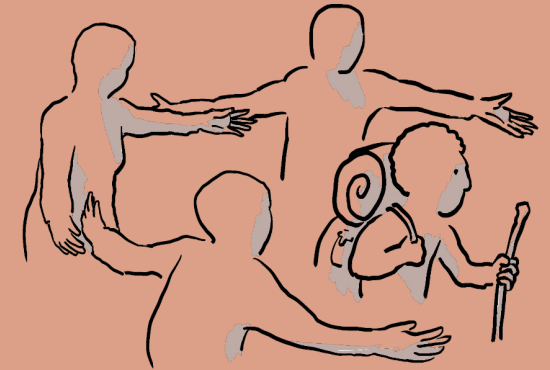




In this chapter you will find:

- Possible Measures to Address Violence and Direct Violence Affecting Migration
  - Safe and Decent Protection-based Pathways
  - Monitoring of Human Rights on Borders
  - Search and Rescue
- Possible Measures to Address Structural Violence Affecting Migration
  - Labour Pathways
  - Educational Pathways for Migrants
  - Providing Information to Migrants about Their Rights
- Possible Measures to Address Cultural Violence Affecting Migration
  - Human Rights Training of Border Authorities
  - Civilian Solidarity and Support



## Chapter 6

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A Positive Peace Approach to Migration  
in Countries of Transit



## INTRODUCTION

This chapter will explore how a positive peace approach to migration can be applied in countries of transit. It will focus on the journey migrants take once they have decided to migrate from their country of origin to their country of destination, and the different kinds of violence they might encounter on this journey. More specifically, it will focus on the journeys of migrants whose country of destination is a European country or the US. As set out in chapter one, only a relatively small minority of migrants undertake this journey, with most staying much closer to their country of origin. Yet this minority is often in the spotlight in the national and international political arenas and media. Considering the problematic and harmful practices this group of migrants encounter (as set out in chapter two), preventing further violent behaviour and direct, structural and cultural violence against this group is a key priority for a positive peace approach to migration. This chapter will first identify some of the main ways in which violent behaviour and direct, structural and cultural violence affect migrants on their journey through countries of transit. Then it will explore the nexus between international migration and peacebuilding in this context. It will also suggest practices that can be applied to address violent behaviour and direct, structural and cultural violence, respectively, in the context of countries of transit.

It is important to underline that the distinction between a country of transition and the other contexts addressed in other chapters is fuzzy. As an example, some migrants can transit through a country that other migrants consider their country of destination. A country that has recently gone through a violent conflict can also be used as a country of transit by some migrants, while also being the country of origin that other migrants return to.

It is also important to emphasise that actions taken in one context might also be recommendable in other contexts. As an example, an action taken in a country of transit might also be relevant in the country of destination.

## Violence and Direct, Structural and Cultural Violence Potentially Affecting Migration

Migrants can experience both violent behaviour and direct violence on their journeys through countries of transit to the country of destination. In some cases, migrants get caught up in violent conflicts in countries they are transiting through. Hence, like the local population, they may be vulnerable to murder, imprisonment and torture and they may find themselves in places where bombings, attacks and sexual violence make it unsafe to stay. In some cases, they can be forced to join armed groups that are fighting in the areas they are trying to transit through.

*Migrants can experience both violent behaviour and direct violence on their journeys through countries of transition to the country of destination. In some cases, migrants get caught up in violent conflicts in countries they are transiting through.*

This might especially be the case if they have some prior affiliation with one of the armed groups, such as belonging to the same clan or ethnic group. In other cases, migrants transit through countries with no violent conflict, but where there are still substantial levels of violence. In such places, similarly to the local population, migrants may be affected by crimes such as assault, robbery or extortion. In many cases migrants are disproportionately affected by violent behaviour because of factors such as not having a safe place to stay, or the perpetrator believing that they carry large quantities of cash. Belonging to a minority religious or ethnic group might further increase the likelihood of them being exposed to violent behaviour.

Migrants' financial background and network can also make a difference, enabling some migrants to pay people smugglers for a quick transit, whilst others with a less privileged financial background and network may be forced to stay in unsafe situations for lengthy periods until more resources become available. People smugglers also exploit migrants and expose them to crimes such as human trafficking and robbing them of their money and identification papers. Finally, and more significantly, many migrants are also subjected to violent behaviour committed by local and national authorities in the countries they are trying to transit through. Dangerous border walls and fences, violent pushbacks and pullbacks, arbitrary detentions and denial of help when lives are in danger are among the practices that make many migration journeys highly dangerous.

Migrants are also often exposed to **structural violence** in countries of transition. For reasons such as not being citizens of the countries they are transiting through, or because they are undocumented, thus hindering equal access to essential resources like food, shelter and healthcare. This might especially be the case in countries where resources are already scarce. Migrants' access to these resources also depends on their personal financial circumstances and the degree to which they have a network that can help them secure this vital access. Intersectional identity markers, such as living with disabilities or belonging to a religious or ethnic minority, might also make it more difficult for migrants to access resources.

Because their stay in countries of transit is temporary, migrants often do not have access to the political system, meaning that their interests, views and needs are probably not represented. Moreover, in situations of violent conflict, transiting migrants might be stuck in unsafe makeshift camps or left to fend for themselves with no access to safe places to stay. They also lack access to regular pathways for immigration to their country of destination, such as pathways based on work or study, depending on factors such as their nationality and education.

Regulations often focus on exposure to direct violence to justify the need for protection over exposure to violent behaviour or structural and cultural violence. This means that, in many cases, the regulations do not consider being exposed to structural and cultural violence as grounds for needing protection. International documents, such as the Refugee Convention, have not been adequately updated to reflect the impact of newer phenomena, such as climate change and gang violence, on the potential need for protection.

Many migrants are also exposed to **cultural violence** while transiting through countries. Stereotypes, prejudices and hate speech against migrants are rife in many countries, regardless of whether or not there is a violent conflict. In many cases, migrants are exposed to discriminatory behaviour based on identity markers, such as their religion, ethnicity or skin colour, when they try to cross international borders and transit through countries<sup>1</sup>. For example, in some countries, national politicians have openly stated that Muslim migrants are not welcome in their country<sup>2</sup>. Some countries have criminalised helping migrants cross borders<sup>3</sup>. In these countries, cases have been raised in courts against civilians and civil society organisations trying to provide essential assistance to migrants being pushed back or prevented from crossing an international border. At the same time, Ukrainian migrants have been welcomed in those same countries, demonstrating that there is discrimination- a clear example of cultural violence<sup>4</sup>.

