



PMUNC 2014

United Nations High Commissioner
for Refugees
Chair: Marni Morse
Director:



Contents

Chair’s Letter.....3

Introduction:4

Topic A: Syrian Refugees.....5

 History of the Conflict4

 Problems inside Syria8

 Problems around Syria9

 Ongoing Efforts and Challenges10

 Bibliography.....12

Topic B: Durable Solutions.....13

 Problems Displaced People Face13

 Potential Solutions15

 Bibliography.....18

Chair's Letter

Dear Delegates,

On behalf of the Princeton International Relations Council, welcome to the Princeton Model United Nations Conference! The many conference organizers and staff have worked hard to ensure that your experience at PMUNC 2014 is enriching, memorable, and fulfilling.

My name is Marni Morse and I'm thrilled to be chairing the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), also known as the UN Refugee Agency. The UNHCR specializes in aiding refugees, both with regards to immediate protection and assistance in emergency situations as well as long-term advocacy and support to reach lasting solutions for refugees. During PMUNC, we will explore both tasks of the UNHCR by discussing the current crisis in Syria as well as how governments can cooperate to create policies that lead to a durable solution for the world's current 50+ million displaced people, the largest number since World War II. I hope you will use this committee to not only debate these pressing international issues, but also to improve your public speaking skills, connect with other students from around the country, and, most importantly, have fun. Please take the time to prepare in advance, and research the committee and both topics that we will be covering for the conference. Follow the guidelines on the website for writing your position papers and come prepared to discuss, debate, and develop innovative solutions!

That being said, I'd like to take a moment to say a quick word about myself. I hail from outside of Washington DC and am a sophomore at Princeton. While I am still undecided in my major, I am interested in politics and ethics, with a regional focus on the Middle East. I spent this past summer studying abroad in Azerbaijan, which struggles with dealing with its over 600,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) since the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the early 1990s. On campus I am involved with The Daily Princetonian newspaper and Theatre Intime, as well as Whig-Clio, the campus political union, which includes the International Relations Council. This is my second year participating in PMUNC, having been a director in a committee on Syria last year.

I am really looking forward to hearing the ideas you present during the conference. If you have any questions about the conference, please feel free to email me. Happy researching!

Best,
Marni Morse

Introduction

The UN refugee agency is a specialized agency governed by the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). ECOSOC consists of 54 member governments elected from and by the General Assembly. The General Assembly also appoints the High Commissioner of the agency, currently Antonio Guterres, who is responsible for presenting biennial plans and budgets to the UNHCR executive committee to approve. The UNHCR reports on the agency's efforts annually to the General Assembly and ECOSOC.

The agency was established in by the 1950 UNHCR statute, which was extended in 2003 "until the refugee problem is solved." The committee is concerned with the global refugee crisis and "safeguard[ing] the rights and well-being of refugees." UNHCR works on providing short-term

protection and aid, as well as ending situations of forced displacement and working with nations to develop durable solution for refugees and IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons).

The majority of the UNHCR's work is in the field, directly working with and assisting refugees. The agency has a national and international staff of more than 8,600 working in 126 countries. Staffers work with the UN, individual nations, other institutions, like Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and regional organizations, and other groups of people, including current and former refugees and IDPs, in order to better understand and improve the global refugee crisis. In all of its actions, the agency aims to aid all refugees as it "pays particular attention to the needs of children and seeks to promote the equal rights of women and girls."

Topic A: Syrian Refugees

The ongoing crisis in Syria broke out around March 2011, leaving over 2 million refugees and 4 million internally displaced persons in its midst, half of which are children according to UNICEF. As the civil war wages on, the refugee crisis continues to worsen, creating massive problems for the

homes and jobs, people struggle for basic food, water, and shelter and are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Government estimates suggest that 4.25 million are internally displaced and 6.8 million are in need of humanitarian assistance. Unfortunately, many of the places in the most need are not able to get international assistance due to the dangerous conditions inside Syria due to



individuals themselves and throughout the Levant, which will only continue to persist even once the fighting stops.

