

refugee. Secondly, an environmental refugee would require the idea of coercion or "forced" migration. Nevertheless, great caution is required in identifying the environmental factor that contributes to defining someone as an environmental. What the nature and characteristics of these factors are needs to be debated in the international community. Unlike the conventional definition of a refugee, an environmental refugee would include both persons who cross international borders and persons who are displaced within the border of one's country.

One possible way of viewing environmental refugees is through the timeframe over which the environmental degradation takes place and the degree that people are forced to move. A sudden environmental shock, such as a natural disaster, with little domestic governmental response to assist victims, or ecocide activities may be appropriate causes for the international community labelling a migrant an environmental refugee. Yet natural disaster, while possibly requiring international humanitarian assistance, need not require that the victims of the disaster be granted refugee status.

It is difficult to accept that an urban worker in a developed country who decides to "get back to the land" because of dissatisfaction with environmental conditions in an urban area, no matter how great the frustration, is an environmental refugee. Similarly, it is hard to accept that the unemployed resulting from worked-out mines should be granted refugee status and the right to seek asylum in a foreign country. The best term to capture these types of people, as well as migrants leaving a region because of the gradual over exploitation of renewable resources, may be environmental migrant. And even this term is may be misleading if uncritically used, as strong economic motives may be present. Certainly, the international reaction and policy responses to these cases should be different from those currently given to conventional refugees.

The status quo which completely ignores the environmental factor as a suitable criteria for refugee status is outdated, but to allow any person migrating for a range of loose environmental conditions to be granted refugee status is equally inappropriate. Allowing a wide range of environmental criteria to confer refugee status means that *non-refoulement* would also be granted. *Non-refoulement* is the principle that the forcible return of refuges to a country where they have reason to fear persecution is prohibited. Applying *non-refoulement* to the environmental criteria would mean that persons could not return to a country unless the environmental condition had been corrected. The long-term nature of many environmental problems,