

REFUGEE RIGHTS: ETHICS, ADVOCACY, AND AFRICA

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Many of the world's millions of refugees and internally displaced persons are in Africa. Protection of the human rights of these people is highly uncertain and unpredictable. Many refugee-serving agencies thus see advocacy on behalf of the displaced as a key aspect of their task. But those working in the field are so pressed by urgent crises that they can rarely analyze the requirements of advocacy systematically. *Refugee Rights* results from an intense dialogue among practitioners and scholars about how to make advocacy more effective. It concludes advocacy must go beyond international law to human rights as ethical standards. All displaced people have rights to be treated as their human dignity demands.

Refugee Rights establishes a framework for increased advocacy based on these obligations. It calls for serious international response to the plight of the long-term displaced confined to camps for decades. It addresses the needs of both urban refugees and the internally displaced who far too often lack protection from either the states within which they live or from the international community. It addresses the specific needs of displaced women and those abused in war, and calls for concerted international protection of the rights of women in flight. It explores the relation between the human rights of the displaced and both the requirements of peace and the norms governing intervention and the use of force. It spells out some key requirements of post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction that can make reintegration of the displaced possible. Most fundamentally, advocacy on behalf of universal human rights and basic ethical requirements of human dignity are essential if we are to prevent displaced people from falling through the cracks of our conflicted, multicultural world. Thus refugee rights are a key test of the viability of human rights in our time.

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The *Joint Commission for Refugees (JCR)* is a commission of the Burundi and Tanzania Roman Catholic Episcopal Conferences. It oversees pastoral programs for the Burundian refugees in Tanzania and internally displaced people in Burundi. It was formed in 2002 at the initiative of Bishop Paul Ruzoka of Kigoma, in conjunction with the pastoral workers in the camps for Burundian refugees in the Kigoma and Rulenge Dioceses of Western Tanzania.

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