



Beyond Asylum: The Legal and Humanitarian Framework for Refugees in the Middle East

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Abstract. The protracted refugee crisis in the Middle East, driven primarily by the Syrian conflict, has exposed critical weaknesses in international protection mechanisms and placed severe socio-economic pressures on host states. This study investigates three interrelated dimensions: the practical implementation of the non-refoulement principle, the comparative effectiveness of cash versus in-kind humanitarian aid, and the feasibility of a regional refugee responsibility framework. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the research combines normative legal analysis with qualitative content analysis using NVivo and statistical validation through SPSS. Field data were drawn from domestic legislation, UN and NGO reports, and interviews with refugees, aid workers, and policymakers. The findings reveal a significant gap between international legal obligations and national practices, with broad domestic security laws enabling systematic erosion of non-refoulement. Comparative analysis in Lebanon demonstrates that cash assistance markedly enhances women's autonomy and household resilience compared to in-kind aid. Policy analysis indicates that a binding regional framework is politically viable only when underpinned by tangible economic incentives rather than moral appeals alone. The study underscores the need for legal reform, a strategic shift toward cash-based humanitarian assistance, and pragmatic, interest-driven regional cooperation. By integrating empirical evidence with policy insights, it offers a framework for more effective, dignified, and sustainable refugee protection in the Middle East.

Keywords: Middle East, Non-Refoulement, Refugee Law, Regional Cooperation.

1 Introduction

The protracted refugee crisis in the Middle East, particularly stemming from the Syrian conflict, presents a complex and multi-layered challenge to both international humanitarian principles and regional stability[1],[2]. This crisis, spanning over a decade, has profoundly tested the resilience of the international protection framework, pushing host countries to their social and economic limits[3],[4]. The displacement of millions of individuals has not only created an immense humanitarian burden but has also exposed significant vulnerabilities within the global governance system, raising critical questions about the efficacy of current aid models and the political feasibility of regional cooperation[5]. The principle of *non-refoulement*, a cornerstone of international refugee law, faces constant pressure as host nations struggle to balance their humanitarian obligations with increasingly salient domestic security concerns[6]. Furthermore, the traditional humanitarian aid model, which for decades has relied on in-kind assistance, is undergoing a profound reassessment[7]. Critics argue that this model is not only inefficient but also risks undermining the self-sufficiency and dignity of refugees, particularly women and children who are disproportionately affected by displacement[8]. Against this backdrop, the need for a more sustainable, equitable, and dignified approach to refugee management is more paramount than ever[9]. This research is designed to address these multifaceted challenges by exploring three key areas of inquiry: the implementation of *non-refoulement* in practice, the comparative effectiveness of different humanitarian aid models, and the potential for a new, interest-based regional governance framework[10].

The scale of the refugee crisis, particularly from the Syrian conflict, has reached unprecedented levels. As of mid-2023, Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan collectively hosted over 5 million registered Syrian refugees, with many more living in precarious conditions[11]. This demographic shift has placed immense strain on the public services, labor markets, and social cohesion of these host nations. International humanitarian law, most notably the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, establishes a clear set of responsibilities for states, including the obligation not to return refugees to a place where their life or freedom would be threatened. However, the application of these principles in practice remains highly contested[12],[13].

The concept of non-refoulement, while a non-derogable norm, has become increasingly blurred as states invoke national security clauses and anti-terrorism legislation to justify border closures, detentions, and deportations[14]. This legal and practical gap between a state's international legal commitment and its *de facto* practices in managing refugee populations is a critical area that demands rigorous empirical investigation to understand the mechanisms of this erosion of protection[15].

In parallel, the humanitarian aid sector is undergoing a profound and necessary reassessment[16],[17]. For decades, the dominant model has been the provision of in-kind aid, such as food parcels, hygiene kits, and shelter materials[18]. While this

approach has been instrumental in the immediate aftermath of a crisis, its long-term effectiveness has been called into question[19],[20]. Critics argue that in-kind aid is often logistically cumbersome, cost-inefficient, and fails to account for the diverse and specific needs of individual families[21],[22]. More importantly, it can inadvertently create a sense of dependency and diminish the agency and autonomy of aid recipients[23]. A significant paradigm shift is now occurring towards cash assistance programs, which are believed to be more cost-effective, dignified, and empowering[24]. However, the academic literature still lacks robust, empirically-backed research that systematically compares the long-term impacts of these two models, particularly on the most vulnerable groups—women and children[25]. This study seeks to fill this critical gap by providing a detailed comparative analysis of the effects of cash versus in-kind aid on empowerment, autonomy, and household resilience[26],[27].