The fighting in Syria is taking a tremendous toll on individuals and families as the fighting threatens and destroys their homes. Left without

the ongoing crisis.

Moreover, some Syrians have fled Syria, mostly to the neighboring countries of Lebanon and Jordan. Refugee camps have been set up in order to help provide the necessary aid and safe spaces the refugees need, however

these camps are not a permanent solution and have many problems of their own. Over 2 million people were forced to flee Syria, creating a huge burden on the entire region, making international cooperation and burden sharing imperative to continue to assist and protect the Syrian refugees.

The UNHCR has been working with other agencies and the international community to try to aid the victims of the crisis as best as possible given the dangerous ground situation and ongoing political instability within Syria. Different groups in control make it difficult for international organizations to provide aid and assistance. Nevertheless, the UNHCR has and is continuing to mount a large-scale response to the refugee crisis in partnership with the host countries and other agencies in order to provide as much humanitarian aid and safety as

possible. It has coordinated the Regional Response Plan (RRP) and the related implementation aimed at aiding refugees and the internally displaced under the framework of the national Syrian Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP).

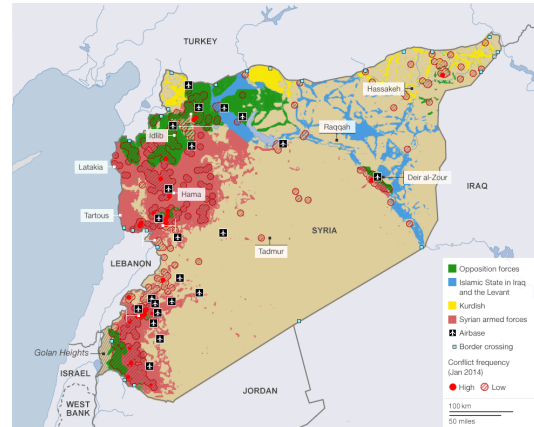
History of the Conflict

The Arab Spring was, in brief, a string of protests and revolts that spread across the Middle East against the autocratic governments that had ruled the region for decades. Though scholars debate the beginning of this modern wave, most cite the suicide of Tunisian Mohamed Bouazizi as the ignition for the first protests. Protests then spread to Egypt, Libya, and across the Middle East, each to varying degrees of success.

The protests in Syria began in March 2011 and faced fierce resistance from President Bashar al-Assad's

government. The conflict slowly transformed from popular protests to an armed civil war. The armed opposition force consists of various groups that formed throughout the course of the conflict, and they fight the national army, controlled by the Assad regime.

Foreign governments have gotten involved to various extents especially when evidence of the government's use of chemical weapons came to light. While Russia supports the Assad government, the United States, Qatar, Turkey, and much of Europe supported the opposition forces represented by the Free Syrian Army, the fighting force, and the Syrian National Council, one opposition coalition. There are also extremist Islamic organizations involved in the ongoing fighting, like the Shia Hezbollah, which supports the Syrian army, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, a Sunni jihadist group which



broke off of Al-Qaeda, which controls land in the East, almost one third of Syria's territory as of July 2014 and most of the oil reserves. The conflict is largely described as sectarian in nature, with the Alawite Assad government working with Shia groups against Sunni Muslims.

Despite initial advances by the opposition forces, by June 2013 the government had begun to recapture much of the lost territory, thanks to additional assistance from Hezbollah, a Shia Islamist movement. More recently, in the 2014 summer rebels have been engaged in bitter conflict with the Sunni jihadist movement, ISIS (The Islamic

State in Iraq and al-Sham, another name for Syria). The situation on the ground is extremely fluid and constantly changing as different factors affect the multitude of players. As of August 2014, over 150,000 have died since March 2011. Additionally, as of August 2014, the map of control resembled this:

Problems Inside Syria

The United Nations and international community faces countless problems in its refugee aid efforts because Syria is an ongoing conflict zone. This reality makes it harder for the victims of the situation itself, both to get the basic needs for survival or to flee to somewhere safer, as well as for the aid organizations to reach those in need. Because different organizations control different parts of the country, and the UN will generally only provide aid when the organization in power agrees to

accept the aid in order to minimize harm to those providing assistance and the locals in need, Syria is an especially difficult situation to navigate.

