

## Reassessing State Responsibility for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons Under Contemporary International Law: Normative Evolution, Implementation Gaps, and Accountability Mechanisms

*Ngueumaga Kameni V Gerard Tresor, PhD*

Lecturer, Faculty of Law and Political Science  
The University of Bamenda, Cameroon

Doi: 10.19044/esipreprint.12.2025.p115

Approved: 06 December 2025

Posted: 08 December 2025

Copyright 2025 Author(s)

Under Creative Commons CC-BY 4.0

OPEN ACCESS

*Cite As:*

Ngueumaga Kameni V., G.T. (2025). *Reassessing State Responsibility for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons Under Contemporary International Law: Normative Evolution, Implementation Gaps, and Accountability Mechanisms*. ESI Preprints.  
<https://doi.org/10.19044/esipreprint.12.2025.p115>

### Abstract

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) represent a growing global challenge, occurring within the borders of sovereign States. Contemporary international law establishes that States hold primary responsibility for their protection, yet significant gaps remain between legal norms and practice. This article reassesses State responsibility for IDPs, examining international frameworks such as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the Kampala Convention, and relevant human rights and humanitarian law obligations. It highlights persistent challenges, including selective compliance, weak domestic implementation, and limited accountability mechanisms. The article argues that bridging these gaps requires stronger national legal frameworks and clearer international enforcement measures, ensuring that States fulfill their duties to prevent displacement, protect affected populations, and provide durable solutions. By moving beyond declaratory norms, the protection of IDPs can be strengthened under contemporary international law.

**Keywords:** Internally displaced persons - State responsibility - accountability mechanism - Humanitarian access- normative compliance

## Introduction

Internal displacement has become one of the most pressing humanitarian, developmental, and legal challenges of the twenty-first century. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reports that more than **60 million people** are currently displaced within their own national borders as a result of armed conflict, generalized violence, natural disasters, and climate-driven crises (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2024). Unlike refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) remain under the territorial jurisdiction of their own State. This distinction does not mitigate their vulnerability; rather, it places the **primary legal and moral responsibility** for their protection on the State itself, making domestic implementation of international standards indispensable (Lambert, 2017). This article asks: to what extent are States fulfilling their legal obligations to protect internally displaced persons under contemporary international law, and what mechanisms can enhance accountability?

The international legal architecture governing the protection of IDPs draws from a combination of human rights law, international humanitarian law, and soft-law instruments. At the center of this framework are the **UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement**, which, despite their non-binding nature, codify core obligations concerning the prevention of arbitrary displacement, the protection of dignity during displacement, and guarantees for durable solutions (United Nations, 1998). Their influence extends to binding regional norms, most notably the **African Union's Kampala Convention**, the first treaty in the world dedicated exclusively to the protection and assistance of IDPs (African Union, 2009).

However, the existence of these norms has not translated into uniform or effective protection. Implementation remains uneven, with many States demonstrating **selective compliance** shaped by political priorities, security imperatives, and limited institutional capacity (Deng & Adeola, 2021). Persistent structural weaknesses—particularly the absence of strong enforcement and accountability mechanisms—further undermine the realization of IDP rights (African Union, IDMC, & Norwegian Refugee Council, 2010). Even the Kampala Convention, despite its binding character, faces substantial challenges in monitoring compliance across conflict-affected and institutionally fragile environments (Breathing Life into the Kampala Convention, n.d.). Moreover, research indicates that securing **housing, land, and property restitution**, a cornerstone of durable solutions, remains one of the most chronically deficient areas of State practice (Asplet & Bradley, 2012).

**This article argues that the central obstacle to effective IDP protection is not the lack of legal norms, but the persistent gap between international obligations and domestic implementation.** It contends that

bridging this gap requires both the consolidation of national legal frameworks and the development of credible international and regional oversight mechanisms. Without such reforms, the protection of IDPs will remain largely aspirational rather than operational (ICRC, n.d.).

The contribution of this study is twofold. First, it reframes the debate on internal displacement by situating State responsibility within the broader tensions between sovereignty, accountability, and international cooperation. Second, it provides a comparative doctrinal analysis that highlights the divergence between normative commitments and actual State practice, particularly within African and conflict-affected contexts.