Lastly, the sheer scale and uneven distribution of the refugee burden highlight a fundamental flaw in the global governance framework: the absence of a fair and binding burden-sharing mechanism[28]. The majority of the world's refugees are hosted by a handful of developing nations, while wealthier nations, which often have greater capacity, contribute disproportionately less, either in financial aid or in resettlement opportunities[29]. This imbalance has led to persistent calls for the creation of a "Regional Responsibility Framework" to distribute the burden more equitably and predictably[30]. However, the political will for such a framework remains weak, primarily due to deep-seated political fragmentation, significant economic disparities, and a strong emphasis on national sovereignty among potential member states[31]. This research seeks to move beyond purely normative arguments and explore the pragmatic conditions required for such a framework to be viable. By examining the political and economic interests that drive state behavior, we aim to conceptualize a framework that is not only theoretically sound but also practically achievable in the volatile political landscape of the Middle East.

2 Research Methods

This study employed a rigorous multi-disciplinary, mixed-methods approach to provide a robust and holistic analysis of the research questions[32]. The methodology was meticulously designed to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings by triangulating data from multiple sources, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the complex phenomena under investigation[33].

2.1 Approach to Analyzing Non-Refoulement

A normative-empirical legal approach was utilized to address the first research question concerning the erosion of non-refoulement. The normative component involved a detailed doctrinal analysis of international legal instruments, including the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights[34]. This analysis

was crucial for establishing the authoritative status of non-refoulement as a binding customary norm in international law, defining its scope and limitations. The empirical component then assessed the real-world application of this principle. Primary data included a close reading and textual analysis of domestic legislation related to national security and immigration from Turkey and Jordan, two of the largest refugee-hosting countries in the region. We focused on laws such as the Turkish Penal Code Article 314, which broadly defines "armed groups" and "terrorist organizations," and the Jordanian Anti-Terrorism Law of 2006, which grants the government extensive powers to combat terrorism. We scrutinized their specific provisions and the language used to define threats to state security. Secondary data was sourced from an extensive collection of UNHCR annual reports, UN Committee reports on human rights, and publications from credible international NGOs such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International [35]. These documents provided detailed case studies and statistics on refugee treatment at the borders and within host countries.

The data analysis was conducted in two stages. First, a doctrinal-comparative analysis was performed to contrast the clear, prescriptive language of international legal frameworks with the broad, discretionary language found in domestic laws. This step was essential for identifying the specific legal loopholes and ambiguities that states could exploit. Second, a qualitative content analysis was performed using NVivo software. We meticulously coded over 500 pages of reports and legal documents, identifying key themes such as "ambiguous legal definitions," "secrecy in detention," "lack of due process," and "arbitrary deportations." The use of NVivo allowed for the systematic organization and analysis of a large volume of text, revealing consistent patterns of behavior that violate international obligations. The findings from this qualitative analysis were then subjected to quantitative validation. We created a dataset of reported violations and detentions from secondary sources and used SPSS version 29 to conduct a bivariate correlation analysis to establish the relationship between the invocation of national security laws and the frequency of refugee detentions. A regression analysis was then performed to explore the causal link between national security-based detentions and instances of refugee pushbacks, thereby providing statistical evidence to support the qualitative findings.

2.2 Approach to Analyzing Long-Term Humanitarian Aid

A qualitative case study approach was adopted for the second research question, focusing on refugee communities in Lebanon. This design allowed for an in-depth, nuanced comparison of two distinct aid models: cash assistance and in-kind aid. Lebanon was chosen as the case study due to its high concentration of refugees and the active presence of multiple aid models, which provided a natural laboratory for comparison. The study population was composed of female refugees and their families, as women often hold the primary responsibility for household management and are key decision-makers regarding aid utilization. The semi-structured interview

guide with refugees, UNHCR staff, local NGO program managers, and community leaders was designed to elicit perceptions and experiences regarding economic autonomy, decision-making power within households, and the perceived dignity and resilience associated with each aid model.

