



Mizoram's Refugees Crisis

For Prelims: [Free Movement Regime](#), [1951 UN Refugee Convention](#), [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#), [Smart Fencing](#)

For Mains: Refugee Policy and Legal Framework in India, India-Myanmar Border and Free Movement Regime, Role of States in Refugee Management

[Source:TH](#)

Why in News?

Mizoram has been grappling with the **challenge of managing a growing refugee crisis** since [Myanmar's 2021 military coup](#), providing shelter to thousands from Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Manipur.

- In early 2025 around 4,000 refugees from **Myanmar's Chin State** entered Mizoram after armed clashes, further straining the State's already fragile humanitarian situation.

How is Mizoram Managing the Influx of Refugees?

- **Ethnic Ties and Humanitarian Grounds:** Cross-border movement has long been common in Mizoram due to ethnic ties, even before the [Free Movement Regime \(FMR\)](#) was formalised in 1968.
 - Mizoram's dominant **Mizo community** shares close ethnic, cultural, and familial bonds with the **Chin of Myanmar, the Bawm of Bangladesh, and the Kuki-Zo of Manipur**, all belonging to the larger **Zo ethnic group**.
 - This shared identity has led to a **sense of solidarity**, with Mizos extending support to the refugees, particularly those from Myanmar.
- **Community Support:** Various organizations, including the Young Mizo Association (YMA), church groups, and local individuals, have been providing food, shelter, and basic needs to the refugees.
 - The state's civilian response has been one of compassion, despite the mounting strain on local resources.
- **Mizoram Government's Position:** The Mizoram government, citing ethnic and humanitarian reasons, has refrained from **deporting refugees**.
 - However, growing local pressure has led some villages to impose restrictions on their movement and trade, citing concerns over legal violations and border security.
- **Limited Assistance from the Centre:** Initially hesitant, the Centre has provided Rs 8 crore in relief funds to assist Mizoram in managing the crisis.
 - However, local authorities have expressed dissatisfaction with the support, as it is seen as **inadequate in addressing the growing challenges**.

RISING INFLUX OF MYANMAR REFUGEES

Here are the nine districts of Mizoram where refugees from the neighbouring country are taking shelter



What is the Legal Framework Governing Refugees in Mizoram?

- **Refugee Definition under International Law:** As per the [1951 UN Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol](#), a *refugee* is someone who is outside their country of origin and is **unable or unwilling to return due to a well-founded fear of persecution**. This fear may be based on their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.
 - An **asylum seeker** is one whose claim for refugee status is yet to be adjudicated.
 - **Refugees are not illegal migrants**, as they flee persecution, whereas illegal migrants voluntarily cross borders in search of better economic opportunities.
- **India's Position:** India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, and it **does not have a national refugee law**.
 - Refugees in India are governed primarily under the [Foreigners Act, 1946](#), and are often dealt with through laws related to immigration and national security like the **Indian Passport Act, 1920, the Repatriation of Prisoners Act, 2003**, and relevant rules such as the Passport (Entry into India) Rules, 1950.
- **FMR and Border Control:** The **FMR** is a 1968 bilateral arrangement between India and Myanmar that allows hill tribe members to cross the border. It aims to maintain cross-border cultural ties, enable trade, and support [India's Act East Policy](#).
 - Originally permitting 40 km of travel, the limit was **reduced to 10 km from the**

border. Assam Rifles guard the Myanmar border, while State officials issue border passes under the FMR.

- Border residents can travel **without a visa or passport** but require a **QR code-enabled border pass**. Biometric data is recorded and uploaded to a centralized portal to check against a negative list.
- Despite its goals, concerns **over security, smuggling, and migration** have led to tighter controls.
- **UNHCR:** Refugees registered with the [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#), get limited protection and services but lack government-issued documents.
 - As a result, they can't access welfare schemes or open bank accounts, leaving them excluded.

Note: The Mizoram (Maintenance of Household Registers) Bill, 2019 currently under consideration, aims to identify and track foreign nationals residing in the state. It seeks to help distinguish between **Mizos, refugees, and illegal immigrants**.

What Measures are Needed to Manage Refugee and Asylum Seeker Issues Effectively?

- **Legal Reform:** Enact a comprehensive **National Refugee Law** distinguishing refugees from illegal immigrants. Ensure rights to fair hearings and protection under humanitarian law.
 - The **Mizoram Maintenance of Household Registers Bill, 2019** if given **Presidential assent**, could be a model for local-level identification and regulation.
- **Institutional Strengthening:** Empower state-level Foreigners' Registration Officers (FROs) with clear guidelines and training. Enhance coordination between the Ministry of Home Affairs and the UNHCR for timely refugee status adjudication.
 - Establish a dedicated **inter-ministerial refugee coordination task force** involving the **Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs, and the Mizoram government** to streamline refugee response.
- **Community Integration:** Promote inclusive local development plans and access to basic services for genuine refugees.
 - Protect vulnerable groups like **women and children from trafficking and exploitation**.
- **Strengthen Infrastructure and Camp Management:** Refugees are currently housed in ad hoc shelters with limited access to sanitation, healthcare, and education.
 - Establish temporary reception centres with support from the [National Disaster Management Authority \(NDMA\)](#) and UNHCR. Create a refugee data management system to track inflow and service needs.
- **Border Management:** Use [Smart Fencing](#) technology to monitor sensitive borders while ensuring humanitarian corridors for asylum seekers.
 - Strengthen local policing and community engagement to detect criminal activities without ethnic profiling.

Drishti Mains Question:

"Ethnic solidarity should not come at the cost of national security." In the context of Mizoram's refugee response, critically examine this statement.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question:

Q. Consider the following pairs: (2016)

Community sometimes In the affairs of mentioned in the news

1. Kurd	Bangladesh
2. Madhesi	Nepal
3. Rohingya	Myanmar

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) 3 only

Ans- (c)

Mains

Q. “Refugees should not be turned back to the country where they would face persecution or human right violation.” Examine the statement with reference to the ethical dimension being violated by the nation claiming to be democratic with open society. (2021)

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/mizoram-s-refugees-crisis>