To advance this inquiry, the article proceeds in two parts. **Part I** examines the normative foundations of State responsibility for IDPs, tracing the evolution of international obligations from soft-law instruments to binding regional frameworks, with particular emphasis on the UN Guiding Principles and the Kampala Convention. **Part II** analyzes persistent implementation challenges, including selective compliance, political and institutional barriers, and the systemic difficulties involved in securing durable solutions.

### **Normative foundations of state responsibility for IDPs**

The question of State responsibility for internally displaced persons (IDPs) has become a central concern of contemporary international law, reflecting evolving conceptions of sovereignty, human rights, and humanitarian obligations. While IDPs remain within the territorial boundaries of their own State, they occupy a legal and normative minimal space: inadequately addressed by refugee law, only partially encompassed by humanitarian law, and often reliant on non-binding norms for protection (Ferris & Petz, 2019). This tension between territorial sovereignty and the moral-legal obligation to protect vulnerable populations underscores the complexity of the contemporary legal landscape.

Understanding the normative foundations of State responsibility requires both historical perspective and careful analysis of current international and regional frameworks. This section examines the evolving architecture defining State obligations toward IDPs, including international norms, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GPID), and the operationalization of these norms within regional and international frameworks.

### ***Evolution of international norms governing IDPs***

The recognition of State responsibility for internally displaced populations represents a gradual codification of what was once implicit in international law. Historically, protection for displaced populations was

considered primarily through refugee law or general humanitarian obligations, leaving IDPs inadequately addressed despite their growing numbers and heightened vulnerabilities (Cernea, 2000).

### ***Historical development of state responsibility under international law***

International refugee law, codified through instruments such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, provides a framework for cross-border protection. By contrast, internal displacement remained largely unregulated until the 1990s, with only scattered references in international humanitarian law (IHL) (Sandoz, Swinarski, & Zimmermann, 1987).

The **Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) and its Additional Protocols (1977)** addressed forced displacement indirectly, allowing it only under strictly defined circumstances, such as imperative military reasons or the protection of civilians (ICRC, 1949). While these instruments established important **limits on State and military conduct**, they did not create explicit obligations for the comprehensive protection of internally displaced persons. This limitation reflected the international community's historical focus on cross-border refugee protection rather than displacement occurring within State borders.

The **Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998)** marked a significant normative evolution by elevating forced displacement to the level of an **international crime**, covering both war crimes and crimes against humanity (Article 7(1)(d)) (Rome Statute, 1998). By criminalizing large-scale internal displacement, the Rome Statute **implicitly reinforced the notion that States have a responsibility to prevent and respond to forced displacement within their territories**, signaling the international community's growing recognition of the gravity of internal displacement and the need for accountability mechanisms when States fail to act.

The post-Cold War era marked a turning point. In 1992, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights established the mandate for the Representative of the Secretary-General on IDPs. This culminated in Francis Deng's Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GPID, 1998), which synthesize humanitarian, human rights, and development concerns, providing a comprehensive framework addressing prevention, protection during displacement, and durable solutions. Importantly, the GPID reinterpreted sovereignty as responsibility, assigning the primary duty of protection to national governments while acknowledging international accountability mechanisms (Deng, 1998). For example, during the 2006 conflict in Darfur, Sudan, the GPID framework was invoked by international actors to press the Sudanese government to protect displaced populations, illustrating its practical influence even without binding force (Ferris & Petz, 2019).

### ***The guiding principles on internal displacement and their influence***

Although non-binding, the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GPID) have profoundly shaped both policy and practice by combining rights-based and needs-based approaches, operationalized through prevention, protection, and durable solutions. By articulating clear responsibilities for States, the Principles provide a normative framework that guides both domestic legislation and humanitarian interventions, while highlighting the areas where enforcement and accountability remain weak.:

**Prevention:** Principle 4 of the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998) emphasizes that States should **actively explore all feasible alternatives to displacement** and ensure that any displacement that is unavoidable is conducted in a manner that is **safe, dignified, and transparent** (Deng, 1998). This principle places a **direct legal and moral responsibility on the State** to anticipate displacement risks, mitigate harm, and protect the rights of affected populations. In Cameroon, for example, policy discussions preceding the **2024 Civil Protection Law** explicitly referenced the Guiding Principles, shaping the formal recognition of IDPs' **rights to access basic services, housing, and legal protection** (IDMC, 2024). Despite these references, the practical implementation of preventive measures remains uneven, highlighting the persistent **gap between normative commitments and State practice**.