Nonetheless, international humanitarian aid, including that going to refugees, has been coordinated throughout the conflict by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). It has been operating in accordance to General Assembly Resolution 46/182 and the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan, which requested USD 1.41 billion in 2013 for humanitarian aid for Syrians. UNHCR has been specifically coordinating the humanitarian response for refugees outside of Syrian borders as well as helping with the internally displaced within Syria.

USAID, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Syrian Red Crescent have also been

helping to provide water, food, medicine, and other vital needs to refugees and others in need in Syria and the refugee camps beyond the borders.

Problems Around Syria

The main framework for coordinating the current refugee situation is the Syrian Regional Response Plan (RRP).

The Syrian refugee crisis is one of the largest in recent history, with over 2 million estimated refugees and over 4 million internally displaced. About one in three Syrian refugees are in Lebanon, though Jordan, Turkey, Libya, Egypt, and Iraqi Kurdistan have also seen many refugees cross into their borders. Recently, Bulgaria has also seen an influx of Syrian refugees. Other refugees are trying to go elsewhere by sea, such as Italy, though not all have made it to their final destination. Another

complication of this is that the fleeing refugees also include some Palestinians who had been living temporarily as refugees in Syria.

Starting in May, Syrians started to flee across the borders into Turkey. During late spring and summer 2011, refugees began setting up tent cities, with the blessing of the Turkish government, which expected more to follow. By July, refugees were entering Jordan and Lebanon too. The refugees steadily increased in all three nations as the uprising persisted and as the Syrian army pushed closer to the Turkish border.

The UN refugee agency has tried to register Syrian refugees as they cross the border and join the camps. With the huge numbers of refugees, the living conditions in these camps are quite terrible, and creating a huge burden and stress on the host countries. In a few

cases, refugees have returned to Syria because of the terrible conditions in the camps. Over 1 million refugees have crossed into Lebanon, meaning almost one out of every five people in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee. In Jordan, the Zaatari refugee camp has become the country's third largest "city."

While most of the agency's current actions are aimed at handling the immediate refugee crisis, such as providing aid and protection as well as handling the burden on the host countries, the international community has also been stepping up to try to create more permanent solutions for Syrian refugees. Some countries have offered Syrian refugees political asylum, like Colombia, Argentina, Brazil, Sweden, and others. The United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, and others have allowed a certain number of refugees to permanently resettle in their

nation, as well as provided money for humanitarian aid. For example, Saudi Arabia and Iran have provided millions in aid to refugees and the European Union has also provided a lot of money for aid too. Armenia has also allowed some Syrians to apply for Armenian passports or visas, but this provision is generally limited to those with Armenian heritage. Israel allowed some refugees to cross their northern border to receive medical attention.

Ongoing Efforts and Challenges

The primary focus of the UNHCR mission in the region is to maintain protection space for the refugees. Given the burden this creates on the host nations and the huge and continuous influx of refugees, new challenges arise regularly. Because of the strain the refugee camps create for host countries, the agency is also looking

for other, more durable resettlement options in order to increase safety, such as countries willing to offer accept refugees or offer asylum. Unfortunately, state asylum policies are often difficult to work around due to state security concerns, yet the agency is specifically working with countries who have already shown a potential willingness to host refugees.

The office is working with host nations, other organizations, and the international community to provide these durable solutions as well as immediate aid and assistance for refugees, including connecting refugees with social services in urban areas. The agency is working on providing not only food, water, and shelter to refugees but also education, medical assistance, and other basic social needs while guaranteeing international human rights.

The committee is challenged by the ongoing nature of the conflict, rendering it hard to reach over some 4 million Syrians in need, especially internally displaced persons in need of aid, as well as new situations and emergencies created and the conflict continues to develop. Organizing all the different players has also created conflict in developing and implementing a single action plan for aiding the refugees both in the short and long term. Finally, funding is another huge challenge for effectively managing the crisis.

The magnitude of the Syrian refugee crisis is unmatched and poses a continuing challenge in 2014-2015 for the UNHCR.

