

## Letter from the Secretary General

Most Esteemed Participants of OAALMUN'24,

It is with great excitement that I extend my warmest invitation to each one of you for the upcoming conference; OAALMUN'24.

As the Secretary General of OAALMUN'24, it is my utmost pleasure to present to you our meticulously crafted study guides, designed to enhance the delegate experience and promote meaningful discussions on critical global issues.

I am honored to welcome you to this significant gathering, where we will embark on a journey of intellectual exploration, collaboration with fellow delegates from various backgrounds and the formation of lasting connections.

Throughout the three days ahead of us, we anticipate engaging debates that will not only enhance your understanding of global affairs but also contribute to the development of critical diplomatic skills. Our dedicated academic team has spared no effort in ensuring that this event becomes a reality, working tirelessly to curate an enriching and memorable experience for all participants.

I encourage you to seize this moment, participate wholeheartedly, and embrace the chance to broaden your horizons academically and professionally. I wholeheartedly wish you all the creation of lasting memories.

Let us all recognize our potential as catalysts for global progress, ready to transcend borders and make a handful out of the opportunities that lie ahead.

Best of regards,

Selma Süeda Çayır, Secretary General

# Letter from the Under-Secretary General and President Chair Beloved Delegates,

I welcome you all to OAALMUN'24, an amazing conference organized by my dear Selma and her execution team. I am Zeynep Rüya Özdemir, and I will be guiding you in UNHCR through our conference.

In OAALMUN'24, UNHCR has an agenda affecting countries technically worldwide, "Return and Reintegration of Refugees and Displaced People". Throughout history, the Middle Eastern region has always been surrounded by wars, diseases and socio-economic difficulties. And as a Commission that works day and night for behalf of refugees, it is a crucial topic for our conference.

I would like to remind you that whether your country is first degree involved with this situation or not, you should participate. Because a delegate's responsibility is to raise their voice against human rights violations, suffering governments and ensuring peace among countries. That is why I hope every delegate will give their most to the resolution of these crises and represent their country the best.

I genuinely hope the study guide is comprehensive enough to guide you through the conference. I will be looking forward to meeting you.

Sincerely, Zeynep Rüya Özdemir

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**Agenda Item:** Return and Reintegration of Refugees and Displaced People Through the Middle Eastern Region

#### Introduction to the Committee UNHCR

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December 14, 1950, by the United Nations General Assembly. The agency leads and coordinates international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally, or resettle in a third country. It also has a mandate to help stateless people.

In more than six decades, the agency has helped tens of millions of people restart their lives. They have faced multiple crises on multiple continents and provided vital protection and assistance to refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced, and stateless people, many of whom have nobody left to turn to.

Today, a staff of some 7,685 people in more than 125 countries continues to help some 33.9 million persons.

#### **Context Framework**

**Asylum Seeker**: A person who seeks safety from persecution or serious harm in a country other than his or her own and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments.

**Irregular Migrant:** A person who, owing to unauthorized entry, breach of a condition of entry, or the expiry of his or her visa, lacks legal status in a transit or host country

**Resettlement:** The relocation and integration of people (refugees, internally displaced persons, etc.) into another geographical area and environment, usually in a third country.

**Internally Displaced Person (IDP):** A person or group of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.

**Tolerated Zone:** Tolerated zones are unofficial refugee camps that are allowed to form. While official refugee camps are built and administered by governments, the UN, the ICRC, or other organizations, tolerated zones exist in a murky, legal gray area.

# Overview of the Conflicts Through the Middle Eastern Region

There are many reasons why people cannot stay in their own countries. Many believe they have a better chance of finding work in another country because they have the education or capital to seek opportunities elsewhere, they may want to join relatives or friends, or want to start or finish their education.

But the reasons for migration are not always this innocent and hopeful. Throughout history, the Middle East has been one of the major crossroads of humanity, where continents, cultures, and ideas intersect. So in the Middle Eastern region, many people flee from violence, war, hunger, extreme poverty, because of their sexual or gender orientation, or from the consequences of climate change. With these reasons, it has produced, and hosted, millions of refugees over the past decades. Especially two years since the beginning of the Arab Spring, a long and difficult transition period

lied ahead for the region. Anti-government protests, uprisings and armed rebellions that spread across much of the Arab world in the early 2010s.

