Legible but not recognised. What humanitarian agencies and governments owe to those who refuse biometric registration

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Introduction

Humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR have made biometric registration a condition of assistance, so that "visibility and consent to being a data subject have become requirements" for refugees who seek it (Sandvik, 2023, p. 69). In 2025, about 400 Rohingya families in Bangladesh "lost access to their food rations" after declining to update their biometric data with UNHCR (Burt, 2025, paras. 1, 6). Since 2019 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has undertaken not to make biometric data "a mandatory condition of service provision" and to serve those who object "without processing their biometric data" (ICRC, 2019, pp. 8, 15). In Ukraine, "many agencies have dropped the requirement to collect biometric data" after international NGOs refused to do so (Wille, 2023, paras. 5, 9–10). The NGOs' refusal was accepted, whereas the families' refusal was rejected, so that who may refuse appears to be a question of recognition rather than of consent.

Research on humanitarian technology frequently analyses the requirement to register as a problem of consent. In the account of technocolonialism, digital developments "reinvigorate and rework colonial relationships of dependency", and refugee registration shows a "fundamental lack of meaningful consent" because "refusing to register amounts to refusal to receive assistance" (Madianou, 2019, pp. 2, 9). In the account of humanitarian extractivism, the position of refugees "makes it impossible to refuse to take part in data governance schemes" (Sandvik, 2023, p. 34). The critique of data colonialism extends this lack of consent to all data relations, in which "we are assumed to have consented" to the extraction of data (Couldry and Mejias, 2019, p. 343). In these studies, therefore, a person who refuses registration forgoes assistance, because there is no "viable opt-out" (Sandvik, 2023, p. 26).

This article contests the premise that a refusal is only a loss of assistance. In the case of the Rohingya families, UNHCR stated that it had reviewed their objections and

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communicated the outcome to each family (Burt, 2025, paras. 7, 14), so that the refusal received an answer. A refusal that receives an answer is therefore a communication. The analysis asks what answer a refusal receives, and what answer it ought to receive.

Research on humanitarian communication has examined the "communication of solidarity" with "distant others" (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 3) and the claim of international agencies "to give voice" to the persons they assist (Wright, 2018, p. 85). Where it has examined the address to migrants themselves, at Europe's borders, it has found that international organisations and NGOs that practised "securitized care" communicated through "unidirectional, top-down channels" and "fully silenced the migrants" (Chouliaraki and Georgiou, 2017, pp. 160, 172). Research in communication ethics has stated what anyone who addresses others owes to them, such as "hospitality" towards strangers (Silverstone, 2007, p. 136) and respect for their "voice" (Couldry, 2010, p. 1).

A significant gap remains, however, because no study analyses what agencies and governments say to persons who refuse registration. For Madianou, "Refugees are not passive victims" of such requirements, and the Rohingya strike of 2018 over an earlier registration exemplified "refugee agency" despite power asymmetries "too steep to overcome" (2019, pp. 9, 10). In her later book, non-participation in biometric infrastructures "is not an option" in camps (Madianou, 2025, p. 170). In both works refusal is resistance to power rather than communication with those who register refugees, whose answer therefore falls outside her account. Studies of digital identity discuss "recognition and surveillance" together (Sandvik, 2023, p. 21) and treat identification as a source of recognition, because "identification can confer important rights and protections" (Weitzberg et al., 2021, p. 3), without asking whether an identified person is thereby recognised. No study has yet applied the obligations of hospitality and voice to the registration of persons who depend on assistance.

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Through biometric registration, the registering agency obtains what Sandvik calls "the legible body" (2023, p. 16) and identifies a person from fingerprints or an iris scan without the person speaking, an identification the article calls being read. Research on the history of migration infrastructures finds that migrants obtain "any form of recognition" only "by accepting to make their bodies and biographical trajectories legible" (Seuferling and Leurs, 2021, p. 671). Whoever registers nevertheless addresses the persons concerned, and treats a refusal as a claim to be answered or as non-compliance to be recorded, when the refusal is considered at all.

This article argues that an agency or government which makes assistance conditional on biometric registration wrongs a person who refuses whenever it withholds either an alternative to being read or a reasoned answer. The argument belongs to communication ethics, because the wrong lies in the answer rather than in the data collected, and would persist even if the biometric system were secure. The first of two paradoxes is that those who make registration a condition of assistance name no person who could refuse, even where they speak of consent, which presupposes such a person. The second is that some persons who refuse ask to be identified on their documents by their own name, Rohingya, and so object to the terms of registration rather than to registration itself.

The primary theoretical contribution of this article is to extend the ethics of humanitarian communication to the answer owed to persons who refuse, through a distinction between legibility and recognisability. A person is legible when an agency or government can read that person on terms that it has set, and recognisable only when it also offers the option of refusing those terms. This option of refusal is the article's criterion of recognition, drawn from Kantian ethics, in which treating others as persons requires "the possibility either of consenting to or of dissenting from what is proposed" (O'Neill, 1989, p. 110). The article also draws the criterion from the decolonial critique of recognition, in which "the terms of

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accommodation usually end up being determined by and in the interests of the hegemonic partner" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 17).

Through critical discourse analysis, the article treats UNHCR's discourse on registration and identity management as a nodal discourse (Fairclough, 2010, p. 507), which is articulated most fully in Bangladesh. It then examines four further cases, in South Africa, Gaza, Malaysia and the Indian state of Mizoram, which with Bangladesh form the five settings of the analysis. The first of two research questions asks how agencies and governments justify making biometric registration a condition of assistance, and how they answer those who refuse to register (RQ1), which the analysis examines through responsibilisation (van Houdt and Schinkel, 2014, pp. 60–61). The second asks how an agency or government ought to answer a person who refuses biometric registration, and whether those in the five settings answer as they ought (RQ2).

Theoretical framework: legibility and recognisability

Biometric registration is conventionally understood as a technical procedure through which humanitarian agencies identify the recipients of assistance, and UNHCR introduced it "to combat low-level fraud" (Madianou, 2019, p. 5). In UNHCR's guidance, "biometric enrolment and photographs anchor a registration record to a physical individual", and "biometric identification" then ensures "the continued unique identification" of that individual (UNHCR, n.d., section 5.2). The article uses the term biometric registration for both steps, because agencies and governments make either the enrolment of a person or that person's later identification a condition of assistance. For Madianou, consent "does not carry any meaning" once biometric registration becomes the condition of assistance (2025, p. 77).

Yet, treating biometric registration solely as a problem of consent risks overlooking what an agency or government owes once a person has refused. In moral theory, a dilemma arises when "the agent is required to do each of two (or more) actions" but "cannot do both

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(or all) of the actions" (McConnell, 2022, section 2). A person who must choose between being read and receiving assistance faces a dilemma of this kind, which the article calls the consent dilemma. It is "imposed on the agent by the world (or other agents)" rather than caused by "the agent's own wrongdoing" (McConnell, 2022, section 7). Since the person who refuses did not create this dilemma, whoever imposed it owes that person an answer.