## The International Migration-Peacebuilding Nexus

When migrants travel through countries on their way from their country of origin to their country of destination, they are often exposed to a wide range of violence. In the worst-case scenario, they lose their lives en route and, even in the best cases, the journey is often very challenging and unsafe. Hence, the most important aim of a positive peace approach to migration must be to make the journey much safer for all migrants by significantly reducing the levels of violent behaviour, and direct, structural and cultural violence they face. However, whenever possible, the focus should not just be on making life better for transiting migrants, but for all people affected by these different kinds of violence in these contexts. This will offer a wider perspective than current approaches to migration that mainly focus on preventing, reducing and managing migration. This entails addressing the different kinds of violence that migrants are exposed to as well as the different kinds of violence the local population face. Importantly, it also means linking the two together.

*The most important aim of a positive peace approach to migration must be to make the journey much safer for all migrants by significantly reducing the levels of violent behaviour, and direct, structural and cultural violence they face.*

As an example, if the border police behave in a discriminatory way towards migrants, this might indicate a culture within the police force that also accepts discriminatory behaviour against citizens. Training on changing these patterns of behaviour should therefore not just focus on behaviours towards migrants, but also on behaviours towards other marginalised groups.

It is also likely that if migrants are experiencing structural violence in the form of unequal access to basic resources, other groups are facing similar challenges and barriers. Therefore, any action taken must focus on improving the access for all groups of people faced with unequal access to vital resources. This will encourage relationships between different groups, because they will be less inclined to feel that they are competing for access to the same resources. It will also help ensure that the situation does not deteriorate to a level where local people also feel forced to migrate, aiming instead to ensure that migration is a free voluntary choice for all.

Finally, it is important to address the cultural violence faced by migrants that is used to justify direct and structural violence in countries of transit. Once again, it is essential to link this cultural violence encountered by transiting migrants with the cultural violence that other groups of people living in the countries of transit are exposed to. As an example, if transiting migrants with specific religious backgrounds are discriminated against, local people with the same religious background may also face discrimination. Therefore, a **coherent approach** to addressing cultural violence is needed, since this will benefit both transiting migrants and local populations.

## Possible Measures to Address Violence and Direct Violence Affecting Migration

### 1. SAFE AND DECENT PROTECTION-BASED PATHWAYS<sup>5</sup>

There are several kinds of ways to help ensure that people can migrate safely to their country of destination whilst avoiding exposure to violent behaviour or direct violence throughout their migration route. These are called regular pathways. Current examples include visas, permits for employment, education or family reason, as well as protection-based pathways, such as resettlement, humanitarian admissions, humanitarian corridors or community sponsorship. This section focuses on the latter four<sup>6</sup>.

**Resettlement** refers to a process by which refugees or stateless persons are screened and selected in a country where they have first sought protection, which is often a state neighbouring the country of origin. After screening, they are transferred to a third state that has agreed to admit them and grant them a permanent residence permit. From that point, they are considered resettled. In the EU context, refugees or stateless persons eligible for admission are usually referred by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) according to resettlement guidelines and admission targets that are specific to each country<sup>7</sup>. In addition, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) is also increasingly involved in the resettlement process to European countries.

**Humanitarian admissions** are additional mechanisms to resettlement which allow refugees to depart quickly to a safe third country on humanitarian grounds. Within a relatively short period of time, people can travel to a new country where they can sometimes apply for asylum or are able to access other pathways, such as private or community sponsorship, along with education-related schemes. Humanitarian admissions usually take the form of specially issued visas or humanitarian admission programmes. They differ from resettlement in that they are established for specific nationalities, whereas, in the case of resettlement, refugees of all nationalities at risk are eligible. This requires distinct programming and dedicated funding as a separate pathway to resettlement.

**Humanitarian corridors** are regulated avenues for safe transfer resulting from a distinct mode of cooperation between a state and civil society. Civil society partners take responsibility for most of the costs of reception, as well as managing some of the pre-departure activities, such as assessments and orientation for applicants. Non-governmental organisations, local associations and religious organisations play a pivotal role in post-arrival activities. These activities include providing immediate support to meet basic needs during the first months, and progressively building up towards more autonomy for the recipients through work, education and language integration.

Finally, **community sponsorship** is a model of sponsorship that connects kinds of support on a voluntary basis. This includes financial and housing support, guidance, service provision and informal mentorship. As with humanitarian corridors, reception can be organised through community initiatives such as church groups, diaspora organisations or local associations who act as lead sponsors.

## WHY IT WORKS

- Resettlement and humanitarian admissions enable people to **migrate safely** and through regular channels in higher annual intakes, meaning that they are less reliant on means of travel that expose them to danger. A wider scope of people in need of protection can benefit from humanitarian admission than for resettlement, for instance those who are not registered with the UNHCR or who are still living in their country of origin.
- Through resettlement, people have access to a permanent residence permit from the moment of arrival; they gain autonomy and can immediately start rebuilding their lives. The model of corridors is based on the initiative of civil society, which ensures that upon arrival, people can gain access to support and reception in community settings, as well as cultural guidance and accompaniment in the process of applying for asylum. Humanitarian corridors consist of a society-wide effort or ‘widespread reception system,’<sup>9</sup> which has the added advantage of promoting trust, hospitality and active citizenship within receiving communities. Reception in communities mitigates the pressure on existing housing systems, reducing the risk of overloading existing government-funded reception facilities for resettled refugees.
- Resettlement provides vital and much-needed support to countries hosting large numbers of migrants. It can relieve some of the pressure on existing services and enhance the overall viability of humanitarian responses. Each state can develop its own framework on humanitarian admissions, meaning that it can be implemented on a wider scale relatively easily.
- Refugees can obtain adapted and community-based support, while providing the receiving communities with ownership and pride regarding their region’s hospitality. Civil society is involved in accompanying volunteers, and in building their skills and capacity to welcome via in-person training and other forms of support. Community sponsorship can also be a good foundation for the development of relationships between the new arrivals and the local community.

## SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace perspective, the use of regular and safe pathways should be broader than just protection-based or focused on a particular group or country. For a variety of reasons, including work, studies, family unity and protection, safe and regular pathways should be rolled out across the world as they would decrease the risk of harm and violence to people, enabling them to settle in quickly once in the country of destination. In this regard, it is vital that the focus is not just on the impact of violent behaviour and direct violence, but also on how structural and cultural violence can have a severe impact on people to the degree that they view migration as the only solution. It is also essential that the selection process which determines who can use these pathways carefully considers how people’s intersecting identities influence the impact of violent behaviour and direct, structural and cultural violence. This includes identifying the different ways women and minorities are being affected. It also includes considering how more complex identities often increase the exposure to different kinds of violence. Finally, it is important to consider the agency of migrants in these processes and the impact of their positionality on their ability to act.



## Example of Promising Practice

The United States (US) had the largest active resettlement programme, the United States Refugee Admissions Program USRAP, working closely with UNHCR, IOM, certified NGOs and private sponsor groups. Persons of any nationality could be considered for resettlement; however, USRAP operated under a system that gave priority to the most vulnerable within refugee populations. UNHCR screened and identified such persons based on their unique circumstances. Private individuals or groups, as well as close relatives living in the US, could also make referrals to the programme, without the involvement of UNHCR. These referrals were for “individuals of particular concern to the United States” such as journalists, human rights defenders, stateless persons, LGBTQI+ persons or individuals experiencing persecution based on their identity or political views.

In the EU, most countries, apart from Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, have functioning resettlement programmes. Resettlement pledges are set by the national parliament or government. The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), UNHCR and IOM also play a crucial role in the implementation of resettlement schemes. This includes holding competencies in identification, referral and determination of resettlement quotas, which are calculated on the basis of existing capacities regarding reception and post-arrival care. Countries such as Sweden, Finland, and Germany have long-standing resettlement programmes, with annual commitments to receive a fixed number of refugees.

However, it is important to point out that in some of these countries, politicians with anti-immigration views are becoming increasingly powerful, leaving many of these initiatives potentially under threat of being scrapped. One of the components of the EU’s Pact on Asylum and Migration is the Union Resettlement Framework, which provides a legal framework for resettlement applicable throughout the EU. However, the impact of this and the degree to which states will commit to its implementation, are yet to be seen.



## Example of Promising Practice

Humanitarian admission programmes in EU countries differ greatly in their geographical focus, scope and design. Most of the EU Member States opened dedicated admission schemes to facilitate the evacuation of Afghan nationals following the advance of the Taliban and the fall of the Afghan government in 2021. For example, Germany admitted 19,185 of its local Afghan staff and their family members, in addition to 10,544 persons at particular risk, such as journalists and human rights defenders<sup>9</sup>. Other humanitarian programmes have targeted Yezidi women and their children (France), persons suffering from persecution in Belarus (Czechia), or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Iraqi Kurdistan (Czechia) in the period 2016-2022<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, countries such as France, Italy, Switzerland, Brazil and Argentina have regulated provisions that allow for humanitarian entry, which do not apply exclusively to persons in need of international protection.



## Example of Promising Practice<sup>11</sup>

The Sant’Egidio<sup>12</sup> community has been active in implementing humanitarian corridors of safe transit since 2015, mobilising its network of volunteers, church groups, academic partners and national charities to facilitate reception as civil society sponsors. A first Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 2015 with Italy. The main aims were to prevent migrants having to cross the Mediterranean Sea in unsafe ways, to counter migrants being exploited by people smugglers and to give migrants in vulnerable positions a regular entry into Italy including the opportunity to apply for asylum. Italian authorities run all necessary checks for the release of humanitarian visas. In addition, partner associations help with welcoming the migrants by providing them with resources such as housing, and helping them integrate by providing services, such as language classes and support in finding employment. Since 2016, more than 7,000 people have been helped through this programme.



## Example of Promising Practice

Ireland has had an active complementary resettlement stream centred on community sponsorship since 2018. The process usually consists of the following steps; A community circle of 5 to 12 people is mobilised and commits to providing support and guidance to a refugee family from the moment of arrival and up to a period of 18 months. The community circle then applies to the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP), which is primarily responsible for the development and oversight of community sponsorship programmes in Ireland, to welcome a family or individual.

Once the request is approved and the individual or family arrives, the community circle supports the integration process via financial assistance, accommodation or other forms of social and emotional support, for instance, in learning the language, seeking employment, or enrolling in educational institutions. Community circles are matched with regional support organisations, such as the Irish Red Cross and the Irish Refugee Council, who provide training and assistance throughout the sponsorship process<sup>13</sup>. This avenue of sponsorship was created within the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, set up by the Irish government in 2015 with the purpose of delivering a more effective response to the increasing numbers of forcibly displaced people seeking protection.

## LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- Resettlement is not an individual right and depends on the goodwill of states. Although demand for resettlement continues to grow worldwide (the projected figure for 2025 is 2.9 million<sup>14</sup>), only a fraction of refugees are resettled<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, resettlement alone cannot meet global needs and further regulated pathways are needed.
- Resettlement remains embedded in unequal power dynamics, and is therefore limited in terms of its transformative potential. Unlike the right to asylum, resettlement is not codified in international law, and resettlement pledges change according to political priorities. Migrants continue to face administrative, legal, financial or other barriers that prevent them from accessing these pathways in an equitable way.
- Humanitarian visas are typically limited in number and issued at the discretion of each state and their respective legislation. This means that issues, such as administrative, legal or financial barriers that are typical of resettlement, should also be considered as limitations on the effectiveness of humanitarian admission.
- Few countries have transparent or cohesive national frameworks on humanitarian visas, making it difficult for civil society actors to engage.
- Humanitarian corridors put the burden of cost on civil society, which tends to be more under-resourced than states. This also raises questions around the sustainability of this model, which requires constant involvement of new volunteers and community groups to host newly arrived refugees. Screening is led by non-governmental organisations, leaving all the responsibility and risks to civil society actors. In developing selection criteria, civil society organisations are still subject to the thorough security protocols of the state, as well as additional requirements such as the ability to live in the European countries of destination.