Mostly, millions of Iraqis, Syrians, Yemenis and Sudanese remain internally displaced with 2.6 of the 4 million Yemeni internally displaced individuals facing life-threatening food shortages. Lebanon, Jordan, Türkiye and Greece are home to the highest proportion of refugees in the Middle Eastern region.

# **Focus Regions**

## **Syrian Arab Republic**

Over 25% of the total global refugee population is part of the global diaspora in the wake of the 10-year Syrian crisis. As of late 2022, 6.8 million Syrians have sought refuge, primarily in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Türkiye (which is currently the largest host community for refugees). In Lebanon, there are no formal camps, which leaves its population of over 1 million Syrians living across 2,000 communities, often overcrowded temporary shelters.

UNHCR has identified 777,000 Syrians requiring resettlement — larger than any other refugee population. Resettlement remains a critical test of responsibility-sharing by the international community. However, only a fraction of eligible displaced Syrians has been resettled to third countries over the past five years. The rest face impossible choices: return to an uncertain and potentially deadly fate in Syria, remain in refugee camps and the certainty of poverty and discrimination, or attempt the dangerous journey to Europe.

Syria is also in a refugee conflict with Lebanon. Since the beginning of the Syrian influx to Lebanon in early 2011, Lebanese authorities have refused to establish an agency to administer their affairs and organize their presence, residency, and distribution. Erected based on a delicate sectarian balance, Lebanon rejects any form of local integration or permanent settlement of refugees. Lebanese authorities also limited work available to Syrians in the agriculture, sanitation, and construction sectors.

Ninety percent of Syrians in Lebanon live below the poverty level. Some 3,100 private camps in Lebanon suffer from desperate conditions, especially in winter. They are subject to expulsion, harassment, and arson.

### Libya

The Libyan Crisis is the current humanitarian crisis and political-military instability occurring in Libya, beginning with the Arab Spring protests of 2011, which led to two civil wars, foreign military intervention, and the ousting and death of Muammar Gaddafi. The first civil war's aftermath and proliferation of armed groups led to violence and instability across the country, which erupted into renewed civil war in 2014.

Since the end of February 2011, 790,000 migrant workers and their families have crossed the Libyan border into other countries to escape the conflict and ongoing violence in Libya. Although migration crises of this kind are not new, the massive outflow of migrants fleeing the violence in Libya represents one of the largest migration crises in modern history.

The scale of the crisis in Libya has brought to the political foreground the issue of protection and rights of migrants caught in crisis; the role of State actors and international cooperation mechanisms in such situations; and the implications of such crises for migrants' countries of origin as well as for wider migration management systems.

Waves of conflict outside and inside its borders have produced subsequent waves of refugees and internally displaced peoples (IDPs). IDPs make up the majority of those requiring humanitarian aid in Libya today. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are over 160,000 IDPs in Libya and nearly 700,000 returnees or former IDPs who have returned to their home communities. There are over 40,000 asylum seekers in Libya.

#### Yemen

The Yemen refugee crisis, often referred to as the Yemeni refugee crisis, is among the world's most pressing humanitarian situations. Over 3 million individuals have been displaced due to the conflict, and over 24 million are in urgent need of help. A significant proportion of these refugees are women and children who seek refuge in Yemen refugee camps.

To summarize the conflict; the eight-year-old conflict in Yemen is between the internationally recognized government, which is backed by a Saudi-led military coalition, and Houthi rebels supported by Iran.

This conflict in Yemen has forced more than 3 million people to abandon their homes. Alarmingly, a vast number of these refugees are children, and as reported by the UN, over 10,000 children have become casualties of the war, either through death or injury.