Bibliography

- <http://www.aljazeera.com/video/middleeast/2011/07/2011712175013150736.htm>
- <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a02db416.html>
- <http://www.unhcr.org/syriarrp6/>
- <http://www.unhcr.org/4bd7edbd9.html>
- <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/members.shtml>
- <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c80.html>
- <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49ed83046.html>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline>
- <http://syria.unocha.org>
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703856>
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22798391>

Topic B:

While the UNHCR primary purpose is to protect the rights and well-being of refugees, its ultimate aim is to achieve a durable solution for the world's refugees. The global refugee problem is the worse it has been since World War II, with over 50 million refugees who are unable to peacefully and safely rebuild their lives. Of the 51.2 million displaced people last year, 16.7 million were refugees beyond their countries borders, while the remainder was internally displaced persons.

2013 claimed the largest annual increase in the number of refugees in over two decades because of the Syrian crisis, and the current crisis in Latin America and Iraq are also adding to the total. Currently, the largest UNHCR operations are in Afghanistan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Pakistan, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq, though refugees come from around the world.

While each individual refugee and refugee crisis situation is unique, there are common problems victims face and the potential to develop a general

framework for creating permanent solutions for current and future refugees and IDPs. As well as different crisis and regional issues, different problems face different types of victims from internally displaced persons to international refugees to asylum seekers and to stateless persons. The UNHCR focuses on a variety of plans in order to most effectively provide durable solutions for these different refugees.

The large quantity of refugees compounds the already difficult situation of providing aid and protection to refugees. It is difficult for the refugee agency to coordinate and for the agency and other organizations to provide all the necessary humanitarian aid. Moreover, the burgeoning number of refugees create more and more stress on host states, therefore in order to ensure the protection and well-being of worldwide refugees, it is essential that a durable plan to handle world refugees is developed, solving some of the problems refugees today face and making it easier to handle new potential refugee emergency situations.

Problems Displaced People Face

The 51.2 million displaced people face a wide range of challenges, though similar issues often arise for similar types of displaced people.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are the largest percentage of displaced people around the world, and often face some of the most difficult circumstances. IDPs have not crossed an international border, and are therefore in the midst of a conflict or the ruins of such violence or some natural disaster. It is generally impossible for the agency to get involved during an ongoing conflict. Even if IDPs have fled their home for the same reason as refugees, they are still under the technical protection of their government, even if that is the government that is causing them to flee.

The UNHCR can and often does get involved once the crisis is over to help resettle and stabilize people permanently while providing social services and immediate aid. The agency also helps organize and oversee IDP camps for protection and shelter within the country.

Refugee refers to displaced people who have crossed an international border. The 1951 Refugee Convention considers a refugee someone

who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."

Refugees, whether old or young, male or female, are the primary focus on the UNHCR. Refugees have no protection from their state; rather, their home state is persecuting them in some manner. Refugees become reliant on other nations to maintain their basic human rights and subsistence. This is different than economic migrants who are generally displaced by choice to some extent in order to search for a better life. Because refugees have to move to save their lives and freedom, the UNHCR works with the international community to coordinate temporary aid, protection, and a durable solution to maintain both of these basic human rights.

Other displaced people are considered stateless, including many refugees. Stateless people are not only living without a home of their own, but belong to no nation; they are not

considered a national of any state. Sometimes it is possible to be voluntarily repatriated to one's home country, and the UNHCR does assist with this process, yet many times this is impossible, at least for many years. Because of the difficulties living without citizenship creates, as possession of nationality is key for full participation in society and human rights, the agency works toward gaining citizenship for stateless refugees from some outside nation to the conflict.

Historically, the UN has attempted to address statelessness because of all the serious problems it creates and how it often unfairly targets national minorities. In 1954 the UN adopted the Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, yet not all states have ratified and implemented the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The UNHCR is currently tasked with working with national governments to develop a framework to prevent statelessness from occurring, whether through adequate nationality legislation and procedures, universal birth registration, or some other way.