## 2. MONITORING OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON BORDERS<sup>16</sup>

Independent monitoring of human rights at borders that migrants cross during their journey is an important step in addressing the violence migrants experience linked to the highly problematic border practices, such as violent push-backs and barbed-wired fences. Migrants can also experience direct violence while crossing borderlands that are contested by armed groups belonging to different countries. Information can be collected through visits to borders, including oversea territories, ports and airports, and via conversations with migrants and reviews of official documents. This kind of monitoring can help determine whether practices align with international human rights standards and can aid investigations into cases where migrants have experienced violations of their human rights. It can also recognise the voice and agency of migrants who experience violent behaviour or direct violence by ensuring that their concerns and experiences are communicated to local and national authorities. In addition, verified information can be used to develop reports and recommendations on the situation in general, as well as on issues of particular concern, in order to inform advocacy, policies and practices ultimately leading to making migrants' journeys safer. As part of the EU Pact on Asylum and Migration, member states will have to set up monitoring mechanisms for the newly introduced screening procedures and the asylum border procedure.

### WHY IT WORKS

- Monitoring human rights on borders works because the information can help make people, including politicians, aware of the violent behaviour and direct violence happening around their borders.
- Monitoring human rights on borders can help highlight the essential voice and agency of migrants experiencing violent behaviour and direct violence.
- Collecting and verifying information about border practices and policies is also an important step in advocating for and achieving significant change. Changes in practices at borders are not just important for migrants but also for the local people living in borderlands and others that cross the international borders because they are also affected by the violence.

## SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace perspective, it is important to ensure that the engagement of migrants in the processes of monitoring human rights on borders is intentional, genuine and meaningful. This should go beyond a short one-off conversation. Instead, continuous engagement that includes bearing witness to migrants' experiences, listening collectively, compassionately and empathetically to their stories, and identifying lessons learned and immediate and long-term needs is necessary. Building trust and creating safe spaces where migrants feel safe enough to share their often-painful stories, without fearing that their involvement will jeopardise their onward journey to their country of destination, takes considerable time. It is necessary to consider how migrants' experiences have affected their relationships with local and national authorities and how these can be rebuilt.

*Building trust and creating safe spaces where migrants feel safe enough to share their often-painful stories takes time.*

Any monitoring activities must also carefully consider how migrants' intersecting identities have affected their experiences and how it affects their participation in monitoring activities. Steps must be taken to include as many migrants as possible. One of the ways this can be achieved is by offering alternative ways of participating. As an example, whereas some migrants might be comfortable engaging in conversations about their experiences, others might prefer to take part in a survey anonymously.



## Example of Promising Practice

In 2017, **Human Rights Observers (HRO)**<sup>17</sup> was founded in response to the state violence committed against migrants in Calais and Grande-Synthe, France. HRO aims to observe and document problematic practices used in police operations against migrants to prevent their use. Working in teams, they take testimony from migrants in the camps who have had their rights violated by the police, helping ensure that migrants' voices and agency are recognised and valued. They use four complementary approaches. Firstly, they collect information about police operations, mostly where migrants are forcibly evicted from their makeshift accommodation. Secondly, the organisation uses the collected data to critically analyse applicable state policies from a human rights perspective. HRO also advocates against the harmful policies implemented by French and British authorities. Finally, the organisation also has lawyers who work to challenge all the different violations sanctioned by the governments of France and the United Kingdom.

## LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- The use of violence at borders will only stop if politicians use the information gathered during the monitoring processes to make significant changes to the policies that enable and, in some cases, even support the violence.
- Changes in policies will only make a difference if different practices are implemented on the borders and if accountability mechanisms help to ensure compliance.

### 3. SEARCH AND RESCUE

People crossing borders through irregular channels face multiple forms of violence as a result of states' disregard for their safety and wellbeing. This disregard enables security forces, police, the military, immigration officers, border guards, criminal gangs and people involved in smuggling or human trafficking to further expose migrants to significant levels of violence.

Examples include pushbacks and pullbacks of volatile overcrowded boats attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea. Escalating loss of life along migration routes reveals the need to step up protection responses, recognising emergency assistance as a universal public service whenever and wherever people find themselves in distress. Aiding persons in danger at sea is established as a duty in international conventional and customary law. This means that countries are legally obliged to develop adequate and effective maritime search and rescue services and to coordinate operations until persons in distress are taken to a place of safety. In the absence of responsive systems that would prevent loss of life in the Mediterranean Sea, and in the face of increasing illegal pushbacks and pullbacks, civil society groups have filled the gap by operating private vessels to rescue people at sea.

However, search and rescue operations run by NGOs face multiple obstacles in disembarking migrants in safe ports, as well as persistent legal challenges by some states, such as Italy, Greece and Turkey<sup>18</sup>. Search and rescue is not limited to assisting at sea. Increasingly, there is a need to deploy similar operations and services on land. Deaths in the Sahara Desert are at least double those recorded in the central Mediterranean<sup>19</sup>.

### WHY IT WORKS

- When states take responsibility for their duty to assist people in distress, they affirm their commitment to protect every person's right to life, irrespective of the person's identity or circumstances.
- Increased willingness from states to fulfil their responsibilities would allow for better coordinated search and rescue efforts, with the involvement of civil society. This could lead to a situation where no migrants die unavoidably or are traumatised from having been left to fend for themselves in open seas as a result of neglect. These improved efforts will also benefit local people if they get into trouble while crossing the same waters. In addition, better practices will also spare local residents from stressful experiences such as finding bodies on beaches or hearing that people have drowned in their local sea.
- Coordinated search and rescue efforts would allow states to improve their asylum reception and management systems for arrivals, coordinating the distribution of rescued people nationally and in the rest of Europe, in the spirit of solidarity.

## SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace perspective, it is essential that all actors contributing to search and rescue, including civilians and civil society organisations, are supported and valued rather than criminalised and pressurised. It is also important to include migrants in search and rescue missions, so that they are not just seen as people needing to be rescued, but also as people who rescue others. This will help challenge the narrative that migrants have little agency and that they are the ones always needing help and support. The significance of good relationships for the successful coordination of search and rescue missions should be recognised. As an example, mutual agreements allowing search and rescue vehicles and vessels to cross borders on land and at sea will significantly increase the likelihood of a successful outcome of such missions. Similarly, good working relationships between civil society actors and local and national authorities involved in search and rescue missions are also essential.



### Example of Promising Practice

Germany has, in recent years, stressed the importance of strengthening rescue capacity in the Mediterranean. People migrating to Germany generally reach its territory by land, and German search and rescue services do not have a mandate to operate beyond the North and Baltic Seas. Nevertheless, the German Bundestag assigned the Foreign Ministry to provide financial support to civilian sea rescue in the Mediterranean, specifically to two rescue charities working on land and at sea. In 2023, the German government provided funding totalling two million euros to three rescue organisations operating in Italy (SOS Humanity, Sea-Eye and the Italian Sant'Egidio community). In the words of Sea-Eye chairman, Gordon Isler, "it also shows that sea rescue is a responsibility under international law that must be carried out by civilian actors until EU member states accept this responsibility again."<sup>20</sup> It is yet to be seen whether this support will continue in the future, considering that politicians with anti-immigration policies are becoming increasingly powerful in Germany.



### Example of Promising Practice

Djibouti is a major transit point for migrants from the Horn of Africa who travel irregularly by sea in search of better economic opportunities in Gulf nations<sup>21</sup>. This route is known as the Eastern Route. It is considered one of the most used and dangerous routes in the world. To address this, the national authorities in Djibouti have established a search and rescue programme along the coastal shore and on the land side on routes leading from Ethiopia and Somalia. The programme includes training of law enforcement officers on protection measures and screening mechanisms during search and rescue missions. The screening mechanisms include procedures aimed at identifying victims of human trafficking. Djibouti has also established centres that inform migrants about the risks of travelling across seas and offers a range of services for migrants who have been rescued.



## Example of Promising Practice

**Alarme Phone Sahara**<sup>22</sup> is a project based on cooperation between individuals, groups and organisations in Europe and the Sahel-Saharan region. The project ensures that migrants stranded in the Sahara Desert are rescued. It also focuses on informing migrants about the conditions and dangers they are likely to encounter en route, as well as the services available to help them throughout their journey. Acknowledging the importance of migrant agency, the aim is not to prevent migration through the desert, but to make sure migrants are able to make informed decisions about whether and how to migrate. The project challenges national and international policies that facilitate violent behaviour and direct violence against transiting migrants, and restrict their right to freedom of movement. Finally, the project also documents cases of violations of human rights.

### LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- While civil society rescue groups are modelling promising practice, developing adequate search and rescue capacities is and should remain a **state responsibility**. Currently, many states are not only not respecting their obligations on search and rescue, but are also criminalising or limiting other actors trying to provide these life saving activities.
- An increase in safe and regular pathways would minimise the reliance of people on longer and more dangerous routes. However, with or without regular pathways, not helping people in need of rescue should never be used as a deterrence strategy. Instead, search and rescue capacities should always be adjusted to match local needs for these services to the benefit of all.

## Possible Measures to Address Structural Violence Affecting Migration

### 1. LABOUR PATHWAYS<sup>23</sup>

Regular pathways, in the context of labour migration, are safe migration avenues for migrants who wish to work in a specific country, facilitating their entry into said-country under employment conditions which provide them with full access to rights and protections. Labour pathways enable the receiving state to fulfil the needs of migrant workers, employers and communities in a context of skills shortages or demographic changes, such as a decline in the working-age population. They are a much safer alternative for people who have decided to migrate since they prevent them from encountering structural violence along irregular migration routes and offer some protection against labour exploitation. They are also beneficial for the people in the countries of destination.

These pathways often provide different types of permits in terms of length, employer dependency and labour market mobility, social and family rights, as well as renewability and progression to more long-term residence. However, working-class workers are more likely to be provided with short-term, precarious and dependent opportunities, without their families, than are more privileged workers. This reinforces existing class inequalities.

## WHY IT WORKS

- Work-related pathways enable safe travel for migrants to their country of destination so that they do not have to resort to often risky and dangerous irregular journeys.
- Labour mobility can make a significant contribution to the economic development of both receiving countries and countries of origin. Examples include fulfilling labour needs, contributing to skills exchange and education, and enabling remittances which have a positive economic impact on families and communities in countries of origin.

## SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace perspective, it is important that labour pathways address structural violence- in this case, unequal access to employment. For example, bilateral agreements only enable migrants from specific countries a regular route to employment in the country of destination. This leaves people from excluded nationalities to travel along unsafe irregular routes and therefore exposes them to structural violence. Labour pathways also need to consider how migrants' intersecting identities, such as living with disabilities, affect their inclusion in employment opportunities in the country of destination. It is also important to consider the impact of migrants' prior education and financial status. Programmes only focusing on migrants with high levels of education and income can lead to a brain drain in the countries of origin.

Such programmes also have several other negative consequences. Among others, they might leave less-educated workers undocumented, trapped in low paid jobs, or reliant on poor-quality permits that perpetuate in-work poverty and keep them separated from their families. They reinforce inequalities, increase the risks of migrants being exploited and potentially increase xenophobia against if they migrants are perceived as driving down salaries. Finally, it is necessary to ensure that migrants who gain employment in their country of destination are not faced with other kinds of structural violence, such as unequal access to housing and healthcare, along with cultural violence, such as hate crimes.

## Example of Promising Practice

Portugal allows migrant workers who wish to move to the country, regardless of their nationality or sector of employment, to apply for a visa from their respective Portuguese embassies and consulates. Eligibility requirements include having a formal job offer that complies with Portuguese labour standards and demonstrating that candidates have the skills required for the job. When these requirements are met, a visa, usually with a validity of four months, is issued allowing the worker to enter Portugal. Usually, a pre-residence authorisation is also issued, which allows the person to access social services while the formal work residence permit is being processed. The residence permit for workers is valid for two years, throughout which the person can live, work, change employers, or claim unemployment benefits under conditions comparable to Portuguese citizens. The work residence permit can be renewed for three-year periods. In addition, after the fifth year in the country, it is possible to apply for a more secure long-term status, such as a long-term residence permit or Portuguese citizenship<sup>24</sup>. However, it should be noted that migrants face administrative and bureaucratic challenges when trying to access these permits from their country of origin.