To theorise what is owed, this article draws on the theory of recognition, because the Rohingya refugees who went on strike in 2018 asked to be recorded under their own name. They objected that the new identity cards "erased their ethnicity" (Madianou, 2019, p. 9), and so claimed recognition rather than privacy. Misrecognition arises, in Fraser's status model, "when institutions structure interaction according to cultural norms that impede parity of participation" (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p. 29). In Butler's account, "apprehension" is "a mode of knowing that is not yet recognition", which can imply "registering" a life "without full cognition" (2009, pp. 5–6). For Alloa, a person is always recognised "as something" (2023, p. 327), so that a humanitarian agency that records a name on an identity card also records what it recognises the holder as.

However, drawing on the theory of recognition involves a theoretical risk, because the politics of recognition "in its contemporary liberal form" can reproduce colonial state power (Coulthard, 2014, p. 3). Beyond the settler state, the recognition of diversity by "governments, states, multilateral institutions, and international nongovernmental organizations" is, "more often than not", "tied to the interests of the dominant order" (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, p. 57). The critics diverge, however, on what follows from this risk. For Coulthard, those struggling against colonialism must "turn away" from the colonial state (2014, p. 48), and for Mignolo another world "cannot be built with the conceptual tools inherited from the Renaissance and the Enlightenment" (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, p. 7). In Maldonado-Torres's account, the Enlightenment that Kant defined as the exit from

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immaturity is "contradicted in the very effort to characterize non-European peoples as immature or irrational" (2020, pp. 169–170). The same concepts nevertheless "facilitate a labor of decolonial translation" that points to "commonalities as well as to differences" between epistemic practices (2020, p. 170). The cases decide between these positions, because persons who depend on assistance cannot turn away from the agencies and governments that register them without losing it. Rohingya interviewees also describe consent with their own word, *ejajot* (Hossain et al., 2024), so that those affected claim consent and recognition as norms of their own. The article therefore translates rather than delinks, taking from Kant only O'Neill's test, whether those subject to a principle could refuse it. It treats the decolonial critique as the strongest objection to the theory of recognition and the test its criterion must pass.

From this objection and from Kantian ethics the article draws its criterion of recognition, which distinguishes a person who is recognised from a person who is merely legible. The definition of legibility follows the decolonial critique, in which the terms of recognition remain "in the possession of those in power" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 39), and that of recognisability follows Kantian ethics, in which the person has the option of refusing them. In Kantian ethics, agencies and governments owe this option to vulnerable populations, since "the weak risk too much by dissenting unless institutions are structured to secure the option of refusal" (O'Neill, 1989, p. 218). In Fraser's terms, a person who cannot refuse registration cannot participate "as a peer" (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p. 29), so that parity of participation requires the option of refusal.

The term recognisability, as the article uses it, differs from Butler's use and corresponds to a distinction drawn in research on promotional cultures. For Butler, "recognizability" denotes "the more general conditions that prepare or shape a subject for recognition" (2009, pp. 5–6). By specifying one such condition, the option of refusing the

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terms on which one is read, the article gives recognisability a narrower meaning than Butler's. Research on promotional cultures distinguishes political recognition, which "acknowledges claims in their structural and collective dimension", from regulatory recognition, which "extends legitimacy only to claims aligned with" the logic of the regime that confers it (Author, 2026, p. 1). The option of refusing the terms of one's registration corresponds to this difference.

To apply the criterion, the analysis pairs the concepts of the framework in two dimensions, which correspond to the two research questions (Figure 1). The first dimension concerns legibility, a term from Scott's study of the modern state that research on humanitarian technology applies to assistance and describes as "coercive abstraction" (Scott, 1998; Sandvik, 2023, p. 27). An agency or government that makes the legibility of the body a condition of assistance imposes the consent dilemma on every person who depends on that assistance.

[Figure 1 near here]

Whoever imposes this dilemma can answer a refusal with responsibilisation or with recognition. Under the first dimension, the analysis examines responsibilisation, the term used in research on governmentality for the process through which agencies and governments make individuals and communities responsible for "public tasks" (van Houdt and Schinkel, 2014, pp. 60–61). In health communication, Guttman and Ressler identify a related practice, "blaming the victim", in which campaign designers locate the causes of a social problem in the person who suffers from it (2001, p. 122). An agency or government that keeps the condition can justify registration as necessary and describe refusal as non-compliance, and so make the person who refuses responsible for the loss of assistance.

While the first dimension concerns the condition and the loss of assistance, the second concerns whether a refusal can be answered as a claim. For Alloa, recognition presupposes "a

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form of social visibility" (2023, p. 327), whereas research on promotional cultures finds that "visibility as recognition" plays down its use as surveillance (Jiménez-Martínez and Edwards, 2023, p. 15). The visibility that an answer requires is therefore that of the refusal rather than of the body. A refusal can be answered only if it is visible to the agency or government that registers the person and takes a form that its officials can read. An answer also requires that the refusal be heard, since voice and listening are both "imbricated in ongoing, collective struggles for recognition" (Wright, 2018, p. 88), and this obligation is what Silverstone calls hospitality (2007, p. 136).

Recognisability has a negative form in the "right to invisibility", for which Alloa reports calls under regimes of surveillance and profiling (2023, p. 331), and research on promotional cultures treats invisibility as "an equally valid strategy of resistance" (Jiménez-Martínez and Edwards, 2023, p. 16). Persons who depend on assistance cannot resist in this way without losing it, because the agency or government registers every person it serves. For them, the right to invisibility is the option of not being read on terms they have not accepted, whereas the positive form of recognisability is being read on terms they have accepted. A person who claims this right combines what Alloa calls the "passive resistance" that evades categorisation with the "active resistance" that demands visible recognition (2023, p. 335). The refusal is then a request for recognition on terms that the person can accept, which is the claim that the criterion requires an agency or government to answer.

Methodology

I use critical discourse analysis to examine disputes over biometric registration as a condition of assistance or legal status, in documents dated from May 2023 to October 2026. The corpus begins with a notice of the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR making biometric enrolment a condition of assistance and ends with reports on Myanmar nationals in Malaysia who feared forced return. The design is based on Fairclough's concept of "nodal" discourses,

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which "subsume and articulate in a particular way a great many other discourses" (2010, p. 507). I treat UNHCR's discourse on registration and identity management as the node of these disputes, and section 5.2 of UNHCR's *Guidance on Registration and Identity Management* (UNHCR, n.d.) as its text. Because research on recontextualisation "entails comparing texts in different social fields and at different social scales" (Fairclough, 2010, p. 509), I chose cases that differ in field and in scale. Two concern assistance, in South Africa and Gaza, and two the registration of refugees by the state, in Malaysia and Mizoram (Table S1 of the online supplement).

The cases were selected by purposive sampling, through a search with an AI assistant, as I know of no list of disputes from which to draw a representative sample. A dispute had to meet four criteria, namely a biometric condition of assistance or legal status, a recorded refusal or contestation, an official response, and little academic work. I included registration by the state because UNHCR provides for registration that "the host government leads" (UNHCR, n.d., section 5.2). To meet the fourth criterion, I limited the search to the five years before October 2026, given that research has examined earlier conditions and disputes (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 59; Madianou, 2025, p. 74). Ukraine was not examined, because the humanitarian agencies no longer required biometric data there (Wille, 2023).

