

THE TURBULENT DECADE



CONFRONTING THE REFUGEE
CRISES OF THE 1990S

SADAKO OGATA



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FOREWORD BY KOFI ANNAN



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*To refugees and colleagues
who work with refugees*

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FOREWORD

BY KOFI A. ANNAN

Sadako Ogata served as United Nations high commissioner for refugees during one of the most challenging periods in the history of the organization. The end of the cold war brought political change and an end to long-standing international conflicts, paving the way for the return of hundreds of thousands of refugees. At the same time, ethnic, tribal, and religious conflicts proliferated, in which population displacement was no longer a mere consequence of war, but often its very purpose. The result was massive disorder, from the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia to the genocide in Rwanda. The unprecedented challenges for the Office of UNHCR were compounded by the limited humanitarian and political means available to respond.

Against this backdrop, the provision of humanitarian assistance and the presence of aid workers on the ground quickly became a means of protecting communities ravaged by war. Increasingly, humanitarian workers had to carry out relief operations in the midst of internal conflict. Under Sadako Ogata's leadership, UNHCR developed a standby emergency response capacity and, for the first time in its history, conducted large-scale airlifts of food and other relief items, with the support of interested governments.

At the same time, determined not to allow relief efforts to become a humanitarian fig leaf or a substitute for meaningful political action, Sadako Ogata made strenuous efforts to engage member states in the search for lasting solutions to conflicts. She understood that what was required was a convergence of humanitarian, political, and security action among major international and regional powers. Those efforts

helped ensure recognition by member states of the link between finding solutions to population displacement and building a climate of international peace and security.

This compelling memoir recounts the successes and failures of the international community in responding to human catastrophe. It illustrates the courage of refugees, the dedication of humanitarian aid workers and the vision of a determined leader. It tells us that Sadako Ogata left no stone unturned in her efforts to protect the world's dispossessed. At the same time, it reminds us that the challenges and dilemmas of "the turbulent decade" still confront us today. May this memoir serve as an enriching guide to our responses in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to my UNHCR colleagues who worked with refugees during the turbulent decade of the 1990s. With a dedicated staff and a clear mandate to protect refugees, the organization operated at the front lines of humanitarian catastrophes. As the world moved from a tight bipolar order to a loose and fractured structure, interethnic, tribal, and separatist armed conflicts dominated the scene. This book is an eyewitness account of the global transition, with a focus on the very high human cost

I first wish to thank the Ford Foundation for inviting me to spend two years as scholar in residence after my retirement in order to assess and write my account of the preceding decade. Without the support and encouragement of Susan Beresford and her Ford colleagues, I would not have had the freedom to concentrate on research and writing. They were generous in providing both space and assistance. I am grateful to Jubin Goodarzi, who as research assistant, went through all my papers that had been entrusted to the UNHCR archives in Geneva and brought relevant materials to my attention, and to Kelly Greenhill, who prepared annotated bibliographies on publications that covered the subject matter under examination.

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sorely missed. I also wish to recognize several others—Ivan Sturm, Joel Boutroue, Kallu Kalumiya, and Eric Morris—for sharing with me their insights into the operations with which they were involved.

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THE
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DECADE

IRAQI KURDS

BALKANS

1988	Ali Hasan al-Majid ("Chemical Ali") leads military operation aimed at eliminating Iraqi Kurds.	
1989		
1990	Led by Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi government invades Kuwait.	
1991	U.S.-led coalition forces drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. The Iraqi forces' operation to suppress the uprising of Kurds in the north and Shiites in the south leads some 1.8 million Kurds to flee to Turkey and Iran. Coalition launches Operation Provide Comfort, establishing security zone in northern Iraq. UNHCR launches rehabilitation program for Kurds return to the north.	Fighting erupts in Croatia as Slovenia and Croatia declare independence from Yugoslavia. UNHCR begins humanitarian relief operation.
1992	Elections are held in Kurdish safe haven, but two main political parties, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), come out even. As a result, tensions emerge among the Kurds.	European Community recognizes the independence of Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia. Bosnia and Herzegovina proclaims independence. Serbia and Montenegro form Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, with Slobodan Milosevic as head of state. UNPROFOR deploys to Croatia and later to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sarajevo airlift begins.
1993		Vance and Owen peace talks begin in Geneva. Airdrop operation expands to other besieged enclaves. Security Council declares Srebrenica, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde, and Bihac safe areas.
1994	The two main Kurdish factions, the KDP and the PUK, begin battling each other.	Framework agreement signed for the establishment of federation between Bosnian Croats and Muslims.

GREAT LAKES REGION

AFGHANISTAN

	Tutsi exiles, many of whom fled during the crisis in Rwanda leading up to its independence in 1962, form the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front) and attack Rwanda. Civil war ensues.	Soviet forces depart the year before, but the number of Afghan refugees reaches 6.2 million.
		Mohammed Najibullah government falls. Return of 1.6 million refugees.
	Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda sign power-sharing agreement in Arusha. UN forces (UNAMIR) are deployed to oversee the agreement. Assassination of Hutu president of Burundi in October prompts revenge killing of Tutsis in Rwanda, and refugee exodus begins.	Factions form coalition government, headed by President Burhanuddin Rabbani, but fighting continues.
	Plane crash kills presidents of Rwanda and Burundi. Genocide starts with Hutu extremists in Rwanda attacking Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Within twenty-four hours, 250,000 Hutu refugees flee to Tanzania. More than 1 million Rwandans flood into Goma, eastern Zaire, in four days. Operation Turquoise launched, with French troops deployed to Rwanda and Zaire. Security rapidly deteriorates in eastern Zaire.	Taliban forces capture Kandahar.