Building on the foundation of prevention, the GPID also underscores the need for **protection** throughout displacement. Principles 7 and 10 of the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998) explicitly **guarantee that IDPs must be protected from arbitrary detention, recruitment into armed groups, and attacks on life, liberty, and property**, while also ensuring **unhindered access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and social assistance** (Deng, 1998). These principles place a **direct legal and ethical duty on States** to uphold the safety and dignity of IDPs within their territories, framing displacement not merely as a humanitarian issue but as a **matter of enforceable State responsibility**. For instance, during Colombia's internal armed conflict, the Colombian government and humanitarian NGOs explicitly referenced these principles in designing interventions aimed at safeguarding displaced children and families in conflict zones (Cernea, 2000). Despite these measures, the **persistent threats to IDPs' physical security and limited access to essential services** illustrate the recurring **implementation gap** between normative commitments and practical State action, underscoring the need for effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

Finally, the GPID emphasize the importance of **Durable Solutions**, ensuring that displacement is not merely managed but resolved in a sustainable manner. Principles 28–30 of the UN Guiding

Principles on Internal Displacement (1998) establish that IDPs should be offered the choice of **voluntary return, local integration, or resettlement**, with an emphasis on **social, economic, and political inclusion** to ensure sustainable reintegration (Deng, 1998). These principles impose a **direct responsibility on States** to create legal, institutional, and policy frameworks that enable IDPs to rebuild their lives safely and with dignity. For example, in Colombia, the Guiding Principles informed the design of reparations and **land restitution programs**, enabling populations displaced by internal armed conflict to regain property, access livelihoods, and participate meaningfully in community life (Kritz, 2001). Despite these measures, **significant implementation challenges persist**, including bureaucratic delays, insufficient resources, and political resistance, which illustrate the ongoing **gap between normative commitments and practical State action**, reinforcing the need for robust oversight and accountability mechanisms.

### ***Regional and international legal frameworks***

While the GPID provides normative guidance, legally binding instruments operationalize State obligations more concretely. Regional treaties, soft-law instruments, and international jurisprudence collectively define obligations for prevention, protection, and assistance.

### ***African union: the Kampala convention***

The African Union Kampala Convention (2009) represents a landmark treaty as the first legally binding instrument dedicated exclusively to the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons. It explicitly obliges States to incorporate IDP protection into domestic legislation, establish effective coordination mechanisms for humanitarian responses, and submit periodic reports to the African Union to ensure compliance (African Union, 2009).

By codifying these responsibilities, the Convention operationalizes the principle that sovereignty entails responsibility, reinforcing that States cannot neglect populations displaced within their borders. The treaty also emphasizes preventive measures, mandating that States address the root causes of displacement, including armed conflict, natural disasters, and development-induced relocation, thereby promoting proactive governance. Beyond its normative articulation, the Convention empowers civil society and regional bodies to monitor compliance, creating mechanisms for accountability and enhancing transparency in the management of internal displacement.

In practice, the Kampala Convention has had a measurable impact on national legislation and administrative structures. For instance, Nigeria's legal framework now requires coordination between federal and state



authorities in addressing displacement caused by the Boko Haram insurgency, demonstrating the treaty's operational influence on governance, resource allocation, and protection mechanisms (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre [IDMC], 2024). Several other African States have similarly begun to align national policies with the Convention, integrating principles related to protection, assistance, and durable solutions for IDPs, which reflects the treaty's broader normative effect across the continent. By combining binding legal obligations with monitoring frameworks and operational guidance, the Kampala Convention exemplifies a regional approach that strengthens State responsibility while complementing international norms, such as the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, translating legal principles into actionable policies that protect the rights and dignity of displaced populations throughout Africa.