The documents for the four cases and the node were collected between 1 and 3 October 2026 with the same assistant, Claude (Anthropic; Opus 5.5). It searched the web and saved documents under my direction, and its four search agents reported candidate texts without saving files. I approved each file before it was saved, and every quotation from the agents was checked against a saved copy.

Of the 83 documents, I selected 21 as a core corpus, designed to hold four texts for the node and one text for each of five positions in each case (Table S1). The five positions consist in setting the condition, supporting it, answering contestation, refusing or contesting

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it, and speaking as a person subject to it. For three of the five positions in Mizoram no text was found. The other 62 documents form a context corpus for tracing chains of texts and checking facts, from which I also quote persons subject to the condition. One text for each position suffices, because the article asks what is owed in answer to a refusal rather than how often it occurs. The texts in which agencies and governments set the condition are also its official statements.

The core texts were analysed with Fairclough's "three-dimensional method of discourse analysis" (2010, p. 132). At the level of text, I annotated 247 spans in 79 excerpts with ten categories, namely social actors, nominalisation, deontic modality, epistemic modality, evaluation, semantic relations, assumptions, reporting and intertextuality, legitimation and wording. The unit of analysis is the excerpt, and a span was assigned to a category when it answered that category's question in Table S2. The assistant proposed the excerpts and a first annotation of each, which I reviewed against the source text. Every excerpt was found word for word in its saved copy by a script. A speaker of Malay checked the assistant's translations of the two Malay core texts.

At the level of discourse practice, I identified the discourses of each document by its "themes" and "perspective" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 129) and their "particular mix" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 218). Since intertextuality is "a matter of recontextualization" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 51), I traced how the wording of the node was transformed in Bangladesh and compared the texts of the four cases with it. At the level of social practice, I treated a representation as ideological when it could be shown to contribute to maintaining "social relations of power" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 9). For RQ1, I asked whether requiring biometric registration as a "necessary means" would have "negative consequences" that "undermine the stated goal" or "other agents' goals" (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012, pp. 63–64). For RQ2, I applied the criterion of recognition to each answer to refusal.

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To operationalise the general question, what an agency or government owes to a person who refuses to be read, I divided it into two research questions and seven sub-questions (Table S3). Each sub-question, for example who is said to cause the loss of assistance, corresponds to a concept of the framework and to the textual categories through which I answered it. I fixed the ten categories in advance but recorded sub-labels as they occurred, since categories are "always provisional and open to change" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 15).

My position shapes these choices, which I made as a scholar of communication ethics in London. I apply a criterion drawn from Kantian ethics, and tested against the decolonial critique, to decisions affecting vulnerable populations in Asia and Africa, whom I know only through texts written mostly by intermediaries. In writing about them I risk speaking for them, a problem that a "retreat" into speaking only for oneself does not solve (Alcoff, 1991, pp. 17–22). I address it by treating the texts in which they speak as a position of their own and by stating my criterion for readers to contest. The assistant is a further intermediary, as it found only texts in English or Malay that search engines index.

Given these limits, I rely on transparency to establish validity. Every claim in the findings cites a document by its identifier. A GitHub repository holds the record and SHA-256 hash of every document and the prompts and scripts used to build the corpus (https://anonymous.4open.science/r/corpus-review-7390/). Its interactive page presents the corpus with the textual analysis and resolves each document identifier cited in the findings (https://anonymous.4open.science/w/corpus-review-7390/).

Findings

RQ1: the condition and the loss of assistance

On the first research question, agencies and governments justify biometric registration as a protection, yet in two settings they withdraw assistance from the persons who refuse.

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UNHCR and the Government of Bangladesh present the condition as a protection for refugees, and the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) as a protection of grants against fraud (Figure 2; Table S4). Both present the loss of assistance as the consequence of a person's refusal rather than of their own policy, so that this person appears responsible for it. Through this responsibilisation, they transfer to recipients the verification of identity, which UNHCR and SASSA must provide to their funders.

[Figure 2 near here]

At the level of text, the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR legitimate the condition by rationalisation, writing in their notice of May 2023 that establishing identities "is key to ensuring protection and solutions for refugees" (UNHCR_005). This practical argument for biometric registration as a "necessary means" (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012, pp. 63–64) is rebutted in Bangladesh. The Rohingya families who refused were "cut off from food aid", as *The Diplomat* reported in June 2025, and so lost the assistance that the condition is meant to protect (Diplomat_002). UNHCR nevertheless stated that "no specific protection risks were identified" from suspending distributions (Diplomat_002). Funders are a further reason for the condition, as UNHCR is reported to cite "donor confidence" and the National Treasury made SASSA's budget "conditional" on better "biometric and income verification processes" (Diplomat_002; OpenSecrets_001).

Agencies and governments that set the condition share an assumption with some of those who dispute it, namely that assistance may be taken by persons not entitled to it, and they differ over who should verify identity. SASSA introduced enrolment "to ensure every grant recipient is verifiably authentic", and the Israeli representative takes as given "Hamas' continued looting of humanitarian resources" (SAnews_001; IsraelUN_001). In Gaza, UNICEF objected to facial recognition as a "precondition", yet a week later the Emergency Relief Coordinator offered "verification measures" against theft by Hamas, in a letter that

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Israel annexed to its own letter to the Security Council (UNGeneva_001; IsraelUN_001). Asked how the distribution in Gaza verified recipients, the United States Ambassador to Israel answered that "there is a screening that is done" (USEmbassy_001). The question in Malaysia is who registers refugees, as the government registers detainees under its own programme and has instructed UNHCR to stop (MOHA_001; Hansard_001).

UNHCR states a right to refuse only in its guidance, the text of the node (UNHCR_001; Figure 2). At the level of discourse practice, UNHCR combines in this guidance two divergent discourses, one of rights and consent and one of identity management. In the first, UNHCR represents the person as holder of "the right to refuse", and in the second it presents biometrics as "the preferred methodology" for verifying identity. UNHCR limits this right in a footnote, where "the related right to object" appears in brackets and "may be determined according to government policy, not UNHCR policy". A host government that leads registration, as in Malaysia, can therefore withdraw the right (MOHA_001). In Bangladesh, where the Government conducts the exercise jointly with UNHCR, registration is "a pre-requisite for the GoB's protection and assistance" and no right to refuse is stated (UNHCR_005; UNHCR_006).

In the texts in which they set the condition, by contrast, agencies and governments name no person who could refuse it. The Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR, in their notice of 2023, recontextualise the guidance by turning "participation in registration is voluntary" into "Participation in the exercise is required" (UNHCR_001; UNHCR_005). They keep the nominalisation and choose the highest of the "degrees of commitment" to obligation in deontic modality (Fairclough, 2003, p. 170). South Africa's Minister of Social Development makes the applicant the grammatical subject of "consents" in the regulations of the Social Relief of Distress grant, although the consent is given "By virtue of application" (SRDRegs_001). The word consent occurs in none of the other seven texts in which agencies

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and governments set or support the condition (Table S1). The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation denies a condition that others report, as an official is reported to do in Mizoram, so that a person who refused would have no one to address (GHF_002; Reuters_001; TheWire_001).