## Example of Promising Practice

Work-related complementary pathways remain small in scale across EU Member States, with several projects running at pilot stage. IOM Belgium runs **Displaced Talent for Europe**, a project that supports European countries in developing a new labour mobility scheme for displaced people who face barriers to employment in the places where they live as a result of their status. The pilot currently connects employers in Belgium, Ireland, Portugal and the United Kingdom with displaced people based in Jordan and Lebanon, accompanying them through the recruitment and visa application process. The **EU-Passworld project** pilots labour complementary pathways with the aim of connecting them to community sponsorship schemes and local networks of stakeholders in Italy, Belgium and Ireland.<sup>25</sup>

## LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- Across the EU, decent labour migration opportunities remain available almost exclusively to highly paid workers or workers with very specific skills that are in demand.
- It is rare for people from outside the EU seeking employment in care work, construction, agriculture or hospitality to find work in decent conditions with full access to rights and protections. This is despite the demand for workers in these sectors. Currently, labour migration policies in EU Member States are unable to keep pace with the demand for workers across sectors and skill levels nor do they provide sufficient labour migration opportunities. This points to the need for more accessible and inclusive pathways and application procedures, as well as improvements in permit conditions for workers across different occupations and skills.
- When a labour pathway is in place for displaced people, those with skills should not be prioritised over others or at the expense of the most vulnerable. Monitoring mechanisms should be in place to ensure that programs are not putting labour needs above migrant-led priorities.
- An expansion in safe and decent pathways related to work should be accompanied by avenues to gain access to work permits when people have already travelled to the receiving country, including people who have temporary or undocumented residence status.

## 2. EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS FOR MIGRATION<sup>26</sup>

Education pathways are avenues through which migrants are admitted to an another country for the purpose of pursuing **higher education** or **vocational training opportunities**. These regulated pathways provide a safer route for migrants, significantly reducing the risk of experiencing structural violence en route from their country of origin to their country of destination. Some programmes only focus on refugees while others include other migrants as well. Examples of programmes that focus on refugees include **university corridor programmes**.

These can involve a diverse set of actors, such as higher education institutions, national bodies, municipalities, foundations, private companies, civil society organisations or international organisations, that connect refugee students with the actors involved in the destination country. Some education pathways for migrants require migrants to be self-funded, whereas others include scholarship programmes that provide practical and financial assistance to facilitate the overall mobility of international students.

### WHY IT WORKS

- Education pathways that offer the ability to apply for a long-term status in the new country provide a foundation of security that allows migrant students to build a new life while simultaneously pursuing their academic goals.
- The presence of migrant students enriches the university learning environment, bringing new perspectives on learning subjects and challenges, benefiting all involved.

## SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace point of view, it is important that educational pathways are significantly expanded. It is also important that educational pathways not only include migrants experiencing direct violence in their country of origin, but also migrants who experience structural and cultural violence, potentially preventing them from accessing education there. As with labour pathways, it is important to make sure that these pathways are not just open for the richest and most educated migrants. Instead, they must strive to be inclusive. From a post-colonial perspective, it is important that educational institutions in countries of destination fully recognise knowledge and skills acquired in countries of origin. It is also important that these pathways break down the barriers that many migrants face when pursuing educational opportunities abroad. These barriers include very high tuition fees and quotas on entries which prevent many migrants from entering education in countries of destination.





## Example of Promising Practice

In Italy, the university corridor programme for refugees **UNICORE 6.0** enables refugees residing in Kenya, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe to continue their higher education in Italy. Initially launched in 2019 by the University of Bologna and LUISS University in Rome, the project now includes 38 partner universities across the country. UNICORE 6.0 is run in collaboration with UNHCR, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and several national partners and civil society groups including Caritas and Diaconia Valdese. In 2024, 67 places were offered to refugee students, who usually receive a full scholarship covering application fees, tuition, travel and other expenses as well as professional development assistance and support to facilitate engagement in student life. After their studies, refugees can apply for a work permit or temporary residency, or file an asylum application in order to continue their stay in Italy.

## LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- Education pathways remain very limited in number, and eligibility is usually based on the person's language and education skills rather than their specific needs.
- Many education-related permits in high-income countries are valid only for the duration of studies, thus education pathways do not always offer a long-term solution.
- A supportive environment that can sustain long-term viability of educational pathways also requires other types of assistance, such as financial support and guidance regarding national processes, legal protections and regulatory barriers, which are not always available to migrant students.

## 3. PROVIDING INFORMATION TO MIGRANTS ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS <sup>27</sup>

Providing migrants with information about their rights and the services that should be available for them plays an important role in addressing structural violence in the form of unequal access to essential resources. These rights<sup>28</sup> include the right to an individual assessment of their protection needs and the rights not to be collectively removed or removed to a country where their life or freedom could be threatened. Their rights also include not being subjected to discriminatory decision-making and arbitrary detention, and that special attention must be paid to them in vulnerable situations. Migrants in transit also have the right to immediate assistance including food, water, clothes, blankets, sanitary items, medical care and shelter.

*Informing migrants about their rights should be embedded in broader initiatives aiming at informing all residents of their rights.*

Without this information, migrants are less likely to be able to access essential assistance on their route through countries of transition. It is essential that this information be provided in a language that the migrant fully understands, and that they can get their questions answered through an interpreter, if needed. If relevant, it is also important that migrants be provided with information about how to file an asylum application or a complaint, and how to connect to civil society organisations that help migrants gain access to essential resources. This information should not only be available for migrants. All people living in countries through which migrants transit should know about their rights and the rights of others. Hence, informing migrants about their rights should be embedded in broader initiatives aiming at informing all residents of their rights, to help counter structural violence that also affects the local population.

## WHY IT WORKS

- People, including migrants, can only assert their rights if they know what they are.
- People can only access vital resources if they know what is available to them and how they can gain access.

## SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace perspective, it is essential that information about migrants' rights be provided in an inclusive way that considers the situation they are in. This includes how their intersecting identity affects their ability to absorb information. It is necessary to consider the stress and trauma transiting migrants experience and how this affects their ability to understand and retain information. Hence, it is important that any information provided orally is also provided in writing in their language, so that migrants can return to this information when they need it. It is also important to find ways to convey this information adequately to specific groups such, as child migrants and migrants living with learning disabilities. From a gender perspective, information should be gender-sensitive and specific and consider the special needs of minorities, such as people living with disabilities or people from the LGBTQ+ community.



## Example of Promising Practice

The UNHCR<sup>29</sup> has a freely accessible database that provides information for refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people about their rights and duties, asylum procedures and access to services in countries around the world. However, a noteworthy limitation of the database is that it provides the information only in the main languages of the country of transition and in some, but not all, languages of the countries of origin. It also does not include the rights of other groups of migrants. The IOM and Missing Children in Europe have also developed apps where migrants can access information about their rights.

## LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- Knowledge about how to gain access to resources is only going to make a significant difference if enough resources are available. This knowledge will not make any difference if migrants face other barriers to equal access to vital resources.
- Information will only make a difference if it is provided in a language and in a way that migrants understand, and if it considers the need of all migrants.

## Possible Measures to Address Cultural Violence Affecting Migration

### 1. HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING OF BORDER AUTHORITIES

One of the ways to address violations of human rights on borders is by providing human rights training to border authorities. This training can teach border personnel about all the **relevant human rights** for their work, and should emphasise that human rights are applicable to all, including migrants, regardless of their circumstances and backgrounds. It can also ensure that border authorities are aware of different **identity markers** and how they influence the experiences of people, including migrants in transit. Importantly, human rights training can make border personnel aware of their own **biases, stereotypes and prejudices** and how these affect their work and the discriminatory behaviours that certain groups can face. For example, it can focus on how understandings of and assumptions about migrants, and the impact they have, can lead to discrimination. The training can also help border authorities to identify **migrants' specific needs**, the impact **trauma** has had on them, and to understand how this might affect behaviour. This can enable the border personnel to treat them sensitively, based on their personal circumstances rather than the border personnel's own preconceptions.

### WHY IT WORKS

- Human rights training for border authorities works because it can help officials reflect on how their preconceptions and how they affect their daily work in terms of potentially leading to discriminatory behaviour and violations of human rights. This awareness can aid changes in their behaviour, potentially reducing cultural violence against groups of people, including migrants.
- Human rights training also works because it can help border personnel understand the complexities of migration and how each person's situation is unique, thus challenging stereotypes and prejudices based on group identities.

### SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace perspective, it is important that training challenges the preconception that all migrants are vulnerable and have no, or very little, agency. Each participant should be encouraged to identify their own stereotypes and prejudices and how these prejudices can impact their work, rather than only focusing on commonly held stereotypes and prejudices. It is also essential that the training focuses on the importance of **nonviolence**. Additionally, training should be compulsory, not only for the border personnel that have direct contact with people, but also their managers. When possible, the training should also include encounters and conversations with migrants in order to improve understandings of and relationships between the two groups. It is also vital that the training occurs on multiple occasions, followed up by further training and reinforcement of what has been learned.



## Example of Promising Practice

In recognition of the potential dangers of international borders for migrants, the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office of Counterterrorism<sup>30</sup> have developed a freely-available training guide focusing on human rights at international borders. The training guide is meant to help build capacity and support the implementation of a human-rights based and gender-sensitive approach to the governance of borders. The training has four inter-linked aims.

Firstly, it helps border authorities identify pertinent human rights standards and understand how they apply to their work on managing and securing borders. Secondly, it helps participants recognise and consider the different situations in which different groups of migrants find themselves when trying to cross international borders. Thirdly, it enables participants to apply a gender-sensitive lens to their daily tasks.

Finally, the course focuses on analysing applicable policies and mechanisms through a human rights lens, aiming at developing strategies to enhance compliance with international human rights standards. The training also includes awareness about protection gaps, that is, migrants who fall outside established legal categories that guarantee protection, emphasising that the line between forced and voluntary migration is blurry. Finally, the training also stresses the significance of fully acknowledging the agency of migrants.

## LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- Human rights training is only going to make a difference if participants change their behaviour in ways that reduce cultural violence against groups of people, including migrants.
- Stereotypes and prejudices are often deeply ingrained. Therefore, it is likely to require much more than a one-off training course to have a significant impact on behaviours and practices.
- Human rights training must also be embedded in a broader framework aimed at upholding human rights on borders. It is also essential to ensure accountability for breaches of human rights.

## 2. CIVILIAN SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT

When migrants encounter cultural violence, such as discrimination or xenophobic rhetoric, while transiting countries or crossing borders, civilian actors can **lessen the impact of the cultural violence** by showing solidarity. For example, local volunteers, community groups, religious actors and civil society organisations can provide food and shelter for people waiting to cross a border as well as help migrants cross borders. They can also direct migrants that have faced discrimination and other traumatic experiences to services providing **legal and medical aid**. By having missions that aim to provide support and aid for all vulnerable individuals, they are exemplaries for welcoming and treating everyone equally. This can help counter the racism and religious discrimination many migrants have faced while transiting through countries. Through this work, civilian actors can experience mutually beneficial encounters and relationships with migrants.

### WHY IT WORKS

- When civilian actors show migrants solidarity and provide them with support, it can **lessen the negative impact of the cultural violence** migrants face. Civilian actors can also gain a better understanding of this cultural violence, and advocate against it.
- Positive engagement with civilian actors builds trust and social cohesion between migrants and local people.

## SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace perspective, it is important to highlight the relational aspects of civilians showing solidarity with migrants, as it can help build understandings and relationships that might reduce stereotypes and prejudices. From a post-colonial and agency point of view, it is essential that projects counter the White saviour syndrome. This syndrome perpetuates the idea that White people from the Western world swoop in to save people from other parts of the world, implying that the latter have very little or no agency to help themselves. Hence, projects should take a participatory approach to development and implementation that fully includes the migrants involved. Active listening, keeping an open mind and showing compassion and curiosity can help organisers to understand the migrants' needs and how they would like to be involved. It is also important to challenge the binary understanding of volunteers as the benefactors, and migrants as the beneficiaries, emphasising instead that both volunteers and migrants are enriched by the shared encounters, activities and experiences.



