

**UNHCR**  
**Study Guide 2022**



**Topic:**

Addressing the Resettlement of Haitian Refugees in Light of the  
Growing Humanitarian Crisis

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## Letter to the delegates

Greetings delegates,

It is with great pleasure that we, the dais, present you with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for POAMUN 2022. The three of us are extremely honored to be your chairs for this committee, as it is an amazing opportunity to be chairing such an interesting council. This said, we hope you are all just as excited to take part in the debates! The UNHCR is a UN body of extreme importance when our world is facing conflicts and crises, therefore we expect you to dive into your research with passion and interest, and bring those into the committee when debating. It is also within our hope that you develop or improve certain skills throughout this conference, whether it is regarding public speaking, research, or a holistic view of the world.

For this conference, we will be debating the resettlement of Haitian refugees due to the growing crisis in the country. We are excited to see delegates engaging in such important discussions that have the power to affect the world around us. Although MUN is usually a mock etup of the process faced by international organizations, this time, you will have an important role in solving the actual issue at hand. Our committee has entered an official UNHCR MUN competition, where our resolution will be sent to UN official who will judge and decide which group of students' resolution is the best. With that, we are hoping to see some amazing resolutions that will not only address the topic but also shed light on new and transformative solutions for age-old issues.

Remember, delegates: expectations are high for all delegations, as you all have the potential to thrive during this conference. We are eager for intense and participative debates! Furthermore, it is always worth highlighting the importance of position papers and resolutions; prepare yourselves! And just as a reminder, we are all available to answer any questions you might have concerning procedures, the topics, your delegation's position, or any other hesitation

you might have; just send us an email. And lastly, we wish you a great research and await anxiously to meet all of you!

With great pleasure,

Isabela Marantes

Gabriela Saute

## Scope

The United Nations High Commissioner for refugees is a UN body founded in 1950 and has its current headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The agency's main goal is to aid refugees and asylum seekers in finding safe passage and ensuring their human rights. This process can happen in one of three ways: resettlement, integration or return. For this topic, the agency will focus on the status of refugees seeking resettlement in new communities and ensuring they're welcome as well as refugees returning to Haiti and ensuring the environment in the country is safe.

It is important to remember that the UNHCR is a recomendatory committee, meaning it cannot impose actions in its resolution, only recommend the best course of action and cooperation between nations. However, bilateral and multilateral agreements can be made between present delegations that are willing to pledge assistance. Outside the resolution, the delegations also have the power to issue reports, send letters to other UN bodies and cooperate with agencies involved in the crisis. These mechanisms are especially important given the scenario at hand, which involve a series of operations and agreements outside the scope of the committee.

Given this information, the delegates' goal will be to write a resolution that addresses multiple aspects of the issue and recommends various courses of action to ensure the safety of refugees affected by this crises.

## Background

The refugee crisis in Haiti began with political tensions around the cruel dictatorship of Papa Doc Duvalier, in 1972, his son and the series of military governments which followed them. Many attempted to flee to countries like the US, but the attempt would result in arrest, jail, the denial of asylum and swift expulsion as successive US governments refused to recognize the repression in Haiti and branded them economic migrants. According to the US immigration service, 433 boats were intercepted and 25,551 Haitians returned to Port-au-Prince under the interdiction program from 1981 to 1991.

## Minustah peace operation

The Minustah peace operation was an action planned and executed by the United Nations Security Council from 2004 to 2017 with the objective of resolving and maintaining the peace during the internal conflict in Haiti. It is important to note that the operation did not have a rebuilding character, meaning it was not within its scope to change the institutions, only ensure their functionality.

