ENSURING HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL MIGRANTS: 
practitioner’s perspectives and proposals in providing access to services to 
migrants in irregular situations

Organised by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in collaboration with 
the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Quaker UN Office, 
and the Permanent Missions of Mexico, the Philippines, Portugal and Switzerland

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13.15 – 14.45, Room VIII (Palais des Nations), Geneva

Background

Many migrants, particularly those who are in an irregular situation, tend to live and work in the shadows, 
afraid to complain, denied rights and freedoms, and disproportionately vulnerable to discrimination and 
marginalization. It is the experience of many human rights and humanitarian organizations, including 
National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, that migrants in an irregular situation are often the most 
vulnerable people in society, often falling victims to violence, exploitation and abuse. Irregular migrants are 
often unable to meet their basic. Their dignity is undermined by the significant barriers they face in accessing 
services like healthcare, education, housing or legal support.

Even where the entitlements are available in law, services are often not accessible, due to lack of 
information, language barriers, costs or because irregular migrants fear to approach service providers due 
to the possibility that they will be detained and deported arrest. The Committee on Economic, Social and 
Cultural Rights has highlighted the specific vulnerability of irregular migrants and guided that, without 
prejudice to the sovereign prerogative to order their removal, the very presence of irregular migrants 
under their jurisdiction imposes certain obligations on national authorities, including the primary obligation 
to acknowledge their presence and accept their right to claim rights

The aim of this event is to draw attention to the human rights situation and vulnerabilities of migrants in 
an irregular situation. It will aim to showcase concrete examples of how to ensure that migrants are able 
to access services in safety and dignity.

Objectives

In line with the topic of this thematic consultation, this side event will focus on migrants in irregular 
situations. This event will identify barriers to the full realization of the rights of irregular migrants due to 
their migratory status. It will highlight concrete examples of how these rights can be realised, backed up by 
strong evidence and disaggregated data. The panellists, drawn from national, regional and international 
civil society and UN Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies will share case examples that can be 
implemented and/or scaled up in countries. These good practices will be presented with a view to their 
inclusion in the Global Compact on Migration as it seeks to uphold the human rights of migrants regardless 
of migratory status (in line with para 8(i) of Annex 2 of the New York Declaration) including by ensuring 
access to basic services (in line with para 8(o) of Annex II of the New York Declaration).

Participants

The side event seeks to bring together critical stakeholders from States, UN human rights mechanisms, 
national human rights institutions and national, regional and international civil society organizations.