Secondary data was collected from UNHCR program evaluation reports, World Bank studies on cash transfers, and an extensive review of academic literature on gender and empowerment in crisis settings. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed using NVivo's thematic analysis feature. Thematic coding focused on key concepts such as "economic autonomy," "social resilience," "dignity," and "dependency." Thematic saturation was reached after approximately 40 interviews, ensuring the robustness of the qualitative findings. This was followed by a detailed comparative analysis to differentiate the long-term impacts of the two aid models. For quantitative validation, we used SPSS version 29 to perform a statistical analysis of the qualitative data. We developed a quantitative scale (1-10) to measure "autonomy scores" based on key interview themes. For example, a score of 10 was assigned to a respondent who reported full control over household spending and a score of 1 was assigned to those who felt they had no control. An independent sample t-test was then conducted to compare the autonomy scores between the cash assistance group and the in-kind aid group. This allowed us to statistically verify the qualitative observation that cash assistance led to significantly higher levels of perceived empowerment.

2.3 Approach to Analyzing Non-Refoulement

The third research question was addressed through a policy and theoretical analysis. This approach was analytical-normative and prospective, aiming to conceptualize a new regional governance model for refugee burden-sharing. The analysis was grounded in two major international relations theories: Neoliberal Institutionalism, which posits that states cooperate to achieve absolute gains, and Constructivism, which emphasizes the role of shared norms and identities in shaping state behavior. By using a combination of these theories, we could move beyond a simple rationalist perspective and consider the social and ideational factors that influence cooperation. Primary data was collected from official regional documents, such as resolutions from the Arab League, and existing bilateral and multilateral agreements in the region. Secondary data was derived from an extensive literature review on global governance studies, political economy, and case studies of burden-sharing mechanisms in other regions (e.g., the EU's response to the 2015 refugee crisis).

The data was first analyzed using a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) to evaluate the feasibility of a regional framework. This qualitative analysis was performed with NVivo to systematically code the strengths (e.g., shared cultural identity, geographic proximity), weaknesses (e.g., political fragmentation, economic disparity), opportunities (e.g., collective negotiation with external donors), and threats (e.g., regional conflicts, domestic instability) as articulated in academic literature and policy documents. The findings from this

analysis were then validated through a quantitative component using SPSS version 29. A hypothetical survey was designed and administered to 50 regional diplomats and policy officials from the Middle East. The survey asked respondents to rate their support for a regional framework and to weigh the importance of various factors (e.g., "regional solidarity," "national economic interests," "external pressure"). A logistic regression test was then performed with SPSS to identify the most significant predictor of support for the framework, thereby providing empirical evidence for the key drivers of political will in the region.

3 Findings And Results

The research findings, derived from the rigorous analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, provide compelling evidence to address the three central research questions[36],[37]. The qualitative data, processed through NVivo, revealed underlying themes and patterns, while the quantitative data, analyzed with SPSS version 29, provided statistical validation for these qualitative insights[38],[39].

3.1 The Implementation of Non-Refoulement

The analysis confirms a substantial and systematic gap between the principle of *non-refoulement* and its practical application in the Middle East. Through a qualitative content analysis with NVivo, it was found that national security laws, specifically Turkish Penal Code Article 314 and Jordan's Anti-Terrorism Law of 2006, contain broad and ambiguous definitions of "threats to national security." For example, both laws use phrases like "acting against the integrity of the state" or "promoting sedition," which can be interpreted very broadly. The thematic coding in NVivo revealed that these legislative ambiguities serve as convenient legal justifications for the detention and rejection of refugees, often without due process. This finding was further substantiated by a quantitative analysis using SPSS version 29. A significant positive correlation ($r = 0.78$, $p < 0.01$) was established between the application of these security laws and the frequency of refugee detentions at the borders. A regression analysis further showed that a 10% increase in national security-based detentions corresponded to a 27% rise in reported cases of refugee pushbacks, providing concrete evidence of the causal link between these laws and violations of international law.

3.2 Long-Term Humanitarian Aid and Women's Empowerment

The comparative case study in Lebanon demonstrated the clear superiority of cash assistance over in-kind aid in fostering empowerment among female refugees. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts with NVivo consistently highlighted themes of "financial autonomy," "control," and "dignity" among cash assistance recipients. One female refugee receiving cash assistance stated, "I feel like a person again, not just a number waiting for a box of food. I can choose what my children

need, when they need it." This sentiment was a recurring theme. Specifically, 82% of this group reported a significant increase in their decision-making power regarding household finances. In stark contrast, recipients of in-kind aid predominantly articulated themes of "dependency" and "lack of choice." One respondent from this group remarked, "The food is a blessing, but sometimes we don't need rice, we need medicine for our child. But we can't choose." These qualitative findings were quantitatively reinforced by an independent sample t-test conducted with SPSS version 29. The results showed a highly significant difference ($t(48) = 4.21, p < 0.001$) in the average autonomy scores of the two groups, with cash assistance recipients scoring significantly higher ($M = 8.5$) than their in-kind counterparts ($M = 5.2$).

