



CHILDREN

GROWING UP WITH

WAR

JENNY MATTHEWS

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W
FRANKLIN WATTS
LONDON • SYDNEY

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Countries highlighted in **bold** have an explanation of how conflict has affected them on pages 46–47.

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**"FOR ALL THOSE CHILDREN WHOSE LIVES HAVE BEEN TOUCHED BY WAR, MAY THEIR FUTURES BE MARKED BY PEACE.
MAY THOSE WHO HAVE HAD HAPPY PEACEFUL CHILDHOODS, BE INSPIRED TO THINK ABOUT CHANGING THE WORLD.
TO THOSE OF YOU WHO WANT TO BE PHOTOGRAPHERS, POWER TO YOUR PICTURES." J.M.**

NOTE TO PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Due to the nature of this book and the Internet, and the content of the websites featured on page 47, the Publisher strongly advises that young persons' Internet access is supervised by a responsible adult.

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INTRODUCTION

WHY AM I A PHOTOGRAPHER?

I became a photographer more than 30 years ago because I wanted to change the world. Since then I have travelled to many conflict zones to take photographs, but I've found that, unfortunately, taking pictures rarely changes anything. However, it has given me a way to communicate. I can tell people's stories, and hope that my photos will encourage others to get involved – whether by giving money, voting, lobbying politicians or becoming a voice against injustice.

The main focus of my work is to document what goes on behind the action of front-line war. I'm interested in how it affects women, children and families in their day-to-day lives.

CHILDREN AND WAR

How would you feel if you lost your home and had to flee from your own country? Imagine losing some, or all, of your family either as a direct result of fighting, or indirectly through illness and disease. You might have to work to support your family or fight and kill other people just to survive. And how can you go to school if it's being used as an army command outpost, and all the books have been destroyed?

This is the reality for too many children and their families in the world. Today, children are growing up with war – the consequences of which they'll live with for the rest of their lives.

This book features just some of the thousands of photographs I've taken. They've been organised into six chapters, each one showing ways in which children are affected by war. These children don't make war, but are dragged into it – usually by adults, and usually by men. These chapters can be linked back to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – see page 5.



▲ These are press cards that I needed to work as a journalist in Sudan and Israel.

WORKING FREELANCE

I'm a freelance photojournalist, which means I don't work for a particular company or organisation. Sometimes, I accompany a journalist on a story for a magazine or newspaper. At other times, I'm commissioned by non-government organisations (NGO), such as ActionAid or CARE International, that provide emergency help. They need photographs to inform the public, as well as raise money. Other times, I travel to places to work on a major project of my own, looking at women and war.



◀ Many countries I travel to require visas. These pages from my passport show the visas I had for Uganda and Chad.

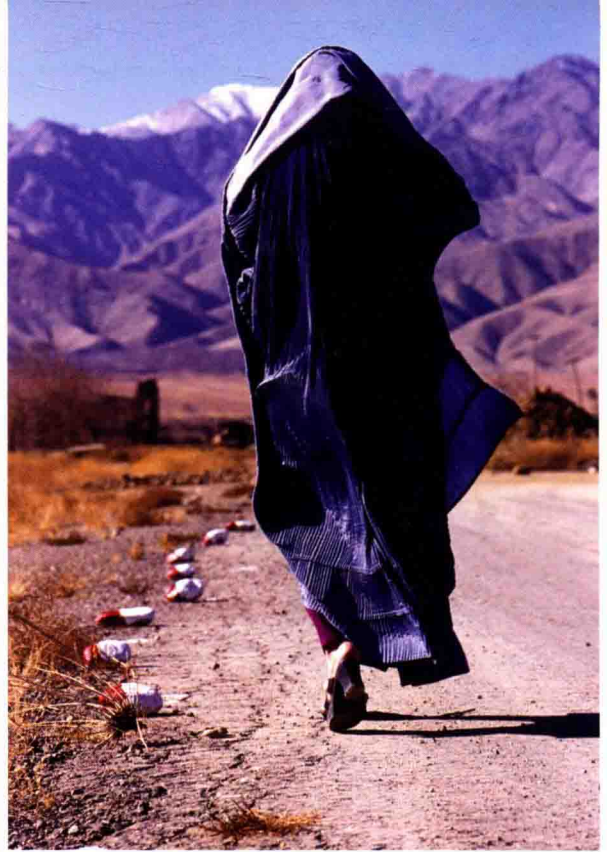
► This hamsa, or hand of Fatima (hand of Miriam in Judaism), was a present from Iraq. I like to think it protects me on my assignments.



