



Indonesia's obligations as a transit country in the administration of asylum seekers according to the 1951 convention on refugees and the 1967 protocol on refugees

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Abstract

Refugees and asylum seekers is a global problem that continues to receive attention. Especially with the success of the Taliban taking over the government in Afghanistan which encouraged its citizens to flee to other countries. The Geneva Conventions of 1951 and the 1967 New York Protocol on the Status of Refugees have become international legal instruments used in dealing with refugee problems. According to UNHCR, Indonesia ranked fourth as the country most visited by refugees and asylum seekers. Indonesia is one of the countries that has not ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol on refugee status so that Indonesia's position is as a transit country. Article 33 of the 1951 Geneva Convention contains the principle of non-refoulement which is established as an international custom, which applies to both transit countries and parties. The 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol on the Status of Refugees do not set a time limit for how long the asylum-seeking and refugee application process will be answered. The results show that Indonesia as a country that has not ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol is not bound by the provisions contained in the convention and has no obligation to refugees and asylum seekers.

Keywords: refugees and asylum seekers, the convention relating status of refugees 1951 and protocol relating to the status of refugees 1967, obligation

Introduction

The occurrence of events in the world, including natural disasters and wars, has a huge impact on human life. Conflict and war have a detrimental impact on human survival in a country. One of them is falling victims, losing their homes, losing access to political and economic life, and losing a sense of security in the area where they live. Conditions in the country that were not conducive as a result of this incident resulted in the people of a country going to seek protection in other countries.

Conflicts that occurred in countries in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, which made some of its citizens decide to leave their country to seek safety and a decent life and protection in other countries. They are trying to seek asylum in the country that is their destination. The destination countries are countries that ratified the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol on Refugees.

"Asylum" in English comes from the word "asylon" in Greek, or "asylum" in Latin, which means an honorable place where someone who is being chased takes refuge (Clara Smyth, 2014) ^[1]. Asylum seeker is someone who calls himself a refugee, but their request for protection has not been considered (unhcr.org) ^[2].

Definition of the term refugee as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (Convention, 1951) ^[3].

Refugees and asylum seekers whose numbers are always increasing and crossing national borders, and entering the territory of a country that has sovereignty deserve special attention from the international community. Article 14 paragraph (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution" (UDHR, 1948) ^[4]. The issue of asylum seekers is an issue in international law, so the United Nations (UN) made an international convention "The Convention Relating the Status of Refugees 1951 (1951 Convention of the Status of Refugees) and made its protocol, the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees 1967 (1967) Protocol of Relating to the Status of Refugees 1967)". This convention was created to provide protection for asylum seekers and refugees.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is an international organization mandated by the United Nations to lead, coordinate and promote international instruments for the protection of refugees, and oversee their implementation. UNHCR was founded on December 14, 1950 by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN), at first the UN General Assembly only mandated three years to complete its task of resolving refugee problems after World War II then this organization would be disbanded afterwards, but in the following year, on July 28, 1951 the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees established as a legal basis for helping refugees and basic statutes directing UNHCR's work given the vital role of UNHCR in resolving refugee problems (unhcr.go.id) ^[5].

The protection provided by UNHCR to refugees and asylum seekers begins with ensuring that refugees and asylum seekers have their basic rights to life and are protected from refoulement (protection from being forced to return to their place of origin where their life or freedom is threatened or

abused). International legal expert Michelle Foster conveys a point of view for the protection of refugees as follows "The key protection in the refugee convention is non-refoulement, the obligation on states not to return a refugee to a place in which he will face the risk of being persecute" (Michelle Foster, 2007) ^[6]. Article 33 paragraph (1) of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees states that countries participating in this convention are not allowed to expel or return refugees in any form outside their territory where their safety and freedom threatened for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political views (Slaiman Hamid, 2002) ^[7].