The severity of the Yemen refugee crisis cannot be overstated. Many arriving refugees are in dire conditions, battling hunger, illness, and trauma. The situation is particularly grim for children, with an estimated 1 million facing acute malnutrition. Efforts to provide aid are further hampered by restricted access to these regions.

## Afghanistan

As was well expected in despair long before the fall of the Afghan government and the drastic Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the massive influx of refugees driven by warfare, famine and fear of persecutions turned into a full-fledged global crisis, affecting lives, security and welfare of millions of people inside the country and turning into a matter of fierce political debates and confrontations. The problem was severely worsened by the consequences of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, economic and agricultural crisis, freezing of state assets abroad and the disruption of humanitarian activities

Over 80% of Afghanistan has been hit by the worst drought in decades, and what some experts have called the worst since the country began keeping records. This latest in a series of weather events began with failed rains in 2020 and escalated sharply over the last years, nearly doubling food insecurity and forcing people to move in search of food, water, and income. Many Afghans are still recovering from a 2018 drought that forced farmers and pastoralists to sell off livestock and other assets (often at a loss) in order to survive. Between security concerns and this climate shock, agricultural labor activities are estimated to have been reduced by 45% in 2023. With a small margin for error, this is a significant loss.

The forty years of constant conflict, warfare, poverty and disasters in Afghanistan created one of the largest refugee populations in the world, since, according to the *Operational Data Portal* by the UNHCR, there are currently 2.6 million registered Afghan refugees worldwide, of which more than 2.2 million, or 1,435,026 and 780,000 respectively, reside in Pakistan and Iran alone.

#### Iran

The situation for Afghan refugees in Iran is becoming increasingly difficult. Since January 2023, over 250,000 refugees have returned to Afghanistan

from Iran, at least half of them facing some form of coercion. Displaced Afghan people face protection risks, including family separation, violence, and persecution.

The situation is particularly unpredictable for undocumented people, who have limited access to services. The process of renewing documentation for refugees has also become more complicated, putting documented refugees at risk of becoming undocumented. Access to education has been impeded by the lack of documentation, affordability, and child labour.

The situation is compounded by the political and economic situation in Iran, where social unrest and inflation (64% in March 2023) are making it difficult for refugees to meet their basic needs. Limited livelihood opportunities and restricted access to employment have lowered purchasing power and increased protection risks from negative coping strategies. Afghan refugees in Iran face discrimination and growing resentment caused by economic pressure and perceived competition for jobs. Despite Iran's history of being inclusive to refugees, recent reports show the mistreatment towards Afghan refugees by both government officials and civilians, including physical abuse and wrongful detention.

## Iraq

While Iraq is experiencing relative stability and the Government's budgetary flexibility has increased due to oil revenue increases, the country continues to face protracted humanitarian and development needs, a complex political environment, and a volatile security situation. The needs remain high in late 2023, with about 1.14 million internally displaced people (IDPs) and 5 million IDP returnees, and 25 IDP camps hosting 175,000 people in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Many IDPs continue to face significant barriers to return or to effective local integration. Those who have already returned also face security and protection risks, mainly from the lack of civil documentation, which impedes their ability to access basic public services such as education, health care and social security benefits. As of January 2023, the stats show that 3 million Iraqis are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, including 1 million people who are in acute need of assistance

And as of April 2023, nearly 1.2 million Iraqis continue to be internally displaced, and the country hosts more than 280,000 refugees from other countries. While nearly 5 million former IDPs have returned, these

returnees live in substandard living conditions and require assistance and support to meet basic needs.

#### **Host Countries**

#### Lebanon

Lebanon hosts the highest number of refugees per capita worldwide, according to the UN Refugee Agency.

Historically, when the Syrian Civil War began in 2011, Lebanon was neither prepared or adequately equipped to respond to the rapid influx of refugees crossing its borders. Lebanon had no "specific framework or dedicated and comprehensive administrative system for the management of refugee affairs." Lebanon's subsequent response has been nothing short of insufficient and irresponsible. Because of Lebanon's complex history with refugees and Syria, any remedial suggestions were seen by Lebanon's government "as an attempt to perpetuate the presence of refugees in the country" and promptly dismissed. In place of productive refugee policies, Lebanon has adopted limited residency policies which leave refugees vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

The Lebanese Government now estimates that 1.5 million Syrian refugees and 13,715 refugees of other nationalities have made their way to the country. The numbers reflect recent conflict in Syria as well as second and third generation refugees descended from Palestinians displaced in the 1948–9 Arab–Israeli War and the 1967 Six–Day War. The total population of Lebanon is around 5.5 million people.