## Example of Promising Practice

Many migrants use the Greek island of Lesbos as a transit point to mainland Europe from Türkiye. There, they often face discrimination as they are forced to live in squalid, fenced and barb-wired reception camps. These include the notorious Moria camp that burned down in 2020 and the current Mavrovouni camp where migrants are required to stay for lengthy periods of time while waiting for their asylum applications to be processed. One of the civil society organisations that offers solidarity and assistance to migrants temporarily staying in Lesbos is the German-based **All4Aid**<sup>31</sup>, which was founded by the Multination Church in 2017. The organisation focuses on supporting women and girls who are often disproportionately affected by discrimination based on gender stereotypes. All4Aid has its own women's centre that provides warm and safe showers, laundry facilities and a shop that provides clothes and personal hygiene items. Women and girls can also participate in various relevant activities and workshops.

### LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- Acts of solidarity from local civilian actors must not detract attention from the **responsibility of local and national authorities** to protect and support migrants.
- Acts of solidarity are increasingly being **criminalised** through enhanced policing of people who assist migrants on borders. People, including volunteers, religious actors, journalists and human rights activists, taking part in activities, such as providing essential services to migrants, assisting in reception centres or conducting search and rescue operations, are portrayed and treated as criminals in certain countries. This criminalisation must end immediately.

### 3. PREVENTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING<sup>32</sup>

Factors, such as unequal and discriminatory power relations as well as gender stereotypes, make migrant women, young girls and LGBTQ+ people more susceptible to human trafficking, mainly because they are seen as more vulnerable. Hence, preventing human trafficking is an important part of tackling the impact of cultural violence in countries of transit, making migration routes safer. The UN's Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons recommends using the 4Ps Framework, which focuses on the following areas: preventing trafficking; assisting and protecting victims of trafficking; prosecuting the perpetrators of trafficking; and strengthening partnerships to accomplish these aims. Developing and implementing comprehensive local and national strategies to carefully address each of these areas is essential. It is also important to understand the demand for, as well as the supply of, human trafficking at the local, national and international levels.

*Preventing human trafficking is an important part of tackling the impact of cultural violence in countries of transit.*

On the **supply** side, this means knowing what makes people vulnerable to trafficking, while focusing on the personal, family, community and structural levels. It also entails acknowledging how cultural violence is used to justify policies and inequalities in countries of origin, transit and destination, forcing migrants to travel along unsafe routes and, hence, putting them at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking. Issuing permits that do not prioritise migrants' labour rights and rights to safety, equality and justice exacerbates the problem, meaning that migrants who experience harm are unable to seek remedy and risk further harm from authorities due to their status. This negatively affects their agency in employment and personal relationships and increases the risk of exploitation and human trafficking.

On the **demand** side, this means considering how the demand for commodities, such as cheap goods and services, influence labour conditions. It is also important to establish assistance and protection approaches, processes and capacity-building in order to address the needs of migrants. These include safe temporary accommodation, medical and psycho-social healthcare to help make them less vulnerable to being trafficked. It also means ensuring that people who are at risk of harm can acquire autonomous residence permits, thus enabling them to stabilise their situation, work and seek remedy, with the possibility of progressing to a longer-term and more secure status. Such permits should not be conditional on criminal proceedings. It is also crucial to ensure effective access to compensation and justice for people who have experienced violence, including wage theft and labour exploitation, whether it amounts to trafficking of human beings or not. This matters both as a form of remedy for the individual and, on a more institutional level, to decrease the risk of vulnerability to exploitation.

Finally, stakeholders should cooperate and coordinate their actions, and be trained to recognise the indicators of trafficking so that they can ensure potential victims receiving the help they need.

### WHY IT WORKS

- Preventing human trafficking works because it addresses one of the biggest dangers migrants face during transit, particularly those with complex intersecting identities.
- Preventing human trafficking works because it focuses on meeting the basic needs of migrants, rendering them less vulnerable to human trafficking.

### SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a *positive peace* perspective, it is important to consider how actions taken to prevent migrants from becoming victims of human trafficking can also help prevent other local residents from becoming victims of human trafficking. For example, rather than only focusing on providing free and affordable healthcare for migrants, it should be provided to all vulnerable groups in the country in order to prevent them from becoming victims of human trafficking as well. It is important to ensure that people with intersecting identities are included in the development and implementation of preventive actions. A participatory approach which includes the time and space for people to share their experiences of human trafficking, is essential for getting a thorough understanding of the issues and vulnerabilities.

From a post-colonial point of view, it is important to focus on the role of countries with the highest demand for cheap goods and labour, as they can play a key role in ending the demand for victims of human trafficking. One of the ways this can be done is by holding people who exploit victims of human trafficking to account. It is also vital that victims of trafficking are supported and provided with remedies.



## Example of Promising Practice

The **Guide of Promising Practices / Long term protection for trafficked persons**<sup>33</sup> identifies barriers and gaps in the current long-term protection of victims of trafficking and promising practice on how they can be effectively addressed. The guide highlights that obtaining permanent residence is key to ensuring victims' rights, as well as to effective remedies and access to justice. It also covers issues for consideration in processes and practices concerning temporary residence permits for people who have been trafficked, as well as how to address gaps in granting them international protection. The guidance is aimed at authorities, lawyers and practitioners working with trafficked persons. The guidance emphasises the importance of harmonising national legislation with international standards and simplifying the process for granting residence permits to trafficked people. It is also vital to inform victims of trafficking about their rights and the resources and assistance available to them, regardless of their status, background and willingness to cooperate with the authorities. Furthermore, the guide stresses the importance of explicitly referring to victims of trafficking as vulnerable, which makes them eligible for special reception and procedural guarantees in asylum procedures.

## LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- As human trafficking is a transnational issue, preventing human trafficking can only be achieved if countries work together and coordinate their efforts.
- Accountability for human trafficking can only be achieved if countries have well-functioning and resourced judicial systems and processes.



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