GETTING INTO A CONFLICT ZONE

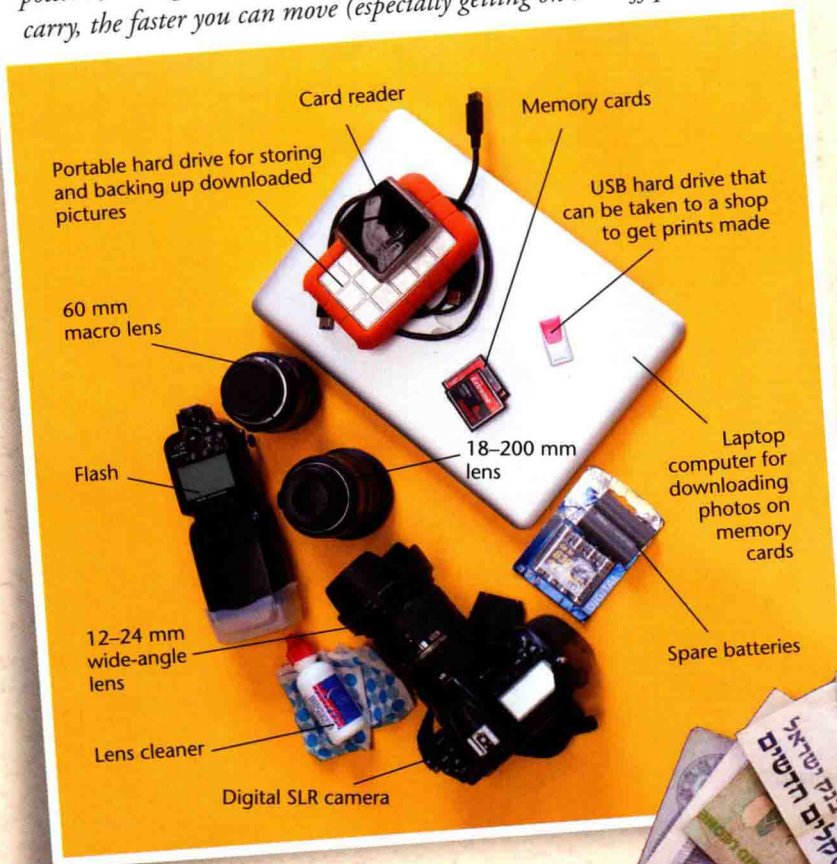
Often, the biggest challenge for a journalist is the logistics of getting to a trouble spot and working safely once there. Research is essential. I use the library and Internet for background information and watch news reports, talk to experts, and learn a bit of the language.

Local people are invaluable. Sometimes I pay a “fixer”—a local person with good contacts—to help me find people and places and to translate. At other times, I work with local organizations. I try to travel as discreetly as possible, but in some dangerous situations photographers team up for safety and support and to share travel expenses.



▲ Unlike me, Farida, who I worked with in **Afghanistan**, knew that the red-and-white stones meant the road had just been demined, and was safe to walk along.

This is my essential camera equipment. I try to travel as lightly as possible, taking only carry-on luggage if it's a short trip. The less you carry, the faster you can move (especially getting on and off planes!).



▲ On every trip, I carry a notebook for keeping a record of places, people, and their comments. If I have time, I write a diary.



► Money from some of the places I have visited. It's important to have local currency—you can't pay by debit card in most places.

FINDING PHUONG

The effects of war were brought home to me when I was photographing in Vietnam long after the war was over. In the 1960s, the situation in this country had shaped my politics and made me aware of the part that film and photography play in recording history. When I visited an orphanage in Saigon, one little girl named Phuong was wearing sunglasses. When she took them off, I was shocked to see that she had no eyes.

It is presumed that her mother was poisoned by Agent Orange, a chemical sprayed over forests during the Vietnam War by US planes, 30 years earlier. The chemical has remained in the ecosystem, and is still continuing to cause birth defects.

Although I may shoot a photograph in 125th of a second – so all the photos in this book add up to less than a minute – I spent hours travelling, chatting and listening before I took them.”

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is an agreement that gives everyone under the age of 18 key rights designed to help protect them. Unfortunately, war can mean that these rights are forgotten, leaving children vulnerable to abuse and violence.

