**The refugee crisis: an open letter from Academics Stand Against Poverty**

[ACADEMICS STAND AGAINST POVERTY](https://www.opendemocracy.net/author/academics-stand-against-poverty) 19 September 2015

**The urgent moral task is to address the systemic problems that are forcing people to migrate in the first place, so that migration will always be a choice and not a necessity**

We are a global community of scholars from a range of disciplinary and geographic perspectives. We are concerned about the refugee crisis that is presently unfolding in the wider Mediterranean region, and distressed by the inadequacy of official responses thus far.

We face two urgent moral tasks: (1) to ensure the safety and well-being of those who have been forced to move; and (2) to address the systemic problems that are forcing people to migrate in the first place, so that migration will always be a choice and not a necessity. The first is most immediate, but ultimately the second is most important.

The global community’s long-term aim should be to address the patterns of violence, poverty, and uneven development that force people to leave their homes. Context matters. We must recognize that these patterns are features of an international system – of geopolitical manoeuvring, resource extraction, trade and finance – largely designed by a small number of rich countries that derive great material advantage from it. It is crucial to protect the victims of this system and to work for its reform. This includes working to end resource wars, stemming illicit flows of capital out of developing countries, making trade regimes fairer, respecting national sovereignty, and responding to climate change.



*A family of Afghan asylum seekers wait to be registered by police on the island of Lesvos. Photo: UNHCR / G. Moutafis*

The present crisis offers a monumental opportunity to turn tragedy into a positive global legacy. It was out of the chaos and mass displacement of the early 20th century that, as a global community, we created the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/) and the [Refugee Convention with its Protocol](http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html), and a variety of structures to ensure peace, security and justice for all. Yet today, with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees [estimating that the number of displaced people worldwide is at an all-time high](http://www.unhcr.org/558193896.html), those structures are being tested.

Now is the moment to re-assert our global commitment to peace, security and justice. This is a collective and ongoing endeavour that goes beyond the narrow territorial concerns reflected in the focus on border control. As an international community, we must find new ways to work together.

At the same time, we must uphold more immediate responsibilities. The responses of citizens and communities globally to the current mass movement have far outstripped in human compassion the responses of most governments. We call upon all governments, including European and Gulf States, but also those further afield, to offer sanctuary to those who need it. This includes swift access to humanitarian protection (including support to those crossing the Mediterranean); opportunities for work and livelihood; and the registration of children born to displaced families. We urge national and international bodies to prioritise additional funding for refugees (that does not deplete existing aid or climate change commitments); and to ensure that efforts to ‘fight trafficking’ do not become an attempt to prevent migration.

Closing borders to stop people moving is not a solution. In fact, blocking individuals at points along their journey pushes them to find new migration strategies – which only makes their situation more precarious.

We need a political commitment from regional and international entities to work together. For example, we urge European states to redouble efforts to build a genuinely humanitarian European-wide response, and to provide resources and mandate to EU institutions to coordinate a truly effective response: to both protect those migrating today and to stop the likelihood of such movement in the future. A global response that addresses the systemic drivers of mass displacement (including conflict, uneven development, generalised violence and persecution of minorities) has the potential to create a positive global legacy in response to the biggest migration challenge of the twenty-first century.

We invite you to sign on to the letter [here](https://secure.avaaz.org/en/petition/World_Leaders_We_need_a_global_commitment_to_protect_refugees_and_migrants/?aLYUoib), calling for a global response to the refugee crisis, that respects the rights of displaced people and confronts the root causes of displacement, including violence, poverty, inequality, and persecution.

This letter has been signed by the [ASAP Global Board](http://academicsstand.org/about/people/board-of-directors/), the heads of chapters/associate chapters in Austria, Canada, Chile, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Oceania, Portugal, Romania, Spain, United Kingdom and West Africa, and the members of the ASAP Global Colleagues Programme. Signatories include:

Thomas Pogge, Director of the Global Justice Program and Leitner Professor of Philosophy, Yale University, USA

Tendayi Bloom, Global Justice Program Fellow, Yale University, USA

Cat Tully, Strategy & Security Insitute, Exeter University, United Kingdom

Katie Tonkiss, Lecturer in Sociology and Policy, Aston University, United Kingdom

Feargal Cochrane, Director of the Conflict Analysis Research Centre, University of Kent, United Kingdom

Jeremie Nare, Chargé de Programmes, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

Mitu Sengupta, Associate Professor of Politics, Ryerson University, Canada

David Álvarez, Sociology Department Faculty, Universidade of Vigo, Spain

Mladjo Ivanovic and Dr. Anna Malavisi, Department of Philosophy, Michigan State University, USA

Keith Horton, Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Wollongong, Australia

Gabriel Amitsis, Associate Professor of Social Security Law, Technological Educational Insitute of Athens, Greece

Robert Lepenies, Post-Doctoral Fellow, European University Institute, Italy

Luis Cabrera, Associate Professor at the School of Government and International Relations, Griffith University, Australia

Ashok Acharya, Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi, India

Paula Casal, Professor at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain

Jason Hickel, Postdoctoral fellow in Anthropology at the London School of Economics, United Kingdom

Keith Horton, Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Wollongong, Australia

Helen Yanacopulos, Senior Lecturer in International Politics and Development, The Open University, United Kingdom

Mitu Sengupta**,** Associate Professor in the Department of Politics and Public Administration at Ryerson University in Toronto and Global Coordinator at the [Centre for Development and Human Rights](http://www.cdhr.org.in/) in Delhi, India.

Zorka Millin, Senior legal advisor for Global Witness, USA

Matthew Lindauer, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Australian National University, Australia

Ellen Szarleta, Director of the Center for Urban and Regional Excellence and Associate Professor in the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University Northwest, USA

Henning Hahn, Academics Stand Against Poverty, Germany

Diane Velica, Academics Stand Against Poverty, Romania

Nicole Selame, Academics Stand Against Poverty, Chile

Oluwaseun Olanrewaju, Doctoral Candidate, Geneva School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Switzerland.

Nita Mishra, Doctoral Candidate, University College Cork, Ireland

*The full list of signatories and versions of this letter in French, German and Spanish will be available*[*here*](http://academicsstand.org/2015/09/asap-writes-open-letter-on-migration/)

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/academics-stand-against-poverty/refugee-crisis-open-letter-from-academics-stand-against-poverty>

Critically analyse the argument put forward by the ASAP Global Board.

The purpose of this text is to… (1)

The text first considers…(2)

The text then moves to discuss… (1-2)

The vocabulary and syntax of the text are notable for… (4)

The text further seeks to be persuasive through use of… (3)

Overall, … (2)

What similarities and differences between this text and diCaprio’s address to the UN on climate change do you notice?

Which text do you find the more compelling? Please explain.