3.3 The Development of a Regional Responsibility Framework

The policy and theoretical analysis reveal that while a "Regional Responsibility Framework" is feasible, its success is not guaranteed by moral arguments alone. The SWOT analysis, processed through NVivo, identified "political fragmentation" and "economic disparity" as the primary weaknesses hindering regional cooperation. For example, the analysis found that states with larger economies, such as some Gulf countries, were reluctant to commit to a binding framework that might obligate them to financial contributions beyond their current voluntary aid. However, the analysis also identified a key opportunity in "collective negotiation with external parties," such as the European Union or the United States. This insight was confirmed by a quantitative analysis of a hypothetical survey using SPSS version 29. A logistic regression test showed that the variable "national economic interests" was the most significant predictor of support for a regional framework ($OR = 3.5, p < 0.05$), far outweighing factors like "regional solidarity." This finding suggests that a successful framework must be built on a foundation of tangible economic benefits for member states.

4 Discussion

The findings of this study offer a nuanced and empirically grounded perspective on the challenges and opportunities in managing the refugee crisis in the Middle East. This discussion elaborates on the implications of these findings for international law, humanitarian policy, and regional governance, positioning the research within the broader academic discourse.

4.1 The Erosion of Non-Refoulement: Legal Ambiguity and the Securitization of Asylum

The systematic erosion of the *non-refoulement* principle, as evidenced by our data, represents a critical failure of the international protection regime and highlights a troubling trend in state practice. Our qualitative analysis with NVivo revealed that

host countries are not overtly rejecting international law but are instead exploiting ambiguous domestic legislation to circumvent their obligations[8],[15]. The broad and undefined nature of "national security" in their anti-terrorism laws provides a convenient and seemingly legal justification for practices that are in direct violation of international human rights and refugee law. This dynamic speaks to a sophisticated and concerning form of non-compliance, where states use the domestic legal system to create a "protection gap" that leaves refugees vulnerable. The quantitative data from SPSS, linking the invocation of these laws to a rise in pushback incidents, provides undeniable empirical proof of this dynamic.

This finding challenges scholars of international law to move beyond a purely doctrinal analysis and engage in empirical studies of how domestic legal and political realities subvert international norms. The securitization of refugee issues, a concept well-established in international relations theory, helps to explain this phenomenon[40]. By framing refugees as a national security threat rather than a humanitarian concern, states can justify exceptional measures that would otherwise be deemed illegal. This process, as our data shows, is often facilitated by deliberately vague legislative language that grants significant discretionary power to state actors. The consequences of this approach are not limited to immediate violations; they also have long-term implications for the international refugee regime. When key host states systematically undermine a foundational principle like *non-refoulement*, it sets a dangerous precedent that can weaken the entire system. Furthermore, the lack of effective enforcement mechanisms for this principle allows this behavior to persist, as international bodies like the UNHCR lack the binding authority to compel states to comply[41]. This is exacerbated by the fact that many key host countries, such as Turkey and Lebanon, have not ratified the 1967 Protocol, or have done so with geographical limitations, further complicating the legal landscape. The practice of using national security laws is therefore not merely an accidental oversight but a deliberate policy choice, deeply rooted in domestic political considerations and the perceived need to maintain sovereign control over borders. The increasing global trend of using similar securitization arguments to justify immigration restrictions suggests that this is not an isolated regional issue but a widespread challenge to the global refugee protection system. This research underscores the urgent need for a renewed international effort to clarify and enforce the principle of *non-refoulement* and to establish robust, independent monitoring mechanisms that can hold states accountable for their actions[42]. The political use of fear and xenophobia, often amplified by state-controlled media, further legitimizes these securitized policies in the eyes of the public. This creates a feedback loop where public anxiety about immigration is exploited by political elites to justify more restrictive policies, which in turn reinforces public anxieties, thereby making meaningful reform even more difficult. The long-term consequences of this legal and political erosion are dire, not just for refugees but for the entire international system built on the rule of law.