An example of residents fleeing a country occurred in 2021, Thousands scrambled to flee Afghanistan after the Taliban reclaimed control of the country after two decades of the group ousted by the United States-led military coalition, several thousand Afghans have crossed into Pakistan soon after the Taliban took control of Kabul, while around 1,500 Afghans reported have entered Uzbekistan and are living in tents near the border (BBC, 2021) ^[8].

The arrival of asylum seekers and refugees in a country has its own impact on that country. Either as a third country or a transit country by asylum seekers and refugees. Security, economic and social issues are among the impacts arising from the presence of refugees and asylum seekers. This is the reason why not all countries ratified "The Convention Relating the Status of Refugees 1951 and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees 1967". Indonesia is one of the countries that did not ratify "The Convention Relating the Status of Refugees 1951 and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees 1967".

When a country involve in the 1951 convention on refugee status and the 1967 protocol on refugee status, state parties have an obligation to fulfill refugee rights as stated in the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugee Status, including social rights, legal rights and economic rights. The 1951 Geneva Convention states that state parties obliged to provide housing (in this case housing) as stated in Article 21 of the 1951 Convention which states that, "As regards housing, the Contracting States, in so far as the matter regulated by laws or regulations or is subject to the control of public authorities, must accord to refugees staying in their territory treatment as favorable as possible and, in any event, not less favorable than that given to aliens generally in the same circumstances" ^[9]. For developing countries to be able to fulfill the rights of refugees as referred in the 1951 Geneva Convention is not an easy thing.

State parties and transit countries prohibited from returning or expelling refugees. Article 33 section 1 of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees states that, "No Contracting State shall expel or return ("refouler") a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" ^[10]. The principle of Non Refoulement agreed upon as customary international law because it is relate to the protection of human rights as contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This principle has an impact on state parties or transit countries that cannot return or expel asylum seekers who come to their country. Until November 2022 there were 12,616 refugees in Indonesia who were register at the UNHCR office in Indonesia. Most of them are refugees from Afghanistan 55 percent. Within the Asia-Pacific

region, Indonesia is the fourth largest receiving country for Afghan refugees. According to UNHCR records, there are 5 (five) Asian countries that received large numbers of Afghan refugees, Pakistan, Iran, India, Indonesia and Malaysia ^[11].

Based on the description above, the author interested in the theme of Indonesia's obligations as a transit country in handling asylum seekers according to The Convention Relating Status of Refugees 1951 and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees 1967.

Research method

The research method can interpreted as a science to reveal and explain natural phenomena or social phenomena in human life, by using work procedures that are systematic, orderly, and scientifically justifiable, because this research is scientific in nature ^[12].

Research is also said to be a scientific activity related to analysis and construction which carried out methodologically, systematically, and consistently. ^[13]

Research Methods is the science of the stages that must passed in a research process or science that discusses the scientific method in seeking, developing, and testing the truth of a knowledge ^[14].

The approach method used in this research is a juridical approach. The juridical approach method is the method of procedure used to solve research problems by examining secondary data. Juridical, meaning that in making an approach, legal principles and principles used to see the problem.

Discussion

1. The 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol

In International Law, it is known that there are differences in the terms asylum and refugee. Although many equate asylum with refugees because both are in the context of seeking protection. Asylum is a person who seeks asylum or protection, usually that person seeks protection from the Government of another country or leaves his country's territory due to various reasons that have happened to him, and caused him to feel insecure and his life threatened. Likewise with Refugees, which are define as people who leave the territory of their country or origin and go to seek protection in the territory of another country, to save their lives and bodies because they are being threatened in their country, usually due to a war or prolonged conflict so they decide to go seek protection. to the territory of another country by way of refuge.

Refugees in Article 1A paragraph 2 of the 1951 Convention are defined as: "owing to wellfounded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" ^[15].

UNHCR provides different definitions between asylum seekers and refugees. According to UNHCR, an asylum seeker is someone who calls himself a refugee, but their request for protection has not considered. An asylum seeker who requests protection will be evaluate through the

procedure refugee status determination (RSD), which starts from the registration stage or asylum seeker registration.