- The right to enjoy these rights, regardless of race, colour, sex, religion, national or social origin
- The right to develop individual abilities
- The right to a name and nationality
- The right to adequate nutrition and medical care
- The right to special care if disabled
- The right to affection, love and understanding
- The right to free education, to learn to be a useful member of society, and to full opportunity for play and recreation
- The right to be among the first to receive relief in times of disaster
- The right to protection against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation
- The right to be brought up in a spirit of peace

How many of these rights do you think would be affected by war?



It was very emotional to realise what Phuong had been denied – the very sense that I rely on for my work.



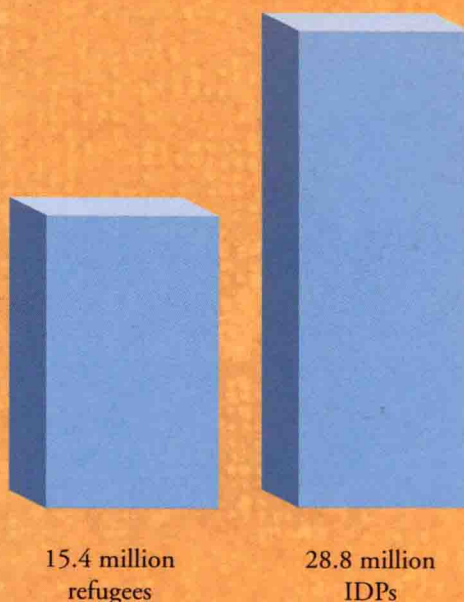
▲ These boys have made their own toy guns from wood and other scrap materials.

HOME AND DISPLACEMENT

When there's a war going on some people have no choice but to stay in their house or apartment, and hope they are not bombed or attacked. If possible, families flee, perhaps to safety within their country, and become known as Internally Displaced People (IDPs). They might end up constructing temporary homes, sleeping in a school, camping in a park or renting rooms in another town.

If people cross an international border, they become refugees. If they are lucky, the international community provides help – although appeals rarely raise enough funds. Fleeing war puts great strain on family finances. People sell jewellery and other valuables just to survive.

THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE DISPLACED BY WAR IN 2012



Source: UN Global Trends 2013

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), displaced people constructed temporary homes out of branches and plastic sheeting.



KIBATI CAMP FOR THE DISPLACED, GOMA, DRC. NOVEMBER, 2008

I went to Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to report on the humanitarian crisis facing people there. Communities had fled rebels, who were terrorising them, and ended up in camps. Here, people had to build improvised shelters for themselves on hard, uncomfortable volcanic rock. As I walked around, I spotted Fraha, resplendent in an orange dress and scarf, sitting next to her hut with her baby son, Shukuru. I am always impressed by how women in the most difficult conditions manage to take pride in their appearance. They are neat and clean, in spite of having no electricity or running water. A nearby family asked me to photograph them in front of their new home.



▲ Fraha and her baby, Shukuru, at Kibati Camp.



▲ Nyirrahimimana (second from left) is proud of the shelter that she and her sister Maombi (right) built from bits of scrap wood and old plastic food sacks.

DEKWANEH, BEIRUT, LEBANON. AUGUST, 2006

When pieces of paper came fluttering down onto her apartment block, Lina knew instantly what they meant. On each one was a message from the Israeli army telling people to leave the area of Dahiyeh, a poor district of Beirut, before a bombing raid began.

Lina grabbed her two daughters, three-year-old Aya and four-month-old Maia, and stuffed some clothes into a plastic bag. She left a message for her husband who was at work, and fled to a school in nearby Dekwaneh. Throughout Beirut and the southern towns of Tyre and Sidon, hundreds of schools offered shelter to people like Lina, who had suddenly become homeless.

Lina, Aya and Maia camp in a classroom, thankful to have a roof over their heads, but uncertain of when they'll be able to return home.