### ***Comparative perspectives from the Americas and Europe***

In the Americas, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and Commission have clarified State duties through jurisprudence, requiring protection from displacement caused by violence and ensuring access to justice and reparations, as illustrated by *Yean and Bosico v. Dominican Republic* (2005), where the Court emphasized the State's obligation to protect children affected by internal displacement, operationalizing international principles directly within domestic contexts. In Europe, although there is no dedicated treaty on IDPs, soft-law instruments and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) reinforce State accountability, exemplified by *Budina v. Russia* (2009), in which the Court affirmed that the European Convention on Human Rights imposes obligations on States to protect life, property, and family integrity, effectively extending these protections to internally displaced persons.

### ***Synthesis and implications***

The evolution of international norms and regional frameworks has established a robust legal foundation for State responsibility toward internally displaced persons. Sovereignty is increasingly framed not as absolute authority but as a form of responsibility, obliging States to protect vulnerable populations within their borders. Regional treaties, particularly the African Union Kampala Convention, operationalize this principle by providing concrete mechanisms for monitoring, reporting, and enforcement, ensuring that States cannot merely pay lip service to normative obligations. Moreover, judicial decisions and soft-law instruments, including the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, help translate non-binding norms into enforceable expectations, creating a layered framework of accountability that spans international, regional, and domestic levels.

In practice, the integration of these norms has tangible effects on domestic legislation and governance. For example, in Cameroon, policymakers have drawn upon both the GPID and the Kampala Convention to craft legislation that recognizes internally displaced persons as rights-holders, ensuring access to basic services, protection from arbitrary displacement, and avenues for durable solutions, rather than treating IDPs solely as recipients of humanitarian aid (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre [IDMC], 2024). This combination of normative guidance and binding legal obligations underscores the practical significance of international frameworks in shaping State behavior, demonstrating that coordinated international and regional approaches can effectively translate legal principles into policies that protect the rights and dignity of displaced populations.

### **Implementation Gaps and Accountability Mechanisms**

Despite the robust normative and regional frameworks discussed in Part I, the practical implementation of State responsibility for IDPs remains uneven. Challenges arise from limited resources, weak institutional capacity, political instability, and gaps between soft-law principles and binding obligations. This Part examines key areas where implementation gaps persist and explores mechanisms for ensuring accountability.

#### ***Gaps in national implementation***

States frequently face difficulties translating international norms into domestic law, resulting in fragmented protection for IDPs. These gaps manifest in areas such as legal recognition, access to basic services, and coordination among agencies. For example, although Cameroon adopted policies reflecting the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, enforcement has been inconsistent, and IDPs in conflict-affected regions often face limited access to healthcare, education, and legal recourse (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre [IDMC], 2024). Similarly, in Nigeria, compliance with the Kampala Convention has been uneven, with Boko Haram-affected states struggling to coordinate assistance between national and local authorities, highlighting structural and capacity constraints (African Union, 2009).

#### ***Legal recognition and status of IDPs***

A fundamental challenge in the protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is the lack of formal legal recognition, which directly affects their ability to access rights, services, and durable solutions. Some States have not officially recognized IDPs as a distinct legal category, leaving them



excluded from social services, humanitarian assistance, and legal protections that are routinely available to other citizens or refugees.

For instance, in Colombia, although national legislation was informed by the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, IDPs in remote or conflict-affected regions often lack the documentation necessary to access government support, including housing, healthcare, and reparations programs (Cernea, 2000). This legal invisibility undermines the practical realization of durable solutions, leaving vulnerable populations trapped in cycles of displacement and poverty.

Similarly, in Sudan, IDPs in regions affected by conflict and natural disasters face barriers to registration and recognition, which restricts their access to basic services, humanitarian aid, and land restitution programs (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2024). These cases illustrate that formal legal recognition is a prerequisite for State accountability, and that the absence of clear legal status perpetuates the gap between international normative obligations and domestic implementation.

### ***Coordination and institutional capacity***

Effective protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs) requires not only formal legal recognition, but also clearly defined institutional responsibilities and efficient inter-agency coordination. States must establish administrative mechanisms that can operationalize legal norms, allocate resources, and ensure timely delivery of humanitarian assistance. Without these structures, even well-designed legal frameworks fail to translate into meaningful protection for displaced populations.