What is meant as asylum seekers here are people who ask for protection and submit an application to UNHCR to become refugees. So that it can be said that asylum seekers are not refugees so they cannot be protected and under the responsibility of UNHCR before arriving at the destination country even though the goal is the same, namely asking for protection, while refugees are initially asylum seekers who after going through the process are entitled to refugee status and then become the responsibility of UNHCR accordance with the 1951 Convention on Refugees.

2. Afghan refugees in Indonesia

The Taliban, or "disciples" in Pashto, first appeared in the early 1990s in northern Pakistan after Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan. From southwest Afghanistan, the Taliban rapidly spread influence. In September 1995, they captured Herat Province, on the Iranian border and exactly a year later they captured the Afghan capital, Kabul. The Taliban overthrew the regime of President Burhanuddin Rabbani and control nearly 90 percent of Afghanistan. United States troops easily brought down the Taliban government. NATO troops joined forces with the United States and the Government of Afghanistan formed in 2004 to bring down the Taliban (BBC, 2021) ^[16]. After fighting for 20 years in Afghanistan, foreign troops finally withdrew their respective troops after an agreement was reached between the United States and the Taliban Group. The Taliban succeeded in occupying Afghanistan in the week of August 15, 2021 by taking over the Afghan Presidential palace in Kabul. The Afghanistan conflict has killed tens of thousands of people. As a result of the Taliban's occupation of Afghanistan, thousands of Afghans flocked to the airport to leave the country and seek refuge in other countries.

Conflicts and wars in a country are factors that cause acts of seeking asylum in other countries. Countries in Central Asia are the countries with the highest number of asylum seekers. Indonesia has not ratified the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees. However, based on data from UNHCR in December 2020, there were 13,743 refugees in Indonesia from 50 different countries, with the largest number of refugees coming from Afghanistan, more than 55 percent, making it the country that contributes the most refugees to Indonesia. This is due to several factors, firstly because of Indonesia's geographical location which is in world trade traffic, secondly because there is a UNHCR office located in the city of Jakarta, thirdly because Indonesia is a neighbor of Australia as a party to the signing of the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol and Indonesia as a country with a majority Muslim population. As we know, most of the refugees are citizens of countries in the Middle East region, coupled with the Indonesian population who are known to be friendly and warm. This makes Indonesia the prima donna country for refugees even though Indonesia has not signed the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol.

The main problem for most of the refugee's transiting Indonesia is where to live. The capacity of refugee camps and other shelters such as the Indonesian detention center is limited. Refugees who are not accommodated seek their own shelter at their own expense. Not a few of the refugees who live wandering on the streets. Some refugees spread out

mats in front of the UNHCR office and set up tents on the streets (Kompas.com, 2021) ^[17].

Based on Article 24 section (1) of Presidential Regulation Number 125 of 2016 about Handling Refugees from Abroad it states that "The Immigration Detention Center coordinates with the local District/City Government to bring and place Refugees from the place where they are found to the shelter"^[18]. further stated in section (2) and section (3) that "In the event that shelters are not yet available, refugees can be placed in temporary accommodation places" and "temporary accommodation places referred to in section (2) are determined by the regent/mayor"^[19]. Some temporary shelters have been established by the Regional Government to accommodate asylum seekers who do not have a place to live. Asylum seekers who come to Indonesia can stay at their relative's place. Some came to Indonesia with sponsors from their families.

3. Indonesia's obligations towards Asylum Seekers According to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol.

Juridically and constitutionally, Indonesia has agreed to actively take part in the handling of asylum seekers and refugees from abroad, starting with the arrival of refugees from Vietnam, the Rohingya and most recently from Afghanistan. From a constitutional perspective, it can be seen in Articles 28A and 28D of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (1945 Constitution), Article 28 guarantees the right of every person to defend their lives and guarantees fair legal certainty ^[20]. Besides to the 1945 Constitution, Law Number 37 of 1999 about Foreign Relations also regulates the government's foreign policy towards refugees coming from abroad. The existence of the Articles governing the Granting of Asylum and Refugee Issues in Law Number 37 of 1999 about Foreign Relations, shows that even though Indonesia has not ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol, Indonesia pays attention to the problems of asylum seekers and refugees and as a manifestation consequence of the ratification of the UDHR Declaration.