However, the country faces its worst socio economic crisis in decades. The World Bank estimates GDP has contracted by 58.1%. Unemployment has more than doubled since 2019. Living standards, food security, healthcare and education are all in difficulty. The Port of Beirut explosion in 2020 continues to impact across the country's infrastructure.

## Türkiye

Türkiye continues to host the largest number of refugees worldwide, as the number of people forcibly displaced across the world due to conflict, violence and persecution hit record levels. Türkiye currently hosts some 3.6

million <u>registered</u> Syrian refugees along with close to 320,000 persons of concern from other nationalities.

The well-equipped refugee camps Turkey constructed as an immediate response were intended to be a solution for a short-term problem. However, the longevity of the war in Syria rapidly raised the number of Syrians entering Turkey after the first refugee flow in April 2011. Around ninety percent of them remain outside camp settings, living in urban areas mostly in the South Eastern part of the country, as well as other cities like Ankara or Istanbul.

Once it became clear that Syrians in Turkey were not just temporary 'guests', the need for broader adaptation to the growing refugee crisis became apparent. In response, Turkey began to develop and build institutional and infrastructural capacities to deal with 'permanent refugees' who want to secure their presence in the country. Long-term integration and settlement of the refugees, especially given the large scale of the crisis, calls for a comprehensive, unified, and rigorous approach. It also necessitates greater cooperation between policy makers, practitioners, and civil society organizations in different areas such as health, education, and employment. In addition, it requires robust international cooperation and support.

#### **Jordan**

Since the start of the conflict in Syria in 2011, Jordan has shouldered the impact of a massive influx of Syrian refugees. Today, Syrian refugees account for nearly 6% of Jordan's population, placing immense pressure on the country's over-stretched resources at one of the most difficult economic periods in its history.

Over 650,000 Syrians – that's more than the entire population of Memphis, Tennessee – have registered with UNHCR in Jordan (the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees). The vast majority of these refugees live in cities and towns instead of camps, which means they must find a way to pay for things like rent and transportation. But only a limited number of them have work permits, so most of these families still rely on humanitarian assistance to meet their most basic needs.

To conclude, The Syrian refugee crisis has exacerbated endemic political, economic, and resource challenges in Jordan. As the conflict in Syria enters

a protracted state and public discontent and other tensions rise, Jordan has limited its humanitarian response. Yet, the roots of the kingdom's challenges run deeper than the refugee crisis and if left unaddressed will be harbingers of instability. If Jordan is to confront its national challenges and continue to provide a safe haven for Syrian refugees, the country will depend on increased international support.

## **Egypt**

Refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt heavily rely on humanitarian assistance. They often reside in overcrowded neighborhoods, where the host community struggles with substandard living conditions and high unemployment rates.

Egypt is the main recipient of people fleeing the ongoing conflict in Syria.

The continued influx of refugees and migrants coincides with Egypt's worst economic recession in decades. Dramatic price increases for food and utilities are worsening living conditions for the most vulnerable population.

Some 32.5% of Egyptians were already living below the national poverty line before the onset of the Syrian Civil War. The skyrocketing inflation, which reached 38% in 2023, severely affected all population groups. According to UNHCR, this percentage is even higher among refugees (84%). Access to basic services, such as health care and education, is extremely challenging for refugees and asylum seekers.

# **Refugee Needs Overview**

Physical and mental wellness, as well as access to healthcare, are foundations for the successful resettlement of refugees and other populations eligible for ORR-funded programs. Without feeling healthy, it is difficult to work, go to school, socialize, or take care of a family. Without access to healthcare, such as having health coverage, an injury or illness can threaten well-being and economic self-sufficiency.