The 2010 Haiti earthquake provides a stark illustration of this challenge. The absence of a centralized framework for IDPs led to duplication of services, gaps in aid delivery, and heightened vulnerability, leaving many displaced persons without adequate shelter, healthcare, or basic necessities (Kelley et al., 2011). This example underscores that legal recognition alone is insufficient; effective institutional capacity is essential to fulfill State obligations.

Similarly, in Nigeria, the displacement of populations due to Boko Haram insurgency revealed weaknesses in coordination between federal, state, and local authorities. Multiple humanitarian agencies operated with overlapping mandates, while some affected communities were overlooked entirely, resulting in delayed access to food, medical care, and psychosocial support (IDMC, 2024). This demonstrates that both legal and institutional gaps contribute to the persistent implementation deficits in IDP protection, highlighting the need for clear administrative frameworks, dedicated agencies, and accountability mechanisms to ensure that obligations under international law are met.

### ***Accountability mechanisms***

To address implementation gaps, both international and regional systems have sought to establish accountability mechanisms, ensuring that States uphold their responsibilities toward IDPs.

### ***Monitoring and reporting obligations***

International and regional treaties, such as the African Union's Kampala Convention (2009), impose monitoring and reporting obligations on States, requiring periodic submission of reports to regional bodies. These mechanisms are designed to assess compliance, provide guidance on implementation, and identify gaps in protection, thereby reinforcing State accountability for the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs). By establishing formal reporting requirements, treaties seek to move beyond aspirational norms and create structured oversight of domestic actions.

In practice, these obligations have proven instrumental for advocacy and accountability. For example, in Nigeria, civil society organizations and international agencies analyzed reporting data to highlight deficiencies in IDP camp conditions, subsequently pressuring local and state governments to improve access to shelter, food, and healthcare (African Union, 2009; IDMC, 2024). Similarly, in Kenya, reporting under the Kampala Convention enabled regional actors to identify persistent gaps in land restitution and reintegration programs for IDPs affected by post-election violence, leading to targeted interventions and policy adjustments at the national level (IDMC, 2024).

These examples illustrate that monitoring and reporting obligations are crucial tools for bridging the gap between legal norms and practical implementation, providing evidence that can be used to hold States accountable while guiding improvements in institutional practices. However, their effectiveness depends on the quality of reports, the responsiveness of authorities, and the engagement of civil society, highlighting that legal obligations alone do not guarantee protection without active oversight and follow-up measures.

### ***Judicial and quasi-judicial oversight***

Courts and quasi-judicial bodies play a critical role in operationalizing the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs), particularly in contexts where legislative or executive measures are insufficient or inconsistently applied. By interpreting existing legal frameworks and international obligations, these bodies can hold States accountable for failures in protection and establish binding precedents that reinforce the normative framework.

For example, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in *Yean and Bosico v. Dominican Republic* (2005) affirmed the State's duty to protect

children affected by internal displacement, including their rights to nationality, education, and social services. Although the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement are non-binding, this decision demonstrated how judicial mechanisms can transform soft-law standards into enforceable obligations, creating practical remedies for vulnerable populations.

Similarly, the European Court of Human Rights in *Budina v. Russia* (2009) extended protection under the European Convention on Human Rights to displaced persons, recognizing the State's responsibility to provide adequate housing and social support. This case illustrates that judicial oversight can fill critical enforcement gaps, particularly where States have failed to implement domestic legislation or comply fully with international norms.

Beyond individual cases, quasi-judicial bodies and commissions—such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights—can also provide guidance, review compliance, and issue recommendations that pressure States to uphold their obligations, even when enforcement mechanisms are limited. These examples collectively underscore that judicial and quasi-judicial oversight is essential for bridging the persistent gap between normative commitments and actual State practice, reinforcing accountability, and ensuring that IDPs' rights are realized in practice.