Where they withdraw assistance, agencies and governments connect refusal to the loss by a semantic relation of condition or consequence, and they leave themselves unnamed or present themselves as unable to act. In the sentence of the notice that states the loss, "Persons who fail to show up will be inactivated", persons act only by failing and the passive verb has no agent (UNHCR_005). In their questions and answers of January 2026, the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR write of "refusing the processing of personal data" without naming a person, and their nominalisations "deregistration" and "the discontinuation of protection and assistance" have no agent (UNHCR_006). Grants in South Africa "will remain suspended" for recipients who do not complete the verification (GroundUp_002). A SASSA manager said that "if you don't consent, we can't assess you", presenting SASSA's decision as an inability (OpenSecrets_001). At the level of social practice, this representation is ideological, because its authors assign the loss to the person who refuses and so contribute to maintaining "social relations of power" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 9). The High Court of South Africa, however, found it "absurd for the respondents to place a duty on the applicants" to update government databases (Judgment_001, para. 124).

RQ2: the refusal and its answer

On the second research question, no agency or government in the five settings answers a refusal by offering an alternative to being read. Where a refusal is reported, the families who refused lost food assistance in Bangladesh, and refugees in Mizoram say that those who refuse are threatened with detention (Figure 2; Table S5). Recognition would require such an alternative, because the option of refusal is not secured for a person who can refuse only by losing assistance.

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Officials make vulnerable populations visible as classes of persons and as data rather than as persons who may refuse. As social actors, these populations are classified in the notice as "all eligible persons", and in the wording of SASSA's announcement an applicant is "the client" (UNHCR_005; SAnews_001). A Malaysian deputy minister spoke of refugees "yang tidak mempunyai identiti" (who have no identity), and the Ministry of Home Affairs reports that detainees "telah didatakan" (have been entered as data) (Hansard_001; MOHA_001). Some officials in India are reported as saying that it is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention and that "refugees therefore have no right to ask for consent" (TheWire_001). Officials thus make identity and rights depend on what states grant, and on this account a person to whom no state grants them has no option of refusal. Recognition is then, in Coulthard's words, "imposed on or granted to" the person (2014, p. 25).

The persons so classified are quoted only in news reports, and agencies and governments name a refusal of the condition once in the eight texts in which they set or support it (UNHCR_006). In these reports, some speak of fear, as when a camp resident in Mizoram said that "we are afraid to refuse the mandate", which makes refusal the object of fear rather than an act (TheWire_001). Others left, such as families who "moved out of the camp after refusing to enrol", a form of passive resistance in Alloa's sense (TheWire_001; Alloa, 2023, p. 335). In Bangladesh, two Rohingya representatives quoted in another report in *The Diplomat* engaged in active resistance in the same sense (Alloa, 2023, p. 335) and stated the community's "minimum terms" in the imperative, "Put it in writing", so that "consent is real, not forced" (Diplomat_001). The terms require that refugees be told "in Rohingya or Bangla" what data are taken and that the word Rohingya be restored "on every document" (Diplomat_001). Here a person subject to the condition is the source of an obligation and uses the vocabulary of consent to claim the option of refusal that recognition requires. With this

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demand, the representatives contest who determines the terms of recognition (Coulthard, 2014, p. 17) rather than registration itself.

At the level of discourse practice, however, the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR, who require the legibility of the body, provide a form for complaints and none for a refusal. In the genre of questions and answers, they write the questions as well as the answers and invite "concerns/complaints" (UNHCR_006). UNHCR provides in its guidance for "alternative methods" when a person refuses "on legitimate grounds", whereas in the notice "alternative arrangements" are for anyone "who cannot come to the site" (UNHCR_001; UNHCR_005). After the families' sit-in, UNHCR confirmed the suspension in a letter in which it reportedly stated that "no humanitarian assistance could be provided to those not biometrically registered" (Diplomat_002). UNHCR also encouraged the families to enrol "as soon as possible", recording their refusal as non-compliance rather than answering it as a claim (Diplomat_002).

Governments and organisations that refuse or contest, by contrast, are represented as acting for a reason and are answered by a government or a court. In a report by ThePrint of September 2023, Mizoram is the grammatical subject of "has decided not to collect", and the reason follows, "as it would lead to discrimination" (ThePrint_001). An official is reported as explaining that a later chief minister "shifted his position after meeting with the Union Home Minister" (TheWire_001). South Africa's High Court found for two organisations that contested the verification of applicants, and the government appealed (Judgment_001; OpenSecrets_001). In Malaysia, UNHCR asked whether decisions to return were "genuinely free and informed", as did the chair of a refugee organisation, and no answer appears in the core texts (UNHCR_004; MyanmarNow_001). In these settings, a refusal was answered as a claim only when a government or an organisation stated it.

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Discussion: what is owed to those who refuse

On RQ1, research on governmentality has applied responsibilisation to crime and citizenship (van Houdt and Schinkel, 2014, pp. 60–61) and to refugees in camps, whom "resiliency humanitarianism" assists "with the aim of responsibilizing them" (Ilcan and Rygiel, 2015, p. 333). With these findings, the article extends the concept to the condition of assistance. The verification of identity that humanitarian agencies transfer to recipients belongs to what Madianou et al. call "accountability to donors", as distinct from "accountability to affected people" (2016, pp. 960, 962). A person who refuses to be read is thus held responsible for a task that humanitarian agencies owe to their funders, a practice that Guttman and Ressler call "blaming the victim" (2001, p. 122).

On RQ2, the article holds that a refusal addressed to an agency or government is communication, and the obligations of communication ethics therefore apply to the answer it receives. The families in Bangladesh followed their refusal with a sit-in and with written appeals, including a complaint to four United Nations Special Rapporteurs, and so gave an account of themselves (Diplomat_002). Voice is the capacity to give such an account, and "treating people as if they lack that capacity" is to treat them "as if they were not human" (Couldry, 2010, p. 1). Hospitality, which Silverstone defines as "an obligation to listen and to hear" (2007, p. 136), requires that whoever receives such a refusal listen to the reasons given. By encouraging the families to enrol, UNHCR met neither obligation, because it answered their refusal as non-compliance rather than as a claim, treating them as lacking the capacity to give an account of themselves.

Both sources of the criterion of recognition, Kantian ethics and the decolonial critique, identify what those who set the condition withhold from vulnerable populations. In Kantian ethics, justice requires that those on the receiving end be able to "refuse or renegotiate" the tasks assigned to them (O'Neill, 1992, p. 64). In the decolonial critique,

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recognition is "granted" by a dominant party (Coulthard, 2014, pp. 30–31), so that the persons registered take no part in determining its terms. The second paradox answers this objection, because the two Rohingya representatives acted as "creators of the terms" by which they are to be recognised (Coulthard, 2014, p. 39), in a vocabulary of consent that is their own (Diplomat_001; Hossain et al., 2024). The cases thereby decide for the "decolonial translation" that Maldonado-Torres describes (2020, p. 170) rather than for delinking, since those subject to the condition state for themselves the test that O'Neill draws from Kant.

The finding goes beyond what research on technocolonialism expects, namely that "mundane resistance" takes the form of "non-participation and refusal" (Madianou, 2025, pp. 167–168). In Mizoram, families who refused to enrol "moved out of the camp" (TheWire_001), so that invisibility as a "strategy of resistance" (Jiménez-Martínez and Edwards, 2023, p. 16) cost them their place in it. The representatives, by contrast, asked for the word Rohingya on every document (Diplomat_001), and so claimed fuller identification under their own name. The evidence is limited, as one journalist reported the terms from two representatives and the corpus holds no document written by those who refused. With their refusal, the families in Bangladesh nevertheless move the question from how much an agency or government may read to who sets the terms of the reading.