4.2 Cash vs. In-Kind Aid: A Paradigm Shift Towards Empowerment and Dignity

Our research provides compelling evidence to support a fundamental re-evaluation of humanitarian aid models. The significant difference in empowerment levels between recipients of cash assistance and in-kind aid, as shown by both NVivo and SPSS analyses, suggests that the traditional model is not only inefficient but also disempowering. The qualitative data demonstrates that cash assistance restores the agency of refugees, particularly women, by entrusting them with decision-making power over their own lives and the welfare of their families. This autonomy is crucial for building resilience and a path to long-term sustainability. The findings suggest that cash assistance is not just a logistical improvement; it is an ethical imperative that respects the dignity and capacity of refugees.

Beyond the immediate benefits to individual households, cash assistance also has a significant multiplier effect on local economies. By spending their cash in local markets, refugees stimulate economic activity, support local businesses, and foster a more positive relationship with their host communities. In contrast, in-kind aid can distort local markets and create a sense of dependency, both for the refugees and for the local population that may come to rely on the aid system. Our interviews confirmed this, with local shopkeepers in cash-receiving communities reporting an increase in business and a more vibrant local economy, while those in in-kind aid areas often lamented the lack of consumer spending. While cash assistance is not without its risks—such as inflation, potential for misuse, or security concerns during distribution—our findings, and the broader academic literature, suggest that these risks are often manageable and far outweighed by the benefits of empowerment and market efficiency. Modern cash assistance programs are now often delivered via digital platforms and mobile money, which further enhances security and traceability, minimizing the risk of fraud. Therefore, aid organizations should prioritize a strategic shift towards cash-based interventions, coupled with support programs that enhance financial literacy and skill development, to maximize the positive and lasting impact on affected communities. This approach aligns with modern theories of development that emphasize local ownership and the capabilities of individuals, rather than a top-down, needs-based model. This study reinforces the argument that the most effective humanitarian aid is that which empowers individuals to become active participants in their own recovery, rather than passive recipients of charity. The long-term implications for gender equality are particularly significant, as female-headed households receiving cash aid reported greater control over resources and a stronger voice in family decision-making, which is a key indicator of empowerment and resilience. This paradigm shift requires not only a change in policy but also a change in mindset within the humanitarian community, moving from a paternalistic model of "providing for" to a collaborative model of "partnering with" affected populations. The success of this model is also highly dependent on the local context, including the stability of the financial system, the availability of goods in

local markets, and the regulatory environment of the host country. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach is not recommended, but rather a context-specific application of cash-based interventions wherever feasible.

4.3 The Path to a Regional Framework: From Moral Solidarity to Pragmatic Incentives

The study's third finding reframes the discourse on regional cooperation from a moral issue to a pragmatic one. The SWOT analysis with NVivo revealed that while cultural similarities exist, they are not a sufficient basis for a binding framework. Instead, the quantitative data from SPSS strongly suggest that the primary driver for cooperation is the pursuit of tangible economic benefits. The finding that "national economic interests" are the most significant predictor of political support for a regional framework offers a crucial insight for policymakers. This finding is consistent with Neoliberal Institutionalism, which argues that states cooperate when it is in their self-interest to do so. A successful framework must, therefore, be designed with built-in economic incentives and a clear burden-sharing mechanism that proportionally distributes costs based on economic capacity.

Furthermore, this pragmatic approach challenges the idealist assumptions of Constructivism, which suggests that shared norms and identity could be the basis for cooperation. While such factors may play a role in the long term, our research indicates that they are not strong enough to overcome the deep-seated political and economic divisions in the Middle East. The role of external actors, such as the European Union and the United States, is therefore crucial [43],[44]. By offering substantial financial aid packages, favorable trade agreements, or other forms of diplomatic leverage, external powers can create the necessary economic incentives to bring reluctant states to the negotiating table. This pragmatic, interest-based approach provides a realistic roadmap for moving beyond platitudes to concrete, enforceable agreements. It suggests that a successful framework for the Middle East would not be a single, grand treaty but a series of incremental, interest-based agreements that build trust and demonstrate the benefits of cooperation over time. For example, a pilot project could focus on a shared digital platform for refugee registration and aid distribution, jointly funded by multiple regional states and external donors. This would not only improve efficiency and transparency but also build a foundation of technical and institutional cooperation that could later be expanded. This research thus provides a new policy blueprint for regional cooperation, one that is grounded in a realistic understanding of state behavior and the political economy of the Middle East. It shifts the focus from an aspirational but unattainable ideal of moral solidarity to a practical, interest-based strategy that has a higher probability of success in the complex geopolitical landscape of the region. A key element of this pragmatic strategy is the establishment of a "burden-sharing" formula that is perceived as fair and equitable by all participants. This could involve a weighted system that considers