### ***Role of non- state actors and international agencies***

Non-state actors, including international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), play a critical role in monitoring State compliance with IDP protection obligations and reinforcing accountability, particularly in contexts where domestic institutions are weak or ineffective. These actors not only provide technical, financial, and operational support to States but also act as independent oversight mechanisms, documenting violations, highlighting gaps, and advocating for remedial measures.

For instance, during the 2006 Darfur crisis, UN agencies utilized the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GPID) to press the Sudanese government to improve protection for IDPs, ensuring better access to humanitarian assistance, shelter, and healthcare (Ferris & Petz, 2019). Similarly, in South Sudan, NGOs and international agencies have leveraged GPID and regional human rights instruments to monitor displacement caused by ongoing conflict, advocating for the creation of safe corridors, access to essential services, and the inclusion of IDPs in national recovery programs (IDMC, 2024).

These examples illustrate that non-state actors can partially compensate for State inaction, using both normative frameworks and on-the-ground data to exert pressure and promote compliance. However, their

effectiveness depends on State cooperation, security conditions, and resource availability, emphasizing that the primary responsibility still rests with the State. Without robust engagement from both domestic authorities and international actors, persistent implementation gaps continue to undermine the realization of IDPs' rights, highlighting the importance of multi-level accountability mechanisms.

### ***Persistent challenges and lessons learned***

Despite the existence of international and regional mechanisms, several structural challenges continue to undermine the effective protection of internally displaced persons. Political resistance remains one of the most significant obstacles, as some States invoke sovereignty to reject external scrutiny or monitoring. This pattern has been evident in Myanmar, where authorities resisted international oversight concerning the displacement of Rohingya communities, thereby limiting avenues for accountability and protection (International Crisis Group, 2018). Even when political will exists, resource constraints often hinder implementation: humanitarian structures frequently suffer from chronic underfunding, leaving IDPs without adequate shelter, healthcare, or legal support, as observed in parts of South Sudan despite the presence of legal frameworks designed to protect displaced populations (IDMC, 2024). Further compounding these issues are legal-policy gaps, particularly the non-binding nature of soft-law instruments such as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which are not consistently translated into enforceable national legislation, thereby weakening their practical effect and limiting mechanisms for redress (Cernea, 2000).

Nonetheless, experiences from various regions demonstrate that integrated strategies combining normative guidance, binding legal instruments, judicial oversight, and strong civil society advocacy can significantly improve protection outcomes. Colombia provides a prominent example: by aligning national policies with the GPID while simultaneously implementing comprehensive reparations and judicial monitoring frameworks, the State has strengthened the legal recognition and social protection of IDPs even amid ongoing internal conflict (Kritz, 2001). This approach illustrates that when States join normative commitments with operational structures - supported by courts, independent monitoring bodies, and community organizations - international standards can be effectively translated into domestic practice. Together, these developments highlight not only the obstacles that persist but also the pathways through which State responsibility toward IDPs can be meaningfully advanced.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the international framework governing the protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has significantly evolved, reflecting a clear understanding that internal displacement is not merely a humanitarian issue but a core matter of State responsibility grounded in human rights law, humanitarian law, and regional commitments. Instruments such as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Kampala Convention articulate sophisticated duties of prevention, protection, and assistance. Yet, as demonstrated throughout this study, the gap between normative development and practical implementation remains wide. Selective compliance, inadequate resources, weak institutions, political instability, and security constraints continue to impede meaningful protection. These challenges are further compounded by systemic barriers to durable solutions, including unresolved land disputes, inadequate restitution mechanisms, and persistent vulnerabilities faced by displaced communities. The result is a profound disconnect between legal standards and lived realities, leaving millions of IDPs exposed to precarious conditions and ongoing rights violations.

Strengthening accountability - domestically and internationally - is essential to bridging this divide. Effective domestic incorporation of international norms, supported by coordinated institutional frameworks, dedicated budgetary commitments, and robust judicial oversight, provides the foundation for ensuring that IDP rights are actionable rather than aspirational. National human rights institutions and courts must play a central role in scrutinizing State action and offering remedies to displaced populations. At the international and regional levels, UN agencies, the African Union, and specialized NGOs contribute by monitoring compliance, providing technical assistance, and exerting normative pressure. While the absence of a universal binding treaty on internal displacement limits global enforcement, emerging peer-review mechanisms and regional reporting obligations offer promising pathways toward more structured accountability. Ultimately, meaningful protection for IDPs requires sustained political will, institutional innovation, and a renewed global commitment to addressing the structural drivers of displacement - ensuring that internally displaced persons are recognized not merely as beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance but as rights-holders entitled to effective and durable protection.