To better understand MINUSTAH and its downfall, it is important to comprehend its foundation. The peace operation was ordered by the Security Council in resolution 1542 and had three objectives that must be followed. The first ensured stability for the country utilizing a transitional government. Secondly, support the institutional processes and incentivize democracy. Lastly, protect human rights. Given these, the mission was divided into three phases and each one had a different representative of the secretary general as leader. The first phase was focused on the political process, as the next paragraphs will highlight. Juan Valdez served as RISG during this step and had to converse with different political parties as well as the armed forces to stabilize the political scene in the nation. The second phase centered around security. Edmond Mulet was RISG and had the goal of executing peace missions all around the island as well as train interim forces. For the last phase, it is important to note that it formally only lasted until 2009, but since then, its objectives have remained, meaning the operation basically stayed in that

last phase for longer. The third phase was led by Hédi Annabi and had as its objective the strengthening of institutional forces as well as incentivizing the respect for the law.

For these goals to actually be fulfilled, the international community had to organize itself to provide the needed resources to the mission. For this, a core group was established, composed of a few more involved nations. The Multilateral Interim Force was composed of six countries: France, USA, Canada, Chile, Argentina and Brazil. This core group was divided into two action spheres with different goals in mind. Chile, Argentina and Brazil, better known as the ABC's acted as the regional initiative. Their goal was to maintain stability and better infrastructure. Given this, these countries were responsible for organizing the military officers acting as peacekeepers as well as handling the political issues that might arise. The ABC's took on a more hands-on role given that the Haitian population did not approve of European and North American interference. For this same reason, Canada, US and France focused on financial and technical cooperation, utilizing the ABC's as a mailman to figure out what was needed and how to deliver it without disrupting the peace.

With the institutional process explained, it is important to understand the context of the mission as well as specific events that happened during that time. Haiti had been living a dictatorship under Duvalier since the 1970's but in 1986, a popular uprising overthrew him. However, in the early 2000's, the international community began to discuss the need of a peacekeeping mission given that even 15 years after ending a dictatorship, the country's institutions were still in shambles. One great example of this is the Haitian police. After Duvalier's stay, the lines between military and police officers became blurry, meaning that the training of civilian safety was no longer in play. Additionally, military men had been in power before the 2000's, which made them rich and corrupt. With this process, the military institution lost its strategic and academic value, resorting to state terrorism to ensure its needs. To worsen the scenario, a lot of the officers who deserted the institution started to serve as a paramilitary police for hire, assuring that Haiti had no viable law enforcement and that the monopoly of force was at the hands of whoever paid the highest amount.

Once Minustah arrived, the issue of reforming the Haitian National Police was quickly addressed. The operation brought an exorbitant number of civil officers in detriment of military officers, which had the objective to train and prepare new police for safekeeping their nation. However, MINUSTAH was also unsuccessful in various aspects. Most notably, the inability to

preserve and ensure elections. For context, since the redemocratization, Haiti has had a very low participation rate in its election. In Aristide's election in 2000, for example, only 5% of the total population voted, demonstrating a huge gap in the voting system. This issue was attributed to the inexistence of a permanent electoral council, which meant that every election a new council was ordered and no stable institution was in charge of it. This led to elections being crises on their own and not the process to resolving a crisis. Given this situation, MINUSTAH had it as one of its goals to ensure this process, but they were unable to in 2004 and the election had to be postponed by almost two years. Even after the election, the participation rate did not improve, demonstrating MINUSTAH's hardship in establishing itself in the nation.

The last case that will be addressed is the reform of the safeguarding of at-risk communities. Minustah created a program called Community Violence Reduction (CVR), which worked in smaller operations to aid and protect civilians living in conflict zones and reestablish order. However, the program caused a lot of turmoil, being one of the leading reasons for human rights violation reports during the operation. The most notable example of the actions of this group was the operation to Cité de Soleil. This impoverished community was controlled by gangs and 1,400 peace officers closed all exits to the community and fired over 20,000 rounds into homes, civilians and gangmembers alike. It is important to note that peace officers can only use their weapons in self defense, making this operation a clear violation of procedure.

These examples show how MINUSTAH acted throughout its operation and the marks it left on the nation. It is important to note that the operation is neither a complete failure or success. While it brings out a lot of controversy, its process was vital to ensure Haiti did not completely lose all of its institutions.

