

Inter-State Dialogue on Internal Displacement: Promoting Global Platforms?

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For full analysis and reference to sources, see IDRP research paper by the same authors.

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There is no formal State-based forum at the global level specifically dedicated to internal displacement. This executive summary thus: (i) explores the potential of existing fora as sites or models for inter-State dialogue on internal displacement (sections 1-3); and (ii) assesses the need for a dedicated global forum on internal displacement (section 4).

Specific attention is given to: a) human rights platforms, particularly UN human rights treaty bodies (HRTBs) and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a procedure of the UN Human Rights Council in which all States participate (in section 1); b) refugee-related fora, namely the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (EXCOM) and Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) (in section 2); and c) informal fora specifically on internal displacement, such as the GP20 process and the Displacement Dialogues (in section 3).

1. UN human rights platforms

Internal displacement is often framed as a human rights issue. UN HRTBs have frequently addressed internal displacement. However, HRTB procedures are generally not fora for inter-State discussion, but instead bilateral dialogues between HRTBs and individual States. Thus, by design, their capacity for inter-State dialogue is limited.

The UPR can more accurately be characterised as a truly global mechanism for inter-State dialogue. It is intended to be 'a cooperative mechanism, based on an interactive dialogue' between Member States, 'with the full involvement of the country concerned and with consideration given to its capacity-building needs'.¹ However, internal displacement is:

- Scarcely addressed, even in respect to those States with the highest IDP populations;
- Narrowly conceptualised, with an almost universal absence of references to disaster-induced displacement; and
- Susceptible to political tensions, which when combined with the UPR's very public arena, can inhibit constructive peer-to-peer discussion and limit scrutiny of State practices.

2. Refugee protection fora

IDPs are similar to refugees in many ways. As such, the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) finds itself involved in both IDP and refugee response.

One way to feed into UNHCR's policy vis-à-vis IDPs is through EXCOM, which is composed of States. However, EXCOM's capacity to systematically address issues relating to internal displacement is restricted by the limits of UNHCR's operational mandate with respect to IDPs, specifically:

- Its mandate is focused principally on the refugee response;
- Its IDP efforts thus mainly relate to conflict-induced displacement; and

