



UN High Commissioner for Refugees

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The **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** has temporarily suspended **voluntary repatriation** of **Sri Lankan Tamil refugees** from India after arrests of returnees in Sri Lanka.

- **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**
 - **About:** UNHCR is the **UN Refugee Agency**, established in **1950** by the **UN General Assembly** to assist people displaced after **World War II**.
 - It is **headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland** with operations in **137 countries**.
 - **Legal Basis:** Guided by the **1951 Refugee Convention** and **1967 Protocol**, which defines refugees and **sets global standards** for their **rights and protection**.
 - **Functions:** It provides refugee **protection, humanitarian aid, promotion of durable solutions (asylum, repatriation, integration, resettlement)**, and **support to states** in **framing refugee policies** under international law.
- **1951 Refugee Convention & 1967 Protocol**
 - **About:** It forms the foundation of **international refugee law**, defining a **refugee** as a **person outside their home country**, unable/unwilling to return due to a **well-founded fear of persecution** (based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or social group).
 - **Mandate:** It upholds the **core principle** of **non-refoulement**, ensuring **refugees are not returned to danger**, while granting rights to **housing, education, work, and legal protection**.
 - Refugees must **respect host country laws**, though those guilty of **war crimes or serious crimes** are **excluded from protection**.
 - **India and UNHCR:** India is **not a signatory** to the **1951 Refugee Convention or 1967 Protocol**. Refugees are managed under **general immigration laws**.
 - Despite this, India has **hosted major refugee groups- Sri Lankan Tamils, Tibetans, Afghans, Rohingyas** and collaborates with **UNHCR** on **humanitarian grounds**.

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