## Current situation

Since the government's announcement in 2018 that it would eliminate fuel subsidies, widespread civil unrest has paralyzed Haiti. Movements by the population caused the police to act with excessive force, and impunity for gang and police violence continued. The Covid-19 pandemic brought economic crisis, as well as the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021. Moïse argued that his term would end later than 2021, 5 years after his term. Ariel Henry, whom Moïse had appointed prime minister days before the assassination, was installed as head of a new government. As of August, the Haitian

National Police (HNP) and the National Human Rights Defense Network (RNDDH) reported 3 people killed and 44 arrested—including former Colombian military officers—in connection with President Moïse’s assassination.

The United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) reported 1,074 intentional homicides and 328 kidnappings from January to August 2021, and gender violence is still very prevalent. Haitian civil society groups say insecurity is derived from complicity between politicians and gangs. Some 95 gangs are fighting over territory in Port-au-Prince, where approximately 1.5 million people live, displacing 19,100. The crisis in Haiti is characterized mostly by acute food insecurity, fuel shortages, and limited health care and sanitation. Millions of children are unable to attend school, are malnourished and live in fear.

Due to its geographical position, Haiti is vulnerable to natural disasters. A 7.2 magnitude earthquake in August intensified political instability. The earthquake affected 2 million people in the southern peninsula, in which 77% lived under the poverty line. 246 dead, more than 12,700 injured, up to 26,000 displaced, and at least 329 missing.

From January 1, 2021 through February 26, 2022, 25,765 people were expelled or deported to Haiti. Of those, the US returned 79 percent (20,309 people) while The Bahamas, Cuba, Turks and Caicos Islands, Mexico, and other countries returned the rest. This increased risk to their life and physical integrity, as there is currently no system in place to track and support returnees. The UN Refugee Agency is calling on States in the region and beyond to suspend the forced return of Haitians to their country.

That way, Haitian women, children and men who are outside the country and returned to Haiti may face life-threatening security and health risks, and further displacement inside the country. Haitian communities living along the border with the Dominican Republic (DR) have difficulty in providing for their families, due to the lack of basic services and infrastructure, which has led many to seek better opportunities and medical services on the other side of the border through irregular crossing points. In 2021 there were 25,649 Haitian refugees abroad under the UNHCR’s mandate and 96,300 asylum-seekers.

## Block positions

United States



15 months prior to the assassination of the former president, the US had insisted that the opposition, a remarkably broad-based coalition of civil society leaders, activists and popular organizations, negotiate with him. Yet, the US returned 79 percent (20,309 people) of the Haitian refugees to their country.

## Haiti

Haiti is experiencing a dire security situation, including loss of government control over strategic areas to the hands of dangerous armed gangs. Haiti has fallen into a spiral of political, economic and social chaos not seen since the overthrow of the Duvalier government in 1986, which has led to difficulties in leading with the refugee crisis.

## European Union

Since 2019, the EU has financed IOM to support Haitian migrants and deportees with €7.85 million in humanitarian funding. Yet, EU's lack of support for staff and weaknesses in long-term efforts to help Haiti recover from the 2010 earthquake.

## Cuba

UNHCR is urging governments in the Caribbean region to fulfill their maritime rescue obligations and ensure all those in need of international protection. Recently, a vessel carrying over 800 Haitians, attempting to reach the United States, arrived in Cuba after being abandoned by its captain and set adrift at sea.

## China

To the ire of China, Haiti has long recognized Taiwan's sovereignty. China has continued to help the country rebuild since 2010. Chinese companies are helping to improve and expand

the road between Port-au-Prince and Malpasse, an important border area near the Dominican Republic.

## Guiding questions

What are the risks of people returning to Haiti?

How can countries assist the crisis in Haiti internally and abroad? How could Haitians resettle or settle abroad?

How can the crisis be dealt with so that the economy of Haiti grows?

How can the displacement issue be solved?

## Important Resources

<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/haiti>

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2022/11/6363acd64/unhcr-calls-states-refrain-forced-returns-haitians.html>

<https://crisisresponse.iom.int/response/haiti-crisis-response-plan-2022-2024>

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