



THE GLOBAL DISPLACEMENT

In the past year the word "emergency" has so frequently been used to describe the migration phenomenon that the two words are seldom used apart. This is because it is indeed, an emergency. Although migration has occurred throughout history, we seem unprepared to protect the victims. In only one of the many examples, from 1970 to 2010, 1,417 million legal migrants from Africa and 4,287 million from Europe moved to the United States. This does not include the illegal migration. Why is society today still unable to protect those who strive to build a better future or escape violence? It has been estimated that in 2016, so far 2.800 people have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea while 206.000 risked their lives to reach Europe by sea. These numbers are growing exponentially while the international community is trying to find solutions. We simply, yet embarrassingly, were not ready when the "new" emergency started. We need to rethink our policies and practices to save lives. The migration emergency over the last decade, oftentimes associated with criminal phenomena such as smuggling and trafficking in persons, has made it clear that changes are needed in both origin and destination countries.

What has contributed to this emergency?

In the countries of origin, the number of conflicts and its ramifications, and the scale and pace of illegal migration are contributing to the mass exodus. In countries of destination, fear and reduced confidence in economic and security systems are generating sentiments of prejudice and racism. The addition of the growing threat of violent extremism to the two connected realities is alarming.

With regards to the spread of conflicts across the world, this is contributing to the emergency. Today, levels of instability are affecting countries such as Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Syria, South Sudan, and Yemen. There is concern that countries in conflict will continue to increase in number. The interdependence between migrants, natives and violent extremists begins with the scale and pace of the number of people crossing the borders illegally, causing alarm in destination countries. The emerging phenomenon of violent extremism has served to exacerbate tensions in destination countries and augments the feeling of exposure to threats among its population. Migrants, too, feel imperilled and leave their homes, among other reasons, as a result of the actions taken by violent extremists operating in and around the regions in which they live. The population in the destination countries also may react with fear and xenophobia, contributing to the increased vulnerabilities of migrants, through the rise of populist movements claiming to defend their homeland against the unstoppable influx of newcomers.

Has there been a shift in our thinking? Did we backtrack from promoting the ideas of globalization and striving to create a more interconnected world where persons and goods, capacities and knowledge can circulate to trigger prosperity and dialogue among populations? Each day we witness nations taking a step backward; reluctance and fear in accepting diversity, the closing of frontiers, and the dissolution of long-standing partnerships. The ideological perception of migrants is generating debates that are not conducive to finding solutions. We have reached a point where we are fully aware of the challenges. It is not only a matter of who is hosting the migrants. Instead, it is about how can we translate our principles, respect for human rights and for people's dignity, the rule of law and development into concrete actions.

Now is the time to find effective answers. During an interview by UNICRI of a group of undocumented migrants housed in a reception centre, many described the numerous abuses suffered during their travel. They were asked if in hindsight, with the knowledge of the hardships they went through they would attempt the journey again. They did not hesitate when they answered "yes," because faced with the only opportunity to escape violence or poverty in their own country; this was what they saw as their sole option.

How can we address the needs of those in need of protection and opportunities? And what are the possible solutions?

First, origin and destination countries need to work together to find a common strategy. The response to the emergency that includes rescue operations - especially along the Mediterranean coast - needs parallel long

term political and economic answers that transcend the life of political parties and politicians. Moreover, international cooperation could be more effective in origin countries: for example, an alternative to creating detention centres to stop migrants could be to support development in countries of origin. Aid could be conditioned to clear criteria, including transparency and inclusiveness where sustainability is key. Local populations, profiting from international cooperation would include benefiting from the natural resources in their home countries and taking advantage of advances in technologies in a more effective way. It is equally fundamental to improve preparedness and resiliency to natural disasters. Legal frameworks for economic migration in both the origin and destination countries should be enhanced to regulate the phenomena in a way that does not leave space for traffickers and smugglers. Much more should be done to stop organized crime and terrorist groups from taking advantage of people's vulnerabilities to raise the funds for their operations.

Second, we need to reaffirm a principle of global belonging. The migration emergency is displacing our own principles of equality and fundamental human rights and in many countries is spreading fear more than solidarity. We have created a global market, but not a global community sharing the objective of a peaceful and wealthy world. In the UN Charter, We the peoples of the United Nations determined

- to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and
- to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and
- to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and
- to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom...

It is time to address our weak integration policies and the economic segregation that is forming and consolidating. Violent extremism further complicates this matter by potentially influencing the new generation of migrants and native young people who feel displaced because of migrants. Despite long-standing efforts made by governments, real integration of immigrants in hosting societies has not yet reached the level desired. The process may be undermined by several factors (some of these include living in deteriorated and poor neighbourhoods of urban centres, facing discrimination, difficulties in finding or maintaining a cultural identity accepted by the hosting society, lack of a real dialogue with the natives), and further, the lack of integration may lead to unemployment, alienation and frustration, which can consequently create the conditions for social conflicts and delinquency among immigrants.

While the lack of integration may lead to social conflicts and deviance, criminal behaviour among immigrants harms their opportunities for integration. This problem mainly affects young immigrants, whose sense of not-belonging or frustration may lead them towards the criminal groups who promise and deliver a feeling of belonging and ultimately damage their process of integration.

We need to consider the fact that policies affecting immigrants are often drawn up by governments without the participation and support of target group. The lack of interaction and joint strategies between natives and immigrants represent the most evident deficiency in the current integration efforts.

Our society is perceiving the butterfly effect: small causes can have large effects and what occurs in one place reverberates to another. We are learning this but we still do not capitalize enough on our failures.

A few months ago, the world leaders endorsed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for a world free from violence and exploitation. The Agenda's goal is a world in which all legal, social and economic barriers are removed; a just, tolerant and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met. Utopic and far-removed as it may seem to some, the goal, in time, is attainable. It is today more than ever before that this Agenda is needed to protect the global citizens we have worked so hard to become, as it is now more than ever that we have the capacity to strive towards these aims and achieve them.