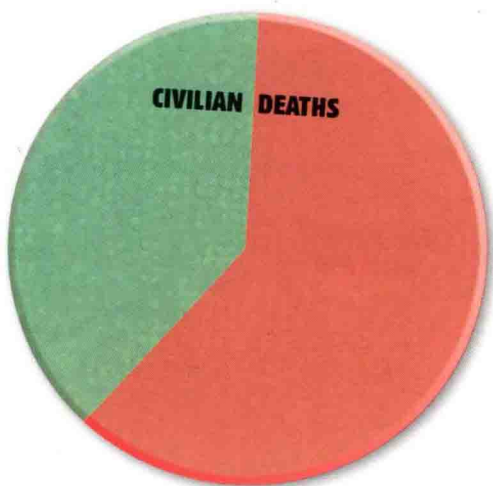


SANAYEH, BEIRUT, LEBANON. AUGUST, 2006

Hundreds of other families, including Azzat and her eight children, were forced to camp on the grass in a local park. In the middle of the night the bomber planes flew over. The explosions as bombs landed and destroyed buildings were terrifying.

▲ The hoses used for watering the plants in the park came in handy for washing clothes and keeping cool in the boiling summer heat.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Why They Died*, 2007



300 of the 510 civilian deaths in **Lebanon** during the 34-day conflict with Israel were women and children.



▲ I was standing next to Azzat on a Sunday afternoon when a bomb dropped nearby. She grabbed a child and froze in complete panic.

RAMADA REFUGEE CAMP, TUNISIA. MAY, 2011

In the rush to flee **Libya** for the safety of a refugee camp just over the border in Tunisia, Mona forgot her spot cream. It's the one thing she wishes she'd grabbed. Now she's living in a tent, sleeping on a mat on the sand, with just the clothes she was wearing when they fled in the night. And her skin isn't getting better. Of course, she also has more serious things to think about.

"We've left behind our family, our homes, our goods. It's not a life here – in Nalut we had a lovely home. Here we can only read the Qur'an, tidy up and organise play activities for the younger children. Because we fled in fear, we left everything behind, so we only have the clothes we are wearing. We've been praying for our families in Nalut. We've been very worried. This morning, before sunrise, we felt the vibrations from the mortars. I prayed for my home, my street, I prayed for hope, for my goals. My brother is fighting with a group of friends. They all look out for each other.



▲ Nineteen-year-old Mona, outside her tent. She wanted to hide her identity to protect her family, who are still in Libya.

It's been over a month since I saw him, but my father goes back when the fighting dies down and says he's in good health and really keen to carry on fighting."



▲ More than 1,500 people spent several months living in these overcrowded tents in Ramada.

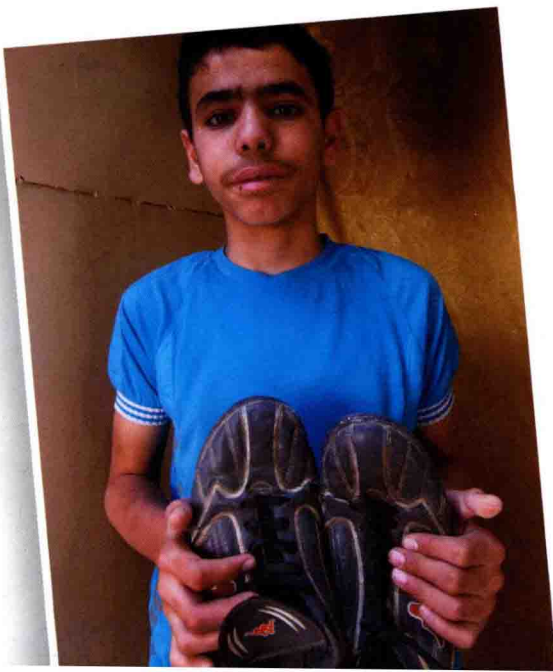
AMMAN, JORDAN. APRIL, 2013

Although many refugees seek safety in camps in a neighbouring country, many others make their own way to towns and cities there. Here, they find shelter with family members or rent rooms, and try to find work. If a conflict goes on for a long time, as in the case of **Syria**, this can put a strain on families and their finances.