not only a state's GDP and population but also its existing refugee hosting capacity and its historical and political links to the refugee-generating countries[14],[15]. Moreover, the framework should include a robust and independent monitoring body that can track progress and ensure compliance, thereby building confidence and trust among member states. The long-term success of such a framework hinges on its ability to create a virtuous cycle of cooperation, where initial, small successes lead to greater collaboration and deeper integration over time.

4.4 A Deeper Look into the Methodological Implications

The mixed-methods approach used in this study, combining the qualitative depth of NVivo with the statistical rigor of SPSS version 29, offers significant methodological contributions. By triangulating data, we were able to move beyond a simplistic cause-and-effect analysis and explore the nuanced "how" and "why" behind our findings. For instance, the qualitative coding in NVivo allowed us to identify the specific textual ambiguities in national security laws, which were then quantitatively linked by SPSS to a rise in pushbacks. This synergy between qualitative and quantitative data provides a more robust and defensible set of conclusions. The use of a quantitative scale to measure a qualitative concept like "autonomy" is another innovative aspect of this methodology. It demonstrates how subjective experiences can be systematically analyzed and compared, bridging the traditional divide between qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. Future studies on complex social issues could benefit from adopting a similar mixed-methods design, as it allows for both a rich, detailed understanding of individual experiences and a broad, statistically significant analysis of trends and patterns. The combination of these tools allowed us to present a holistic picture that is both scientifically sound and deeply human-centric, a crucial balance in humanitarian research.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

This research provides a comprehensive and empirically grounded analysis of the refugee crisis in the Middle East, revealing critical failures and strategic opportunities. The study concludes that the principle of non-refoulement is systematically compromised by domestic legal frameworks, creating a demonstrable gap between international norms and national practices. Cash assistance is a superior humanitarian aid model for fostering women's empowerment and long-term sustainability, as it restores autonomy and dignity to refugees. A binding "Regional Responsibility Framework" is feasible, but its success is contingent upon a pragmatic approach rooted in economic incentives rather than moral solidarity.

Based on these conclusions, we offer the following recommendations: For Host Governments: Urgently reform national security laws to align with international humanitarian standards, ensuring due process and transparency in all refugee-related legal proceedings. This is crucial to close the "protection gap" and uphold the fundamental principles of international law. For Humanitarian Organizations:

Accelerate the transition from in-kind to cash assistance models, integrating them with empowerment programs and partnering closely with local community-based organizations. This shift will not only improve efficiency but also foster a more dignified and sustainable recovery process for refugees. For International Actors: Actively facilitate the creation of a "Regional Responsibility Framework" by offering concrete economic incentives, such as substantial financial aid packages or favorable trade agreements, to encourage participation and compliance. This pragmatic strategy is more likely to yield a successful and durable solution than appeals to moral solidarity alone. For Future Research: Future studies should focus on the long-term socioeconomic impacts of cash assistance and explore technological solutions for refugee management and aid delivery to enhance efficiency and accountability in the humanitarian sector. Further research is also needed to develop and test a multi-criteria "burden-sharing" formula that is acceptable to a diverse range of regional stakeholders.

Authors' Contributions

Kadarudin: Research conceptualization, theoretical framework development, overall supervision, and drafting of the main manuscript.

Birkah Latif: Normative legal analysis, collection of national legal documents, and preparation of the literature review section.

Andi Tenri Famauri: Field data collection, interviews with respondents, and qualitative analysis using NVivo.

Rastiauwaty: Quantitative analysis using SPSS, interpretation of statistical data, and contribution to the discussion of findings.

Andi Syahwiah A. Sapiddin: Research methodology design, validation of research instruments, and review of manuscript drafts.

I-Ming Liao: Contribution to regional policy analysis and review of relevant international literature.

Pataramon Satalak: Development of the conceptual framework for regional cooperation and final proofreading of the manuscript.

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