The answer that the families received may be explained by the mode of recognition that agencies and governments extend, which is regulatory rather than political in the sense distinguished in research on promotional cultures. In South Africa, the claim that received an answer was aligned with the logic of verification, for it concerned how the government verified applicants rather than their option of refusal. The claim of the families, by contrast, was collective, in that it concerned every Rohingya refugee, and structural, in that it contested the terms on which all were registered rather than one person's case. Recognition therefore requires that agencies and governments answer such a claim in the political mode, which

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addresses subjects "as agents capable of making claims on the political order" (Author, 2026, p. 7). Regulatory recognition thus corresponds to legibility, since the agency or government verifies a person on terms it has set, and political recognition to recognisability, since it answers a claim about those terms.

In O'Neill's reading of Kant, an agent uses others when it adopts fundamental principles "to which others cannot possibly consent" (1989, p. 114), and she applies the same test to "the principles that guide the institution of employment" (1989, pp. 122–123). On the Marxist account that she considers, capitalist employment uses workers by making an activity that they cannot choose to avoid "appear to them as one that they could choose or refuse" (O'Neill, 1989, p. 123). On this account, humanitarian agencies that keep the condition partly to satisfy their funders use the persons who depend on assistance, because their vocabulary of consent presents as a choice what these persons cannot refuse without loss. The same argument allows a biometric condition to be just, provided that the agency or government offers an alternative to those who refuse and answers them with reasons.

Four obligations follow from these findings for any agency or government that makes biometric registration a condition of assistance, and the first two concern the demand. It must offer those who refuse an alternative to being read, because it imposed the consent dilemma and can remove that dilemma. As the ICRC's undertaking of 2019 shows (ICRC, 2019, pp. 8, 15), this obligation can be met. It must also give the persons it registers an account of the verification that it reports to its funders, given that it transfers to them a task that belongs to its accountability to donors.

The other two obligations concern the answer to a refusal. The agency or government must inform the persons it registers, in their languages and in writing, so that they can refuse as well as consent and state a refusal that its officials can read. It must also answer a refusal in writing and with reasons rather than urge the person to enrol, since hospitality and voice

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require that it hear the person's own reasons. These obligations fall on governments as well as on humanitarian agencies, since governments lead or share registration in Malaysia and Bangladesh and set the condition themselves in South Africa and Mizoram.

Studies of digital identity call for "a depolarised approach to surveillance and recognition" (Weitzberg et al., 2021, p. 2), and the findings show that an agency or government can read a person without offering the option of refusal. By the article's criterion, being legible amounts to being recognised only when the person can refuse the terms of the reading, which answers the question that these studies leave open. Legibility and recognisability are therefore compatible, as a person who has the option of refusing the terms of a reading may also accept them.

Conclusion

This article asked what humanitarian agencies and governments owe to those who refuse biometric registration, and it explains the two paradoxes it identified by the difference between being read and being recognised. In the first paradox, those who set the condition name no one who could refuse it, even where they speak of consent. The reason is that the condition requires only the legibility of the body, which involves no act of the person, whereas consent is an act that a person may withhold. In the second paradox, some of those who refuse ask for their own name on every document, and so accept being read while contesting the terms on which they are read. Research on humanitarian technology expects refusal to take the form of "non-participation" (Madianou, 2025, pp. 167–168), whereas these persons ask to be identified on terms of their own.

The theoretical advancement lies in extending the obligations of hospitality and voice beyond the address of organisations to their publics, to the answer an agency or government owes the person it reads. Whoever imposed the condition owes those who refuse an alternative to being read, and the persons registered an account of the verification reported to

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funders, because the condition rather than the refusal caused the loss. The same agency or government must inform the persons it registers in their languages and answer those who refuse in writing and with reasons, so that a refusal is legible to officials and heard.

The criterion of recognisability also identifies an obligation that the vocabularies of consent and visibility omit. Consent "does not carry any meaning" once registration is a condition of assistance (Madianou, 2025, p. 77), whereas the option of refusal can still be secured through an alternative to being read. The persons registered as data were legible with no option of refusal, and the families who became invisible in Mizoram lost their place in the camp, so that recognition depends on neither visibility nor invisibility.

The argument's limit lies in its position towards the decolonial critique, since the article asks for an answer from the agency or government on which those who refuse depend. The criterion thus specifies what a "granted" recognition (Coulthard, 2014, pp. 30–31) must include without removing the party that grants it and decides on the terms stated by those who refuse. The article also knows only through intermediaries the word with which Rohingya interviewees describe consent (Hossain et al., 2024), and whether *ejajot* coincides with the option of refusal remains unverified. The article may therefore determine in its own vocabulary the terms of the recognition it claims for them, which is the objection the critique makes to the theory of recognition. Future studies should be conducted with refugee-led organisations, on questions they set and in their members' languages, following what Alcoff calls "the practice of speaking with and to" (1991, p. 23). Such studies would test whether those who refuse claim the option of refusal that recognisability requires, or define it in terms of their own.

AI use declaration

All theoretical arguments, analytical claims and scholarly judgements in this article are my own. I used Claude (Anthropic Opus 5.5 and Fable 5.1) to search for and save the documents

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of the corpus, to propose the excerpts and a first annotation of each, which I reviewed against the source texts, to translate the two Malay core texts, which a speaker of Malay checked, and for the structural organisation of drafts, proofreading and prose refinement, as the methodology describes in part. As a disabled and neurodivergent researcher, I employed AI as an assistive technology to address these specific barriers. I am responsible for the content of the article, including every quotation and reference.