**Conflict of Interest:** The author reported no conflict of interest.

**Data Availability:** All data are included in the content of the paper.

**Funding Statement:** The author did not obtain any funding for this research.

## References:

1. Brookings Institution. (2015). *Housing, land, and property rights of IDPs*. Brookings Institution.
2. Brookings–LSE Project on Internal Displacement. (2010). *Making the Kampala Convention work*. Brookings–LSE Project on Internal Displacement.
3. Cantor, D. J. (2014). *The law of internal displacement*. Oxford University Press.
4. Christensen, M., & Harild, N. (2009). Accountability gaps in internal displacement. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 91(875), 547–567.
5. Cohen, R., & Deng, F. M. (2010). *Mass displacement and the need for an international convention on IDPs*. Brookings Institution.
6. Deng, F. M. (1998). *Internally displaced persons: Compilation and analysis of legal norms* (UN Doc. E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2). United Nations.
7. Deng, F. M., & Adeola, R. (2021). The normative influence of the UN Guiding Principles on the Kampala Convention in the protection of internally displaced persons in Africa. *Journal of African Law*, 65(S1), 59–72. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021855321000048>
8. Ferris, E., & Stark, C. (2018). *Internal displacement in Africa*. Brookings Institution Press.
9. Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. (2006). *Report on the situation of internally displaced persons in Colombia*. Organization of American States.
10. Inter-American Court of Human Rights. (2004). *Case of the Moiwana Community v. Suriname* (Series C, No. 124).
11. International Committee of the Red Cross. (2019). *IHL and the protection of IDPs*. <https://www.icrc.org>
12. International Committee of the Red Cross. (n.d.). Protected persons: Internally displaced persons. *Humanitarian Law & Policy Blog*. <https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/protected-persons-internally-displaced-persons>
13. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. (2024). *2024 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID)*. <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2024/>
14. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre & Norwegian Refugee Council. (2010). *Making the Kampala Convention work for IDPs*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre & Norwegian Refugee Council.
15. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre & Norwegian Refugee Council. (2022). *Unsettled: Global report on internal displacement –*

- Policy analysis*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre & Norwegian Refugee Council.
16. Kälén, W. (2008). *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: Annotations* (2nd ed.). American Society of International Law.
  17. Kälén, W. (2021). Internal displacement. In F. Nicholson & N. Shah (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Refugee Law* (pp. 848–863). Oxford University Press.
  18. Kälén, W., & Walicki, N. (2017). *Protecting internally displaced persons*. Brookings Institution Press.
  19. Lambert, H. (2017). *International refugee law*. Brill Nijhoff. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004322240>
  20. Mooney, E. (2005). Internal displacement as a category of concern. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 24(3), 9–26.
  21. Moore, W. H., & Shellman, S. M. (2006). Refugee or internally displaced person? To where should one flee? *Comparative Political Studies*, 39(5), 599–622. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414005283124>
  22. Norwegian Refugee Council. (2016). *The Kampala Convention: Progress, challenges, and opportunities*. Norwegian Refugee Council.
  23. Norwegian Refugee Council. (2022). *Access to essential services for IDPs*. Norwegian Refugee Council.
  24. Phuong, C. (2004). *The international protection of internally displaced persons*. Cambridge University Press.
  25. Storey, H. (2020). International refugee law and the protection of stateless persons. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 32(1), 174–180. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/eeaa004>
  26. United Nations. (1998). *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement>
  27. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2023). *Global trends: Forced displacement in 2023*. UNHCR.
  28. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2020). *Handbook for the protection of internally displaced persons*. UN OCHA.
  29. Williams, R. C. (2015). Responsibility to protect and internal displacement. *Journal of African Law*, 59(2), 145–168.