



Global Hub on
Internal Displacement

GLOBAL HUB ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

EXPERT FILES

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FEATURE: FRANCIS DENG

UN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ON IDPS, 1992-2004

INTRODUCTORY NOTE: THE UN GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

When I was tasked with the mandate of developing the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, I felt highly motivated by the pressing need to ensure protection and assistance for those displaced. As protection was likely to be resisted by governments and assistance more welcome as support, I thought it important to approach the two areas as inextricably connected.

The Guiding Principles were to be the benchmark for protection and assistance of internally displaced persons. And evidently navigating an understanding and agreement with governments on the challenge of protecting and assisting IDPs was imperative to the process. A crucial first step was the guidance by the UN Secretary-General earlier in an Analytical Study.

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Following broad consultations and discussions amongst various groups including scholars and policy makers, the essential elements of the needed normative framework was concretized. The wide array of existing norms in international law significantly within the human rights, humanitarian law, and analogous refugee law contexts guided the process of developing concrete standards that could guide actions by various stakeholders.

Over the last several decades, the value of the Guiding Principles has been significantly reflected in its use in developing normative standards across various contexts. Laudable initiatives by states and various actors have brought the Guiding Principles within global focus as bedrock for prevention, response and solutions. But it is imperative to emphasise that existing actions need to be strengthened while further steps should be taken.

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One of the highlights of the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement was the emergence of the right not to be arbitrarily displaced which, while derivatively reinforcing international law on IDPs specifically with respect to human rights, humanitarian, and refugee law provided an integrated tool for congregating action for IDPs on the strength of the normative framework on internal displacement.

Significantly, it is important to identify contexts where action based on these normative standards still need to be concretised and the leverage based on the Guiding Principles fostering solutions. It is crucial to also reflect on emerging challenges and contextualize prevention, response and solutions within the framework of the Guiding Principles.