Finally, there are asylum seekers, who claim to be refugees, but whose

claims cannot be definitively evaluated. In a crisis with mass border crossings, like in Syria, individual interviews with asylum seekers to determine status are impossible due to the sheer number of border crossers, so such groups are generally declared "prima facie" refugees, also because it is generally obvious why people fled.

However, because an asylum seeker's status is not definitively categorized in an international system, it is currently up to individual nations to determine that status and to decide whether or not to grant asylum. Asylum seekers face the potential of being sent home if their status is not deemed refugee by the state, and they are not guaranteed other international protections. Because asylum policies are currently state-based, they are not always fair and/or efficient, and are not uniform internationally.

Potential Solutions

The UNHCR has considered various plans for how to create lasting peace and security for refugees. The different proposals generally appeal to different states based on their own refugee history, national history and

policies, size, development levels, etc. A true solution to the global refugee crisis will likely involve some combination and compromise of these proposals as well as new innovative solutions.

In all of its various long-term solutions, the UNHCR focuses on capacity building, both of refugees themselves and of states to meet their international legal obligation to refugees. The UNHCR provides livelihood programs for refugees to increase their self-reliance and chances of creating a durable solution. Likewise, the agency works with host nations to help provide immediate protection and aid in refugee camps as well as to orchestrate more permanent solutions as well as working with governments to improve laws and policies regarding refugee handling and asylum seekers. The UNHCR works not only with host governments and refugees but also with other NGOs in order to reach more people more effectively.

Durable solutions are complicated by the fact that displaced refugees are often mixed with asylum seekers and general economic migration. Global movement of these groups often occurs together, and often without proper legal documentation or through

unauthorized entry. While such movement is risky, it sometimes is the only option for legitimate refugees. The committee must work with national governments to protect refugees in the best way possible while also recognizing that border controls are a national concern and necessary for fighting international crime. It is essential that the international community work to ensure that these border policies are not applied in such an indiscriminate manner that refugees are being forced back to their home countries where their lives and liberty face significant risk. The committee is dedicated to working with countries to respond to these challenges in a practical, efficient, and fair manner and has already developed certain suggestions like its 10 point plan for refugee protection and mixed migration.

Generally the UNHCR's durable solution suggestions have focused around three main solutions where the agency can help: voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement to a third country when one cannot return to one's home country or remain in the host nation. These concepts are part of the 2003 Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern.

For many, voluntary repatriation is their end goal, as people often share a bond with their home country. However, this requires the full cooperation of the home government in order to reintegrate these displaced people, both refugees and IDPs, into society. The international community can also help to ensure that former displaced peoples have the means to rebuild their lives and a safe, stable environment in which to do so.

Local integration is often the next best option for refugees with little hope of returning home. Host nations can decide to permanently integrate refugees into their country. Local integration is complex and requires a lot from both the new refugees and host nation, yet in the past decade around 1.1 million refugees have become citizens of their country of asylum. However, this is more difficult with massive influxes of people, like what has happened in Turkey and Lebanon due to the Syrian uprising.

Another possibility is that a third country agrees to accept refugees, and the displaced persons resettle there. This

can be extremely challenging for the refugees as they enter a whole new culture and language, quite different from their regional home. Nonetheless, this can be an improvement to perilous living conditions in a camp in a host country. Currently not all that many nations work with the UNHCR on this program; historically the United States is the world's top resettlement country, and other nations across the world also participate, including Canada and many European and Latin American countries. The UNHCR works with refugees, receiving countries, and NGOs in order to make this transition as beneficial to both parties as possible.

Finding durable solutions sooner rather than later is imperative, since, in many situations, the lack of a long-term solution aggravates the short term problems of aid and protection. Throughout all of these possible answers to the problems of displacement, the UNHCR remains committed to being a protector and advocate of refugees, and assisting some of the world's most vulnerable in times of crisis.

Bibliography:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/20/world-refugee-day_n_5514414.html

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c206.html>

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c146.html>

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c125.html>

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c137.html>

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c155.html>

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c107.html>

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a1d406060.html>

<http://www.unhcr.org/4688b4af2.html>

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a16b1676.html>