IRAQI KURDS**BALKANS**

1995	The United States mediates a fragile cease-fire between the two Kurdish groups.	Srebrenica falls to Serb forces. Croatia launches Operation Storm, retakes Krajinas from the Serbs. Dayton Agreement ends the war in Bosnia.
1996	UNICEF reports that 4,500 children under the age of five are dying per month in Iraq as a result of hunger and disease. United States launches missiles against Iraqi posts in southern Iraq after Iraqi military crosses into Kurdish security zone.	NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) carries out demilitarization of Bosnia and Herzegovina. UNHCR is charged with repatriation of refugees and displaced persons.
1997	Local rebels invade "security zone" in northern Iraq. U.S., British, and French troops withdraw support. Flight of 75,000 Iraqis to Iran.	
1998	Iraqi officials expel UN arms inspectors, and the Security Council condemns Iraq. Voluntary repatriation of 10,000 Iraqis with UNHCR assistance, all returning to Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq.	UN Transitional Administration (UNTAES) leaves eastern Slavonia and the region returns to Croatian sovereignty. Fighting erupts in Kosovo between Yugoslav forces and Albanian separatists. The OSCE sends observers to Kosovo.
1999	The international community maintains economic sanctions against Iraq for the tenth year.	Talks collapse in Rambouillet, France. NATO launches air strikes on Yugoslavia, Major refugee outflow to Macedonia and Albania. Yugoslav security forces withdraw, and Kosovo Albanians return with NATO entering the province, but Serbs are displaced in turn. UNMIK administration established.

GREAT LAKES REGION	AFGHANISTAN
<p>In the absence of deployment of international troops to separate the former soldiers, Zairean security forces are deployed to refugee camps in Zaire. Security Council adopts a resolution to investigate reports of military training and arms support to the former Rwandese armed forces (FAR) in Zaire.</p>	<p>Taliban capture Herat and advance to Kabul.</p>
<p>Security deteriorates in Masisi region, and thousands of Tutsis flee toward Goma. Refugees on the move, from Uvira to Bukavu and from Kibumba to Mugunga, fleeing attacks on camps. Security Council approves dispatch of multinational forces to eastern Zaire. Corridor opens during fighting in Goma, allowing 450,000 refugees to return to Rwanda while others flee southwest.</p>	<p>Taliban capture Jalalabad and Kabul. Najibullah captured and hanged. Fighting between Taliban and mujahideen in western and central Afghanistan.</p>
<p>Zairean rebel forces (AFDL) take Kinshasa. Mobutu Sese Seko overthrown. Humanitarian agencies pursue fleeing refugees into the Zaire rain forests. Refugees airlifted home from Tingi Tingi and other settlements.</p>	<p>Fighting continues in western, central, and northern Afghanistan. Taliban briefly capture northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif.</p>
<p>Civil war erupts in the neighboring Congo Republic. Civil war opens in Democratic Republic of the Congo with heavy involvement of neighboring countries. Burundi refugees flee to Tanzania. Tension grows between Burundi and Tanzania. Nelson Mandela appointed mediator.</p>	
	<p>Taliban take Mazar-i-Sharif. Number of internally displaced reaches 500,000.</p>

IRAQI KURDS**BALKANS**

2000	The government attempts to "Arabize" Kurdish districts through "nationality correction," and thousands of Kurds who refuse to sign a form changing their nationality are expelled to northern Iraq.	Slobodan Milosevic ousted. Kostunica becomes president of FRY.
2001		Yugoslav forces enter the Kosovo buffer zone as NATO leaves the area. Conflict erupts in Macedonia. Former President Milosevic arrested and extradited to The Hague.
2002		
2003	U.S.-led Coalition forces take military action against Iraq. Saddam Hussein is overthrown, but the battle between Iraqi insurgents and coalition forces continues.	Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic killed in Belgrade.

GREAT LAKES REGION	AFGHANISTAN
	<p>Worst drought hits Afghanistan, affecting millions as civil war continues.</p>
	<p>September 11 attacks prompt U.S.-led coalition forces to launch air strikes against Taliban and Al Qaeda. Taliban regime collapses, and Afghan exiles begin to return home. Bonn Agreement establishes an interim authority headed by Hamid Karzai. The ISAF deploys to Kabul.</p>
<p>Agreement reached to establish Democratic Republic of the Congo transitional government. Rwandan and Ugandan troops withdraw.</p>	<p>Coalition war continues in southeastern Afghanistan in an attempt to capture Osama Bin Laden. UNHCR launches a massive repatriation operation, assisting 1.8 million refugees and 400,000 internally displaced people to return home. Ethnic Pashtuns continue to flee the north, and drought-affected population remains displaced in large camps by the border with Pakistan. Karzai appointed by loya jirga as head of the Transitional Authority.</p>
	<p>Refugees continue to return, and much of the country normalized, but security deteriorates in parts of Afghanistan, with insurgent activities. The ICRC and UNHCR staff killed in the south. NATO takes over the ISAF.</p>