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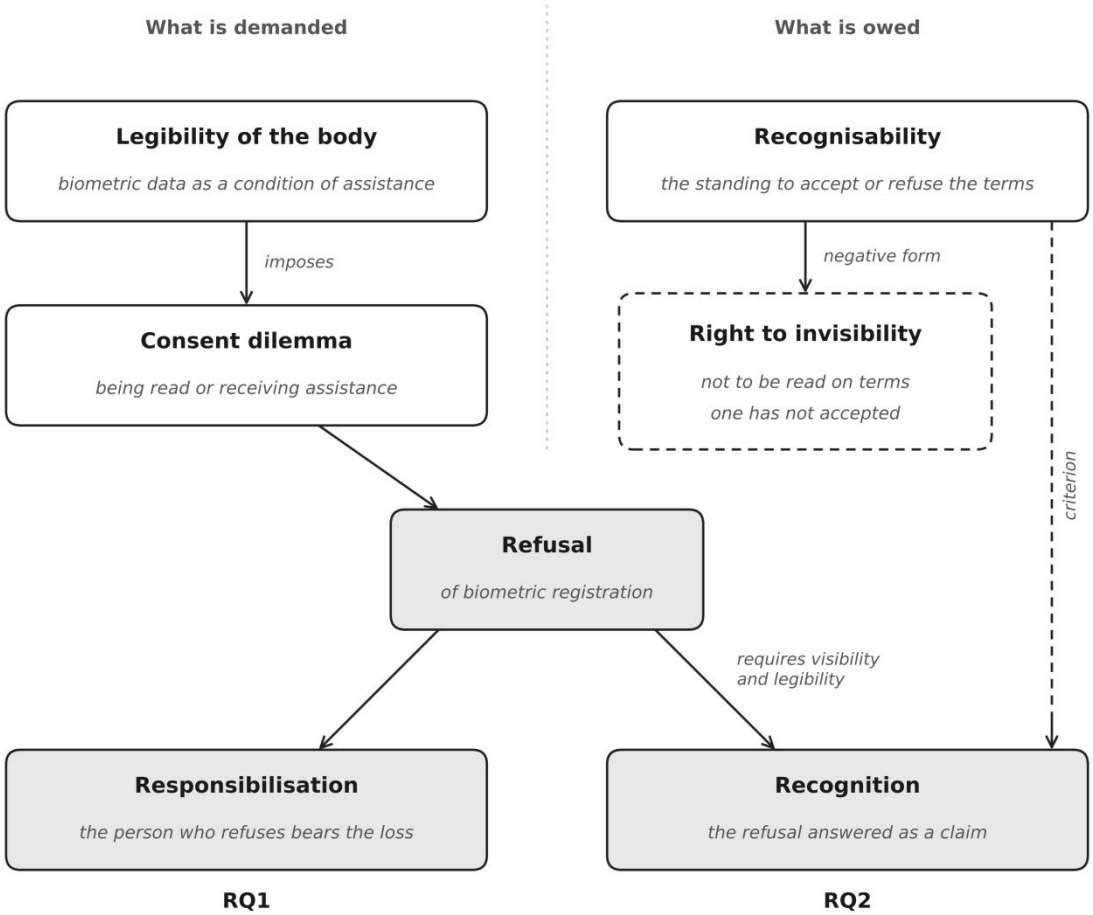

Figure 1. The conceptual framework and the research questions. The left panel sets out what is demanded of the vulnerable populations who are registered, and the right panel what is owed to them.

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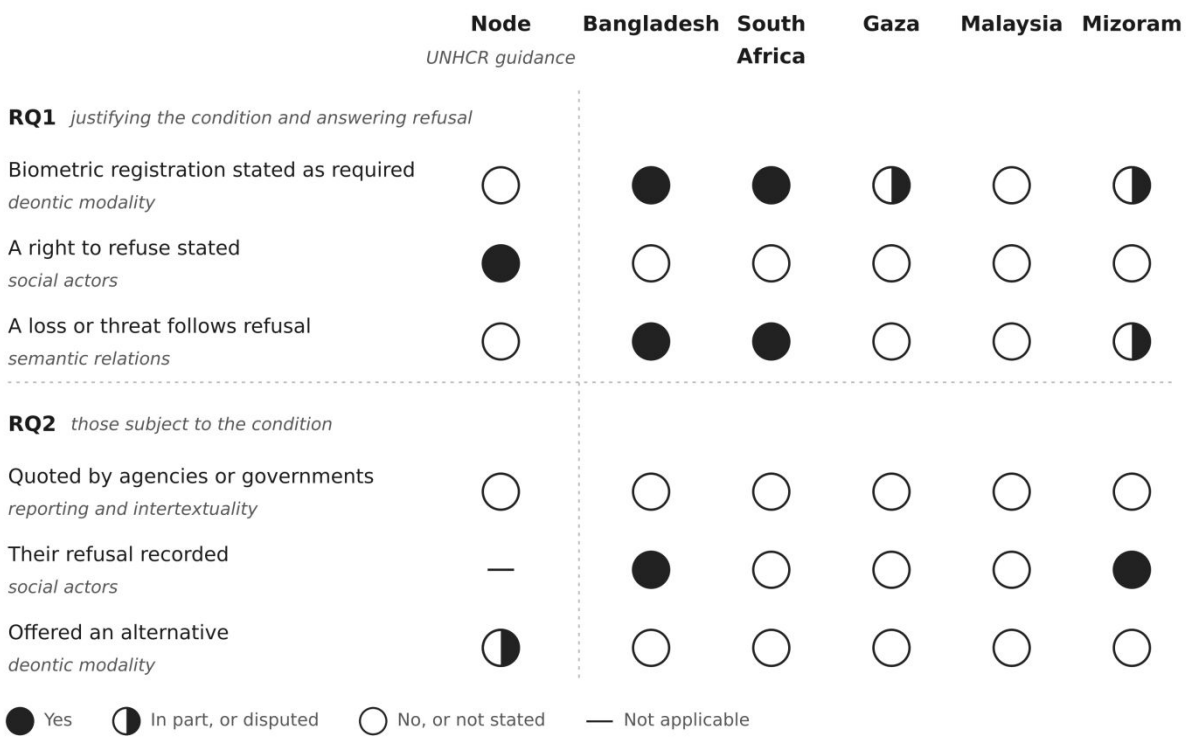

Figure 2. Findings for the node and the five settings. Each row names a feature of the texts, with the textual category that identifies it in italics (Table S2). Tables S4 and S5 give the wording for the node and for each setting.

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Supplemental material

Legible but not recognised. What humanitarian agencies and governments owe to those who refuse biometric registration

Table S1 gives the cases and the core corpus, and Tables S2 and S3 the textual categories and the research questions. Tables S4 and S5 give the wording on which Figure 2 of the article is based. The works cited are listed in the references of the article.

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Table S1. Cases and core corpus.

Case	Saved documents	Sets the condition	Supports it	Answers contestation	Refuses or contests	Voice of those subject to it
South Africa	20 (September 2023 to August 2026)	Minister of Social Development, regulations of the Social Relief of Distress grant (2022, as in force from April 2025)	SAnews, biometric enrolment by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) (August 2025)	Open Secrets, a SASSA official on consent (August 2026)	High Court, *Institute for Economic Justice v Minister of Social Development* (January 2025)	GroundUp, a grant recipient (June 2024)
Gaza	20 (May to September 2025)	Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, overview memo (May 2025)	Israel, letter to the Security Council (May 2025)	United States Ambassador to Israel, interview with CBS News (August 2025)	UNICEF, United Nations press briefing in Geneva (May 2025)	Reuters, recipients at a distribution centre (May 2025)
Malaysia	28 (July 2025 to October 2026)	Ministry of Home Affairs, media statement (May 2026)	UNHCR Malaysia, notice on the refugee registration document (January 2026)	Senate, Hansard of the sitting of 23 July 2026	UNHCR, press release on returns to Myanmar (September 2026)	*Myanmar Now*, Myanmar nationals in Malaysia (October 2026)
Mizoram, India	9 (September 2023 to March 2026)	Union Ministry of Home Affairs, directive (2023), no text found	Government of Mizoram (2025), no text found	Parliament of India, answer (2023 to 2026), no text found	ThePrint, refusal by the Government of Mizoram (September 2023)	*The Wire*, refugees at Zokhawthar (December 2025)

Note. The node is section 5.2 of UNHCR's *Guidance on Registration and Identity Management*. The core texts for Bangladesh are the notice of May 2023, the questions and answers of January 2026 and a report in *The Diplomat* of June 2025. With the node and Bangladesh, the corpus has 83 documents.

