

The context

Disasters displace two people every second. In 2024, nearly 70% of all internal displacement globally was disaster-related, a trend that will likely accelerate with climate change. For millions of people around the world, displacement is not a hypothetical risk but a lived reality.

Yet, despite its centrality, displacement is only marginally reflected in the current draft of the treaty on the Protection of Persons in the event of Disasters (PPED). If left unaddressed, the treaty risks sidelining one of the most common and significant consequences of disasters, and failing to reflect the lived experience of millions of people.

Why displacement must be explicitly recognized in the treaty

Displacement is a defining feature of disasters. It can have adverse short- and long-term impacts on people's safety, livelihoods, housing, culture and identity.

Frameworks and declarations in every region of the world now recognize the challenges of disaster-related displacement – and the need for cooperation and collective action. The new treaty should reflect this evolution.

Recommendations

1. Acknowledge displacement in the Preamble

Acknowledging displacement in the treaty's text would signal that disaster risk reduction, response and recovery must be designed with displaced people in mind, centring their lived experience. It would also provide an interpretative framing and a hook for future action.

This could be done by including a new recital in the Preamble, as follows:

Bearing in mind that disasters cause great human suffering and distress, including the displacement of people from their homes and places of habitual residence, and that the risk and incidence of such displacement are increasing.

Alternatively, a more minimal approach would be to amend an existing recital:

Considering the frequency and severity of natural and human-made disasters and their short-term and long-term damaging impact, including the displacement of people from their homes or places of habitual residence.

2. Explicitly recognize the human rights of displaced people

The needs and rights of displaced people could be foregrounded in article 5. This would explicitly promote a rights-based approach to displacement in the context of disasters.

Persons affected by disasters, including ... those who are displaced, are entitled to respect for and protection of their human rights in accordance with international law.

3. Recognize evacuations and planned relocation as disaster risk reduction measures

Evacuations can be a life-saving measure to move people away from hazards. Planned relocations – when lawful, well-planned and rights-respecting – can reduce long-term exposure to harm from repeated hazards. Article 9(2) could expressly reflect these as disaster risk reduction measures:

Disaster risk reduction measures include the conduct of risk assessments, the collection and dissemination of risk and past loss information, evacuation and/or relocation planning and the installation and operation of early warning systems.

4. Treat evacuation support and visas as forms of international cooperation

International solidarity must go beyond disaster relief. Assistance with evacuations – including transport, logistics, cross-border movement, and access to humanitarian and/or protection visas – can be critical when national capacity is overwhelmed. Article 8 could reflect this, as follows:

Cooperation in the response to disasters includes humanitarian assistance, coordination of international relief actions and communications, assistance with evacuations (including across international borders), providing access to humanitarian and/or protection visas, and making available relief personnel, equipment and goods, and scientific, medical and technical resources.

The bottom line

Displacement is not an add-on to disaster protection. It is a core part of protecting people in disasters.

General resources

- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Treaty on the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters [resource page](#) (with links to relevant UN and IFRC documents)
- United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters [resource page](#) (with links to background and proposals for amendments to the draft text)
- Kaldor Centre Policy Brief: Jane McAdam and Thomas Mulder, [Foregrounding Displacement and Evacuations in the Proposed Treaty on the Protection of Persons in the event of Disasters](#) (May 2025)
- Kaldor Centre Policy Brief [video explainer](#) (15 mins)
- [Remarks](#) delivered at a Technical Briefing on the Treaty on the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters and Disaster Displacement (Jane McAdam, March 2026) and [summary report](#) of the briefing

Commentary:

- Thomas Mulder and Jane McAdam, [‘Pacific Needs Disaster Displacement Included in Treaty’](#), *Devpolicy* (28 April 2026)
- Thomas Mulder and Jane McAdam, [‘Displacement in Disasters is All Too Common, Yet Is Missing from a New Draft Treaty’](#), *Researching Internal Displacement* (17 April 2026)
- Jane McAdam and Thomas Mulder, [‘Foregrounding Displacement in the Treaty on the Protection of Persons in the event of Disasters’](#), *EJIL:Talk!* (11 September 2025)

A short-cut to most of the materials above (apart from the IFRC and UN resource pages) can be found [here](#).

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