#### **Mental Health**

Migrants and refugees can be exposed to various stress factors which affect their mental health and well-being before and during their migration journey and during their settlement and integration. Refugee mental health and psychosocial wellbeing is an integral part of UNHCR's approach to protection, public health and education. Forced displacement due to armed conflict, persecution or natural disasters put significant psychological stress on individuals, families and communities. Refugees not only experience atrocities prior to their flight, their living conditions in host countries can impose more stress and hardship. Refugees with preexisting mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and psychosis, often face greater challenges when trying to navigate asylum systems.

In many refugee situations, specialized mental health professionals are not present, especially for children and adolescents. When available, they often only reach a small proportion of those who need services. Many refugee mental health and psychosocial concerns, however, can be best addressed within communities themselves. Where possible, UNHCR trains and supports refugee community outreach volunteers who guide other refugees on accessing services while fostering social cohesion and mutual support.

**EXAMPLE OF SOLUTIONS:** Reuniting families: Having close family around can make all the difference to people adjusting to a different life and culture, often while recovering from deep trauma. Governments have an obligation to let refugees join family members who have already settled abroad through family reunification.

Scaling up resettlement: This is a crucial way that governments can protect refugees who need it most — people who have been tortured, for example, or women at risk of abuse. But it's a heavily underused solution. Right now, around 1.2 million people urgently need resettlement, but only 189,300 refugees got the chance in 2016. And only 30 countries currently offer this option.

### Health and Access to Healthcare

Unfortunately, too often refugees face barriers to accessing even basic health services because of inadequate access to food and water, sanitation, and other basic services. There is, therefore, an urgent need for better provisions and cooperation between health professionals and relevant government departments so that those gaps are understood and addressed.

➤ Maternal and Child Health: The main challenges facing reproductive, maternal, and child health among refugee and displaced populations include low use of antenatal care and high rates of cesarean sections, child diarrhea due to limited access to safe water, acute respiratory disease, acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiency such as iron deficiency and inappropriate infant and young child feeding.

**EXAMPLE OF SOLUTIONS:** Providing medical visas: Refugees who have a serious medical condition can get life-saving treatment – if governments decide to grant them visas to a country where they can access it.

#### Access to Education

Among the class will be children who have seen their homes destroyed and their relatives injured or killed. Some may have disabilities, either from birth or as a result of the violence in their home countries. There may be a former child soldier, a survivor of sexual abuse, someone who made the journey to safety when their brother or sister did not. Their education will have been interrupted for weeks, months or even years. On average, UNHCR estimates that refugees miss out on three to four years of schooling because of forced displacement.

Although all children have a fundamental right to basic education, in practice the type, quality and duration of schooling offered to asylum seeking, refugee and migrant children depends more on where they are in the migrant/asylum process than on their educational needs.

Insufficient school capacity both in terms of resources and staff trained to work with refugee and migrant children, language barriers, psychosocial issues, as well as limited catchup classes are among the most common challenges faced by refugee and migrant children in need of education. Lack of information on enrolment procedures and transportation to/ from remote asylum facilities can also present a barrier.

**EXAMPLE OF SOLUTIONS:** Access to education: Universities and schools could offer refugees visas to start or carry on their studies in another country. This opportunity can turn people's lives around through completing their schooling, integrating, making a living, and contributing to society. According to the UN's refugee agency, UNHCR, only 1 percent of refugees currently attend university. A staggering 3.7 million refugee children and teenagers are not in

school right now – five times the global average.

## **Nutrition and Food Security**

Refugees and displaced people are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition and undernutrition. Displaced from their homes, they may be sheltering in areas with limited food or markets, have lost their jobs or livelihoods, and have limited access to national support systems. All of these often result in food insecurity and undernutrition.

Poor quality diets and vitamin and mineral deficiencies can also weaken the immune system, leaving individuals at risk of succumbing to other diseases. It also contributes to delayed childhood development, which can cause irreparable long-term damage. Children, pregnant women, and people with chronic illnesses are often among the most vulnerable.

## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Due to limited resources, refugees tend to live in very densely populated areas where access to water, sanitation, and hygiene is often well below basic standards. Population density can simultaneously reduce the quantity of safe water per person and increase the likelihood of pathogen and disease transmission. In certain contexts, refugees from different households may share a communal toilet with up to 50 people. This heightened level of shared sanitation facilities can interfere with adequate hygiene practices and expose vulnerable refugees to harassment and sexual— and gender—based violence.

Refugees can also spend hours daily traveling long distances or queueing at handpumps or tap stands to collect water. Water collection most often falls on the shoulders of women and girls, resulting in decreased time for school, livelihoods, or other activities. The journey can be dangerous since women and girls risk physical injury (from carrying water on their heads) and are exposed to sexual, psychological, or physical violence.

#### **Accommodation and Settlement**

There is an urgent need to address the issues facing refugees in relation to their housing opportunities and housing pathways. Housing has always had a close association with migration, particularly for involuntary migrants who have been forced to move from their homes in their country or place of origin, due to an experience or fear of persecution, to seek sanctuary elsewhere.

**EXAMPLE OF SOLUTIONS:** Offering work visas or employment: For many refugees, getting a job is a vital solution to their problems. As well as surviving and supporting their families, it helps people maintain their self-respect and independence, and to integrate in a new community. Many countries offer refugees work permits. Businesses can potentially offer work visas to refugees with particular skills, as well as training and work experience.

# **Crucial Organizations and Agencies**

## **International Organizations for Migration (IOM)**

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the UN Migration Agency with a focus on regulating global migration in general. Serving this major goal, IOM defined serving refugees within its strategic focus plan. IOM runs projects to support refugees' integration in countries of asylum, voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, or resettlement to a third country.

# International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)

IRAP is a global legal aid and advocacy organization working to create a world where refugees and all people seeking safety are empowered to claim their right to freedom of movement and a path to lasting refuge.

IRAP builds non-traditional, non-partisan coalitions to improve displaced people's access to pathways to safety and to ensure those pathways provide procedural integrity, operate with transparency, and treat applicants with dignity.

## United Nations Children' Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Children's Fund is the UN Agency serving mothers and children in developing countries. Children constitute one of the most vulnerable groups during the time of conflict and displacement. In 2015, the number of child refugees was estimated at 10 million. For this reason, UNICEF extends its services to refugees that include: education opportunities for child refugees, enhancing maternity services for pregnant women in camps, and providing vaccines for child refugees.

## **International Rescue Committee (IRC)**

Founded at the time of the Second World War, the International Rescue Committee works to alleviate the suffering of humanitarian crises. They have special programs serving refugees worldwide. With its headquarters in New York, the IRC works in over forty countries to help victims recover from humanitarian problems. They focus on five main aspects, health, safety, education, economic well being, and empowerment.

#### **Crucial Points to Cover:**

- How can the international committee ensure refugees a safe place to live and accommodate?
- How can countries <u>reintegrate</u> and <u>resettle</u> their citizens?
- Talk about the ways to use agencies and organizations in favor of this situation.
- What actions could be taken regarding the socio-political wars in suffering countries?
- How can the international committee support hosting countries economically?
- Find solutions regarding violated human rights of refugees.

# **Further Readings:**

- https://hopechildinc.org/?gad\_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAibeuBhAAEi wAiXBoJH4C-xoQx3dMJYl-RLt3Dneg4JE4u4TnRsWkOnp7EYD5JNlpG 3jM2xoCqbQQAvD\_BwE
- http://podem.org.tr/en/researches/exploring-refugee-movements-i n-the-middle-east-regional-context-responses-to-the-syrian-cris is-in-lebanon-and-turkey/
- > https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/10/18/refugee-crises-in-arab-world-pub-77522
- https://www.nrc.no/perspectives/2021/three-steps-towards-ending -the-refugee-crisis/
- https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/refugees

> https://www.unicef.org/children-uprooted/six-actions-refugee-chil dren