Until now, Indonesia has not ratified the 1951 Geneva Conventions and the 1967 New York Protocol. Ratification according to the 1969 Vienna Convention on International Agreements is approval or confirmation of willingness to be bound by international agreements. Ratification is not ratification but approval, confirmation, willingness of the State to submit (consent to be bound) and be bound by an international treaty ^[21]. The 1951 Geneva Conventions and the 1967 New York Protocol provide obligations for countries that ratify them or so-called State Parties to provide equal protection and treatment to refugees and fulfillment of life's necessities such as economic, social, legal needs and guarantees of human rights.

Even though Indonesia did not sign the 1951 convention, Indonesia continued to aid Afghan refugees based on human rights. The legal framework for the protection of Afghan refugees in Indonesia is quite complicated, but that does not mean that asylum seekers and refugees do not have legal protection. Indonesia has ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The declaration contains the principle of non-refoulement as contained in the 1951 Geneva Convention.

The authority to determine the Status of Refugees and Asylum Seekers who are in transit countries rests with UNHCR. UNHCR as the UN agency that oversees the

problems of Refugees and Asylum Seekers. UNHCR carries out the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedure, which begins with the registration or registration of asylum seekers. After registration, UNHCR will conduct individual interviews with each asylum seeker, accompanied by a competent translator. This process generates a reasoned decision that determines whether an individual's request for refugee status accepted or rejected and gives everyone an opportunity (one time) to appeal if his or her application rejected. Unlike the state parties that ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol which have the authority to determine the status of refugees and asylum seekers as contained in the 1951 Geneva Convention.

The 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol about the Status of Refugees do not provide a time limit for when applications for asylum seekers and refugees to be placed in destination countries are obtained. This convention only provides limits on when the refugee status is no longer valid. Indonesia, which has not ratified the 1951 Geneva Conventions and the 1967 New York Protocol about the Status of Refugees, cannot set a time limit for asylum seekers and refugees to stay in Indonesian territory.

Another obstacle is social and cultural challenges. There are still many Indonesian people, including in big cities like Jakarta, who do not understand that refugees and asylum seekers are different from economic migrants. The local population is sometimes resentful and jealous that refugees receive monthly living rations from international agencies. In fact, the local population themselves are sometimes very poor. So, refugees and asylum seekers cannot be forcibly repatriated when they face a real risk of persecution, torture, or other serious harm in their country. There is a principle of non-refoulement in international refugee law. A principle that is part of customary international law and is binding on all countries, regardless of whether they are parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol (FH UI, 2022) ^[22].

According to Indonesian law, asylum seekers can be returned voluntarily or deported. For refugees who are rejected by their application as contained in Article 29 of Presidential Regulation Number 125 of 2016 that asylum seekers whose application for refugee status is rejected and finally rejected by the United Nations through the High Commissioner for Refugees in Indonesia are placed in the Immigration Detention Center for the Voluntary Return process or deportation in accordance with statutory provisions ^[23].

Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Indonesia are the responsibility of UNHCR and IOM as stated in Article 15 of Regulation of the Director General of Immigration number IMI-0352.GR.02.07 which states that everything related to the discovery, placement, treatment, transfer and release of Asylum Seekers and Refugees and repairs Urgent facilities at Immigration Offices and Immigration Detention Centers are facilitated and funded by IOM or other international organizations ^[24]. Refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia cannot work because Indonesia has not ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol on the Status of Refugees so that Indonesia is not bound by the provisions of the convention which state the right of refugees to find work.