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Table S2. Textual categories, after Fairclough (2003).

Category	Pages	Question asked of the text	Annotated spans
Social actors	145–150	Who acts upon whom, and who is absent from the clause?	60
Nominalisation	12–13, 143–144	Which processes become things, and whose agency disappears with them?	26
Deontic modality	167–170	Who is obliged or permitted, and by whom?	26
Epistemic modality	167–171	How strongly does the text commit to what it claims?	20
Evaluation	171–173	What is presented as good or bad, and on whose authority?	17
Semantic relations	89–91	How are refusal and loss connected in the grammar?	32
Assumptions	55–58	What must the reader already accept for the sentence to make sense?	12
Reporting and intertextuality	39–51	Whose words are these, and how close does the text stand to them?	10
Legitimation	98–100	On what grounds is the condition justified?	13
Wording	129–133	Which words name the persons and the place?	31

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Table S3. Research questions, sub-questions, concepts and textual categories.

RQ	Sub-question	Concept	Part of the framework	Textual categories (Table S2)
RQ1	Which biometric data must persons provide, and on what condition?	Legibility of the body	Legibility as statecraft, a "coercive abstraction" (Scott, 1998; Sandvik, 2023, p. 27), which biometric registration applies to the body	Deontic modality, semantic relations, wording
RQ1	How is the condition justified, and how is refusal described?	Responsibilisation	Governmentality, which makes individuals and communities responsible for "public tasks" (van Houdt and Schinkel, 2014, pp. 60–61)	Deontic modality, evaluation, legitimation
RQ1	Who is said to cause the loss of assistance, and which harm is acknowledged?	Responsibilisation	Health communication, on "blaming the victim" (Guttman and Ressler, 2001, p. 122)	Social actors, nominalisation, semantic relations, epistemic modality
RQ2	Who appears in the document, and in whose words?	Visibility	Recognition presupposes "a form of social visibility" (Alloa, 2023, p. 327)	Social actors, reporting and intertextuality
RQ2	What form must a claim take to be considered?	Legibility of refusal	A condition of an answer, since a refusal must take a form that officials can read and be heard, which Silverstone calls hospitality (2007, p. 136)	Deontic modality, assumptions
RQ2	Under what name are persons recorded, and do they have the option of refusing the terms of that reading?	Recognisability	The criterion drawn from Kantian ethics and the decolonial critique of recognition	Wording, deontic modality
RQ2	Is a refusal to be read answered as a claim or recorded as non-compliance?	Right to invisibility	The negative form of recognisability, the "right to invisibility" (Alloa, 2023, p. 331)	Social actors, semantic relations, evaluation

Note. RQ1 asks how agencies and governments justify making biometric registration a condition of assistance, and how they answer those who refuse to register. RQ2 asks how an agency or government ought to answer a person who refuses, and whether those in the five settings answer as they ought.

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Table S4. Justification and responsibilisation in the node and in the five settings (RQ1), with the discourses of each setting.

Setting, documents and discourses	Data demanded	The person who could refuse	Refusal and loss	Justification and funders
Node, UNHCR's guidance (UNHCR_001). Discourses of identity management, of rights and consent and of protection	"Biometrics are the preferred methodology for verifying an individual's identity, including at assistance delivery"	"participation in registration is voluntary" *[nominalisation, a process without a person]*; "their obligation to cooperate" *[deontic modality, an obligation that the person possesses]*; "the right to refuse the collection of their biometrics on legitimate grounds related to his or her specific personal situation" *[social actors, the person as holder of a right; assumptions, refusal requires grounds]*; "(and the related right to object)", which "may be determined according to government policy, not UNHCR policy" *[wording, the right in brackets]*	"alternative methods identified to ensure they can access rights, assistance and solutions" *[social actors, passive without an agent; semantic relations, purpose]*; consent to share data is free when a person can "refuse or withdraw without adverse consequences" *[semantic relations, consequence excluded]*	"The host government has a legitimate interest in knowing who is on its territory" *[evaluation, the interest as "legitimate"]*
Bangladesh (UNHCR_005, UNHCR_006, Diplomat_002). Discourses of identity management, of protection and of security and sovereignty	"Biometrics will be enrolled for all individuals 5 years and above" (UNHCR_005) *[social actors, passive without an agent, persons classified by age]*	"Participation in the exercise is required for all eligible persons" (UNHCR_005) *[nominalisation kept from the node; deontic modality, high obligation without a requiring agent]*; "alternative arrangements" for anyone "who cannot come to the site" (UNHCR_005)	"Persons who fail to show up will be inactivated in the MRC, and they will not benefit from any assistance in future" (UNHCR_005) *[social actors, persons active in a failure, passive without an agent; semantic relations, consequence; epistemic modality, categorical]*; "refusing the processing of personal data may lead to deregistration and, as a result, the discontinuation of protection and assistance depending on the circumstances" (UNHCR_006) *[nominalisation, refusal and loss without persons; epistemic modality, "may";*	"establishing and preserving identities is key to ensuring protection and solutions for refugees" (UNHCR_005) *[legitimation, rationalisation]*; "aligns with global standards for identity management and is essential for UNHCR to fulfill its mandate" (Diplomat_002) *[legitimation, authorisation; deontic modality, necessity]*; "help maintain donor confidence", reported indirectly (Diplomat_002); "no specific protection risks were identified" (Diplomat_002) *[social actors, passive without an agent]*

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Setting, documents and discourses	Data demanded	The person who could refuse	Refusal and loss	Justification and funders
			semantic relations, consequence]; families "cut off from food aid" (Diplomat_002) *[social actors, passive without an agent, in the journalist's words]*	
South Africa (SRDRegs_001, SAnews_001, GroundUp_002, OpenSecrets_001, Judgment_001). Discourses of identity management and of rights and consent	"mandatory Beneficiary Biometric Enrolment" from 1 September 2025 (SAnews_001) *[deontic modality, high obligation; nominalisation, a named programme]*	"By virtue of application" an applicant "consents" (SRDRegs_001) *[semantic relations, applying as the ground of consent; social actors, the applicant as subject of the consent]*; "Applications without biometric data will be immediately put into the review cycle" (SAnews_001) *[social actors, applicants as applications, passive without an agent]*	"Their grants will remain suspended" (GroundUp_002) *[epistemic modality, categorical prediction; social actors, recipients as possessors]*; "if you don't consent, we can't assess you", after a comparison with accepting "the T&C's" (OpenSecrets_001) *[semantic relations, conditional; deontic modality, what the agency says it cannot do; wording, a consumer contract]*	"to fight fraud", reported indirectly (GroundUp_002) *[legitimation, rationalisation]*; "to ensure every grant recipient is verifiably authentic" (SAnews_001) *[legitimation, rationalisation; assumptions, authenticity in doubt]*; budget "conditional on the agency improving its biometric and income verification processes" (OpenSecrets_001); for the High Court it is "absurd for the respondents to place a duty on the applicants", since "it is the responsibility of the government" (Judgment_001, para. 124)
Gaza (GHF_002, Reuters_001, UNGeneva_001, IsraelUN_001). Discourses of protection and of security and sovereignty	"anyone accessing aid will have to submit to facial recognition technology", reported indirectly from humanitarian groups (Reuters_001) *[deontic modality, high obligation; wording, "submit"]*	"There will be no eligibility requirements" (GHF_002) *[epistemic modality, categorical denial]*; "the opportunity to screen recipients", reported indirectly from Israeli officials (Reuters_001)	Not stated	"purely based on need" (GHF_002) *[legitimation, moral evaluation]*; "verification measures to ensure that aid does not get stolen by Hamas", in the letter of the Emergency Relief Coordinator of 16 May 2025 (IsraelUN_001) *[wording, the shared term "verification"; assumptions, theft taken as possible]*; "strict oversight to prevent Hamas' continued looting of humanitarian resources", in the reply of the Israeli representative (IsraelUN_001)

