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### Refugees and Covid-19: A Dismal Look into the Future

A mother and her daughter are running down a dark corridor. Their dangerous pursuer is closing in. They frantically pull and yank on every door they see, yet each one appears to be locked. They can hear some voices hiding behind several of the doors, but their shouts and pleas to open up seem to fall on deaf ears. With no help coming and escape impossible, the mother embraces her daughter preparing for the worst.

This cliché scene could very well be featured in the next run-of-the-mill horror film. Yet, it also very well represents the utterly real struggle that refugees have experienced, and are continuing to experience in a world dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Locked doors are everywhere. Borders are closed. Asylum seekers are turned away. Safety is just out of reach. And a deadly virus continues to close in.

Currently, more than [82 million people](#) are forcibly displaced in the world. These people are fleeing conflict, persecution, economic strife, and an innumerable amount of other perilous situations that forced them from their homes. The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 added a whole other degree of hardship and complexity, to the already extremely difficult circumstances that refugees face each and every day.

As the virus began to quickly spread across the world, the subsequent fear, panic, and tribalism did so too at similar pace. In an attempt to counter the spread of Covid-19, countries closed their borders, placed stringent travel restrictions, enacted policy that specifically targeted countries with high infection rates, and even suspended asylum requests. This approach was widely embraced across the world. At the height of the pandemic, [168 countries](#) either partially

or fully closed their borders, and over 100 countries did not make any exceptions for refugees and asylum seekers. Refugees quite literally had nowhere to go. Many were forced to return to the places where they fled from. Others were placed in temporary camps, akin to a refugee purgatory as they wait out the pandemic.

The world quickly went from a welcoming place, championing human rights and ideals like global citizenship, to a world dominated by nationalistic protectionism, ethnocentrism, and nativism. Countries prioritized taking care of their own citizens first before giving any thought to other nations and refugees. From evacuating citizens at the start of the pandemic, to the distribution of vaccines, nations all over the world placed their own above anyone else. And when you consider that many refugees come from countries in which the government either plays a large role in creating refugees, or lacks the necessary resources to provide support, this notion become even more troubling. These nationalistic and protectionist sentiments can be seen time and time again in instances of crisis and difficulty. Whether it be widespread economic problems, war and conflict, or disease, whenever push comes to shove countries almost always embrace a “us first” and a “us above them” narrative.

The Covid-19 pandemic served as a test, which was blatantly failed by much of the world. Refugees were abandoned, ignored, and ultimately punished as country after country placed their own above those in need. This notion is extremely frightening when looking towards the not-so-distant future. By 2050, predictions show that the world may see over a [billion refugees](#) from climate change alone. Coupled with both associated and non-associated conflict, persecution, and socioeconomic challenges, that number will certainly be much higher. If the Covid-19 pandemic serves as any indication of how refugees will be treated in times of global crisis, the refugees of this impending catastrophe will bear a significantly worse situation. The

nationalism and nativism seen in the past 20 months will pale in comparison with what is to come in the future. The almost century of increased globalism and cooperation that we have seen will almost certainly experience a drastic reversal. The future is dim, and at our current rate, things look to be only getting darker.