The problem of refugees and asylum seekers is not only a global problem but their arrival in Indonesia as a transit

country also creates problems for the Indonesian state. Until now, Indonesia has not ratified the 1951 Geneva Conventions and the 1967 New York Protocol about the Status of Refugees, so that Indonesia does not have the obligations contained in the conventions, such as fulfilling a place to live and getting a job. Based on human rights principles that have been recognized by countries including Indonesia, asylum seekers and refugees are accepted by transit countries. Besides that, transit countries do not have the authority to determine the status of asylum seekers and refugees in Indonesia and cannot set a time limit for when asylum seekers and refugees can stay in Indonesia. All that can be done is to wait until their application to UNHCR receives a response.

According to Presidential Regulation Number 125 of 2016, Indonesia can voluntarily repatriate refugees if their application status rejected and rejected as final. Refugees can also be send home if they commit crimes and violate the provisions of the applicable laws and regulations. Refugees and asylum seekers who are finally rejected according to Presidential Regulation Number 125 of 2016 are consider as illegal immigrants who may be subject to administrative action in the form of voluntary repatriation. As a developing country, it will be difficult for Indonesia to ratify the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol about the Status of Refugees with the obligations contained therein, bearing in mind that internal refugees still occur in Indonesia and other considerations related to social inequality that will arise.

Conclusion

The problem of refugees and asylum seekers is a global problem that continues to exist. This problem prompted countries to ratify the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol about the Status of Refugees which had been agreed upon as international legal umbrellas in dealing with the problems of refugees and asylum seekers. The 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol about the Status of Refugees are the legal basis for UNHCR as an agency under the auspices of the United Nations which has the authority to deal with refugees and asylum seekers.

Until now, Indonesia has not ratified the 1951 Geneva Conventions and the 1967 New York Protocol on the Status of Refugees. This condition resulted in Indonesia not having the authority to determine the status of refugees and asylum seekers. This authority rests with UNHCR as the UN agency in charge of refugee issues. This condition causes Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Indonesia to live in Indonesia for many years. The authority to determine the status of refugees and asylum seekers lies with UNHCR. As a transit country, Indonesia cannot repatriate refugees and asylum seekers to their countries of origin due to the principle of non-refoulement or the prohibition on repatriating refugees. This principle accommodated in the General Declaration of Human Rights or UDHR where Indonesia is one of the countries that ratified it.

Juridically, Indonesia provides protection to refugees and asylum seekers through written law, including in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law Number 37 of 1999 about Foreign Relations and Presidential Regulation Number 125 of 2016 about Management of Refugees from Abroad. The principle of non refoulement relates to the recognition and protection of human rights.

Ratification according to the 1969 Vienna Convention on International Treaties is approval or confirmation of willingness to be bound by international agreements. Ratification is not ratification but approval, confirmation, willingness of the State to submit (consent to be bound) and be bound by an international treaty. Ratification is a form of agreement of a country to be bound by the provisions contained in the international agreement. Until now, Indonesia has not ratified the 1951 Geneva Conventions and the 1967 New York Protocol about the Status of Refugees, so that Indonesia is not bound by the provisions contained in the 1951 Geneva Conventions and the 1967 New York Protocol about the Status of Refugees. Thus Indonesia does not have any obligations towards Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Indonesia including Afghan Refugees, as in Article 15 of the Regulation of the Director General of Immigration number IMI-0352.GR.02.07 which states that everything related to the discovery, placement, treatment, transfer and expulsion Asylum Seekers and Refugees and urgent improvement of facilities at Immigration Offices and Immigration Detention Centers facilitated and funded by IOM or other international organizations.

The 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol about the Status of Refugees do not specify a time limit for requests for answers. This authority left to the arrangement of the state party as the destination country so that the time will vary from one country to another. This has resulted in asylum seekers and refugees waiting for an answer to their requests to stay longer in transit countries. Transit countries themselves, such as Indonesia, do not have the authority to determine the time limit for refugees and asylum seekers to stay in their country. The government of the transit country must provide shelter for asylum seekers and refugees

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