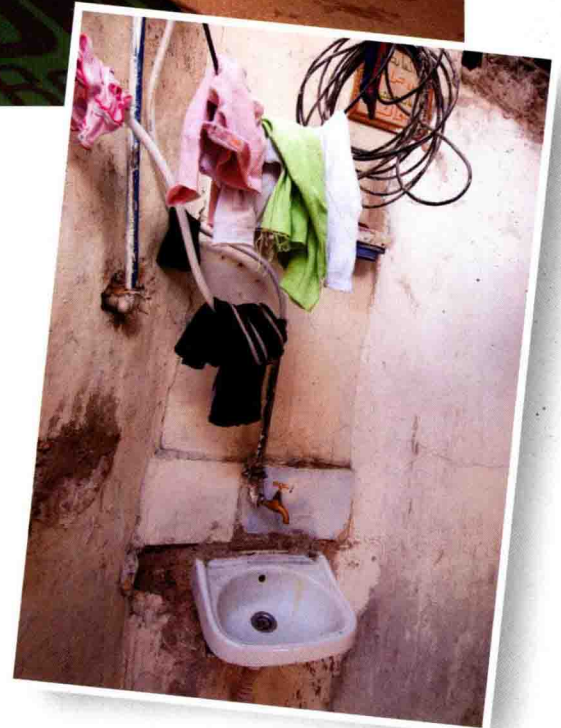
When I asked some Syrian refugees in Jordan what they had brought with them when they fled from their homes, everyone said just a small bag of clothes. One family had a room to sleep 18 people. Each night they unfurled neatly folded blankets to make the floor a bit more comfortable.



▲ This family could only afford to rent a single room. There is no fridge, no washing machine, no cooker – there isn't even a bathroom. Everyone shares a single toilet and a sink for washing.



◀ Hassan, aged 15, explained to me that he brought only the clothes he was wearing and a pair of shoes.



▲ This is the shared sink in the small room in Jordan.

THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S PERSPECTIVE

I'm aware that, as a photographer, I "parachute" into people's lives and spend a short amount of time talking, listening and photographing. Then I leave them, to go back to a world with electricity, running water, a choice of what to eat and the freedom to travel. I think it's easy to forget how lucky we are. When I'm taking photographs I have to focus on the reason I'm there – to report back, to get my photos published and to share information and stories with the rest of the world.

In 2007, I travelled to Goz Bagar camp in Chad for CARE. I was there to photograph the work they were doing with Sudanese refugees who had fled from the conflict in **Darfur**. They use my photographs to illustrate stories and articles on their website and in their promotional material.

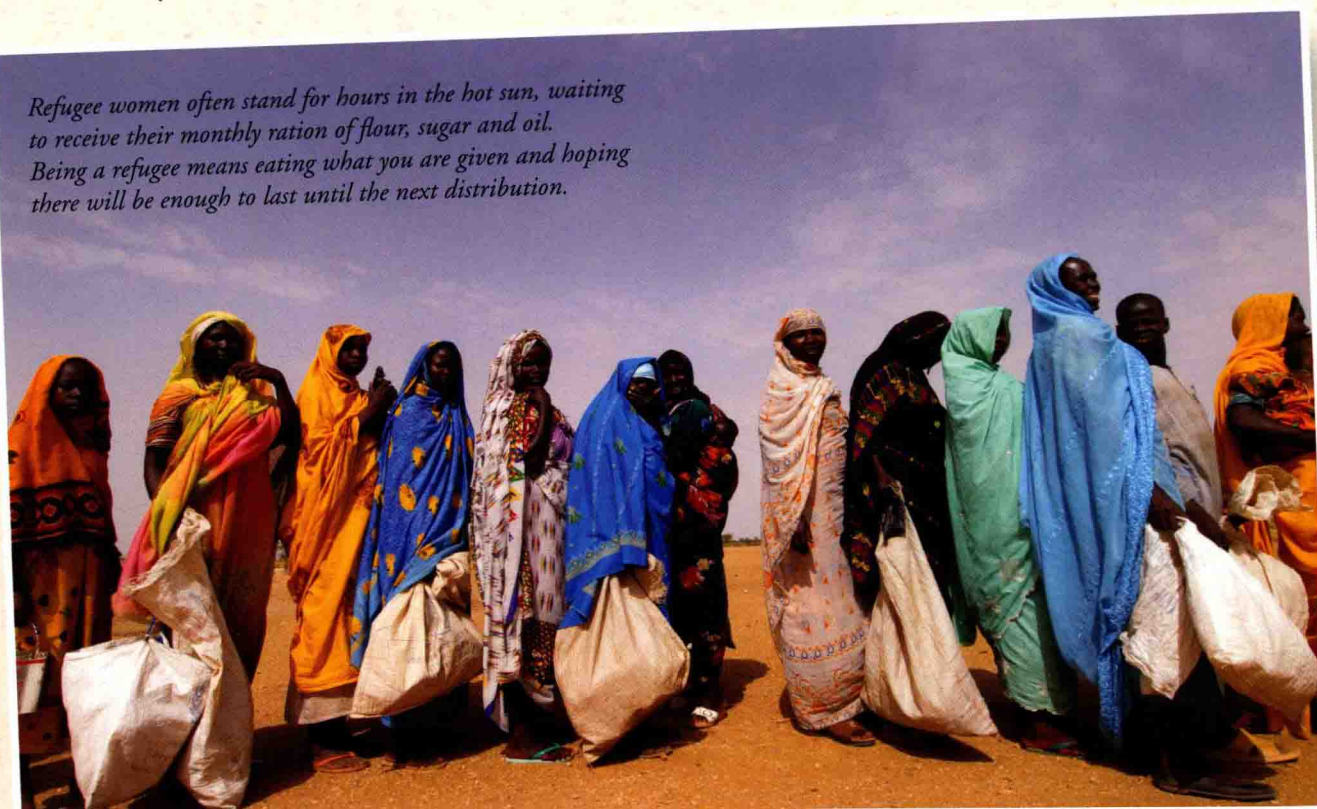
While I was at Goz Bagar camp, I met a mother and her family. She had left everything behind, and I recorded what she said to me in one of my notebooks:



Mariam Issak Adam, aged 30, with her four children - Ousman Issak, aged 10; Nadjoi Issak, aged 7; Mahama Issak, aged 5 and Yakhoub Issak, aged 3 - at Goz Bagar camp.

"The war sent us from our village. Before we had breakfast, armed men came to our village. They killed nine people, including my husband, and so we decided to leave because of the lack of security. Life is difficult now. I've lost my husband and I've my children to look after. I've no hope of going back. The men who attacked us are still there, next to the village. I brought nothing with us, no money, no goods, nothing."

Refugee women often stand for hours in the hot sun, waiting to receive their monthly ration of flour, sugar and oil. Being a refugee means eating what you are given and hoping there will be enough to last until the next distribution.



LIFE FOR REFUGEES

The difference between my life and that of refugees is enormous. I am always very humbled that people who have lost virtually everything can be bothered to talk to me about their lives, and insist on sharing what little they have – always offering me food and tea.

In Qawala camp, near Sulaimaniya, Kurdistan, in 2008, I met 3-year-old Taybeh and her mother. They fled from the sectarian violence between Sunni and Shi'ites in northern Iraq. The camp was home to around 3,000 people, just some of the 2.5 million Iraqis homeless in their own country.



▲ Taybeh and her mother live on a landfill site in a structure made from an old tent and plastic sheeting. I think they were laughing at me taking a photo of the washing up. At home they'd had a proper kitchen, with running water and a washing machine.



Tahane stands with her children in front of her home. She's come back to see what she can salvage from the ruins.

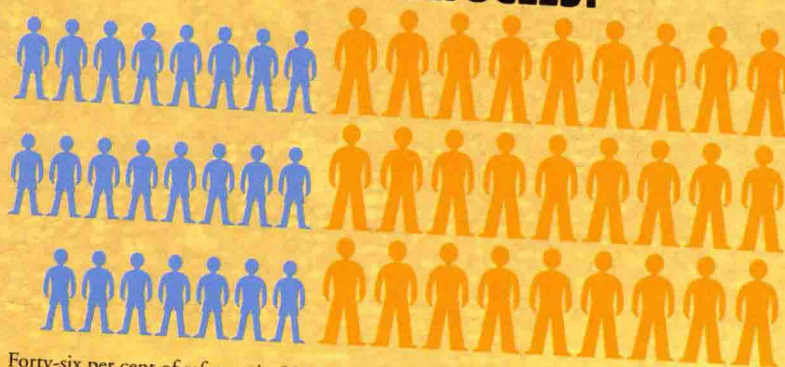
PERMANENT CAMPS

Sometimes people spend a few months in tents. Others, like the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, build houses where their tents were but still refer to their communities as "camps", even though they've lived there for more than 60 years.

I met Tahane in Netzarim, Gaza, in 2009 after the Israeli Defense Forces launched Operation Cast Lead. She told me how loudspeakers had told her to leave her house. She had just enough time to pack a few things and scoop up her three young children before the air strike. Her house was completely destroyed.

Source: UNHCR Global Trends Report 2012

WHO ARE REFUGEES?



Forty-six per cent of refugees in 2012 were children under the age of eighteen.