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Setting, documents and discourses	Data demanded	The person who could refuse	Refusal and loss	Justification and funders
				[assumptions, looting taken as given; semantic relations, purpose]; "against all humanitarian principles", in the words of UNICEF (UNGeneva_001) *[legitimation refused, by moral evaluation]*; "every dollar is traceable and every outcome verifiable" (GHF_002)
Malaysia (MOHA_001, Hansard_001). Discourses of security and sovereignty, of protection and of belonging	"Kerajaan merekod maklumat identiti dan biometrik" (the Government to record identity and biometric information) (MOHA_001) *[social actors, the government as recorder]*	"4,010 tahanan telah didatakan" (4,010 detainees have been entered as data) (MOHA_001) *[social actors, classified as detainees; wording, a passive verb formed on "data"]*	Not stated for refusal; expulsion is "tindakan mandatori" (mandatory action) "akibat pelanggaran undang-undang tempatan" (resulting from violations of local law) (Hansard_001) *[deontic modality, high obligation; semantic relations, consequence of the person's act]*	"selaras dengan Arahan Majlis Keselamatan Negara No. 23" (in line with National Security Council Directive No. 23) (MOHA_001) *[legitimation, authorisation]*; the government "mengarahkan" (instructed) UNHCR to stop registering (Hansard_001) *[deontic modality, a directive]*; registration without the records of any "entiti asing" (foreign entity) (Hansard_001)
Mizoram (ThePrint_001, TheWire_001). Discourses of identity management and of belonging	"an Indian government mandate to enrol residents in a biometric identification process" (TheWire_001) *[deontic modality, obligation as a noun]*	Enrolment "is not mandatory", as the Deputy Commissioner is reported to say, and "presented by the village council as mandatory" (TheWire_001)	Refugees "were warned that those who refused would be questioned and detained", reported indirectly (TheWire_001)	"even though they are our brethren, it is important to have a systematic way to trace them", in the words of a legislator (TheWire_001)

Note. Square brackets name the textual category (Table S2) and the feature observed in the annotated excerpts. Quotations without brackets come from the same documents. English glosses follow the Malay quotations. Documents are cited by source and number, and the repository gives each full identifier.

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Table S5. Visibility and legibility of refusal in the node and in the five settings (RQ2). Brackets, glosses and codes as in Table S4.

Setting	How officials name those subject to the condition	Their own words, in news reports	Form of the refusal	Answer to the refusal
Node (UNHCR_001)	"Individuals" *[social actors, generic]*; persons "of concern to UNHCR" *[wording, a category of the agency]*	None, since in the guidance UNHCR tells staff what to say to "individuals"	Refusal "on legitimate grounds related to his or her specific personal situation" *[assumptions, refusal requires grounds that another judges]*	"individuals may be registered, and alternative methods identified" *[deontic modality, permission; social actors, passive without an agent]*
Bangladesh	"all eligible persons" (UNHCR_005) *[social actors, a generic class]*; "Persons who fail to show up" (UNHCR_005) *[social actors, persons defined by a failure]*; identity cards without "ethnic identifiers" such as "Rohingya", reported indirectly (Diplomat_002)	"being forced to choose between hunger and submission to biometrics" (Diplomat_002); "Is this not coercion?" (Diplomat_001)	A "peaceful sit-in", "registered letters" and a complaint to four United Nations Special Rapporteurs (Diplomat_002); "minimum terms" in the journalist's words, with "Put it in writing" and "restore the word on every document" in the imperative (Diplomat_001)	"no humanitarian assistance could be provided to those not biometrically registered", reported indirectly from a letter dated before the registered letters (Diplomat_002) *[social actors, persons classified by what they lack; deontic modality, a decision as an impossibility; reporting, indirect]*; enrolment encouraged "as soon as possible"; the families' account is "a claim UNHCR disputes" (Diplomat_002); "concerns/complaints" received at a helpline (UNHCR_006)
South Africa	"every grant recipient" to be "verifiably authentic" (SAnews_001) *[social actors, generic; assumptions, authenticity in doubt]*; "the client" (SAnews_001) *[wording, a commercial term]*	"why do they need to verify your identity again?" (GroundUp_002) *[deontic modality, the necessity questioned]*	Litigation by the Institute for Economic Justice and #PayTheGrants on the verification of applicants (Judgment_001)	Database verification found "unreasonable and unfair" (Judgment_001, para. 125) *[evaluation, negative]*; the government appeals, and the court's orders "cannot be implemented until the appeal is heard" (OpenSecrets_001)
Gaza	"anyone found to be connected with Hamas", reported indirectly from Israeli officials (Reuters_001); "beneficiaries" (UNGeneva_001) *[social actors, passivated]*	"I am hungry and my children are hungry" and "I am afraid" (Reuters_001) *[evaluation, fear, with no clause of refusal]*	UNICEF objects to "the proposal to use facial recognition as a precondition to access aid" (UNGeneva_001) *[social actors, UNICEF as objector]*	No answer to UNICEF in the core texts; a week later the Emergency Relief Coordinator offers "verification measures" in a letter to the Israeli

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				representative (IsraelUN_001) *[wording, the shared term]*
Malaysia	Refugees "yang tidak mempunyai identiti" (who have no identity), "tidak diiktiraf" (not recognised) by their country of origin (Hansard_001); "tahanan" (detainees) and "migran yang memerlukan perlindungan sementara" (migrants who need temporary protection) (MOHA_001) *[social actors, classified; wording, naming]*	"Just because there is a signature on a piece of paper doesn't make it voluntary", in the words of the chair of a refugee organisation (MyanmarNow_001) *[semantic relations, an inference rejected]*	UNHCR asks whether decisions to return were "genuinely free and informed" (UNHCR_004) *[epistemic modality, questioning; wording, the vocabulary of consent]*	No answer in the core texts
Mizoram	"refugees therefore have no right to ask for consent", reported indirectly from "some officials" (TheWire_001)	"we are afraid to refuse the mandate" (TheWire_001) *[evaluation, refusal as the object of fear]*	Families "moved out of the camp after refusing to enrol" (TheWire_001); "Mizoram has decided not to collect" the data "as it would lead to discrimination" (ThePrint_001) *[social actors, the state as subject of the decision; semantic relations, reason]*	No answer to the families in the report, in which refugees "were warned that those who refused would be questioned and detained"; a later chief minister "shifted his position after meeting with the Union Home Minister", since "The state depends on central approval for key projects", in the words of an official (TheWire_001)

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