



# UNHRC PACMUN 2016

Director: Lily Jones

Chair: Daisy Bell

Assistant Director: Maddie Mousseau





# PACIFIC MODEL UNITED NATIONS

## UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Dear Delegates,

My name is Lily Jones and I am honored to serve as the director for the Human Rights Committee of Pacific Model United Nations 2016. I currently attend Inglemoor High School as a Junior and an enrolled in the IB program. I began to become involved in MUN last year and attended PACMUN 2015 as my first conference and was a delegate in UNHRC myself. MUN has helped drive my interest for history and world issues as well as provide me with the valuable opportunity to advance my abilities in research, writing and public speaking. MUN has become a significant part of my life as I am also co-president of the MUN club at my school and it has been a truly enriching and rewarding experience. I hope to enhance your experience in MUN through this committee.

As UNHRC's main focus is the advocate for and solve a wide range of issue inside of human rights, choosing a topic was a daunting task. I wanted to choose topics that were both relevant to the interety of the international community as well as engaging enough to the delegates to spark productive and interesting debate. The rest of the dais and I finally decided upon: Protecting Human Rights in Syrian Refugee Camps and Religious Persecution in Southeast Asia. Both topics are multifaceted and involve multiple subtopics that allows them to be approached from many perspectives. The depth of these issues will require the delegates to execute extensive research in order to allow them to collaborate and form an effective solution. I expect delegates to branch out beyond the background guide and utilize other resources to gain a full understanding of the topics in order to have a productive committee.

I share my immense excitement for PACMUN with my fellow dais members; Daisy, who will be serving as Chair, and Madeleine, who will be serving as Assistant director. We have all worked very hard to insure that this conference will be a memorable experience for all of us. We wish you all good luck in your research and preparation for this committee and look forward to meeting you at the conference. If you have any questions regarding topics or position papers, please do not hesitate to contact me, I will be happy to help!

Sincerely,

Lily Jones

Director | United Nations Human Rights Council

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Committee Intro	3
-----------------	---

## TOPIC ONE: RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Topic Introduction	3
History	5
Past Action	6
Current Situation	7
Bloc Positions	8
Case Studies	9
Guiding Questions	11
Further Research	11

## TOPIC TWO: PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS IN SYRIAN REFUGEE CAMPS

Topic Introduction	12
History	13
Past Action	14
Current Situation	16
Bloc Positions	18
Case Study	19
Guiding Questions	21
Further Research	21
Sources	22

## COMMITTEE INTRO

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) was established in 2006 from the creation of the General Assembly's Resolution 60/251 and replaced the UN Commission on Human Rights as the intergovernmental UN council responsible for addressing human rights issues. The Human Right Council consists of 47 member states elected by the General Assembly for three year terms, this committee holds three sessions for an annual total of 10 weeks in the UN office of Geneva.

The UNHRC is a highly significant council due to the fact that it is tasked with bringing awareness and protection of human rights by addressing the violations and passing effective resolutions that put forth solutions to various human rights issues around the world as well as providing support and resources to human rights emergencies. Some issues the UNHRC has addressed in the past include child prostitution, adequate housing, safe water, freedom of expression, education as well as many other gravely important issues.

The promotion and protection of human rights and international respect without discrimination based on race, gender, language or religion are the overall goals of the UNHRC and it works on conducting research and implementing programs targeting civil, cultural, educational, economic and political rights in order to reach these goals.

## TOPIC 1

### RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

## TOPIC INTRO

One of the first and most notorious cases of religious persecution is the Holocaust, carried out by Nazi Germany. The Nationalist Socialist Party, led by the infamous Adolf Hitler, killed nearly six million Jews in the 1930s and 1940s<sup>1</sup>. This particular anti-Semitic movement frightened the international community, seeing as it caused a major worldwide diaspora. Measures such as the creation of the United Nations were taken in order to prevent another horrific act of religious persecution. However, religious persecution continues to be a prevalent issue in today's world, especially in Southeast Asia. More specifically, in Myanmar there is evidence that points to a state-funded persecution directed at their Rohingya Muslim minority group. This religious group is prohibited from obtaining full Burmese citizenship due to the Burma Citizenship Law passed in 1982<sup>2</sup>; a law that indirectly prevents the Rohingya from receiving access to education, proper medical attention, public services, employment opportunities, right to land ownership and also complicates

Rohingya movement between countries and/or provinces. This issue has resulted in an estimated 140,000 internally displaced Burmese people. Approximately 86,000 Rohingya people have crossed into neighboring nations, such as Indonesia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Australia but have been denied resettlement.<sup>2</sup>



[http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map\\_of\\_southeast\\_asia.htm](http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map_of_southeast_asia.htm)

Foreign actions, such as the ones taken by Myanmar and other Southeast Asian countries, do not follow the *Declaration of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief* which clearly states that "No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have a religion or belief of his choice".<sup>3</sup> The dilemma the United Nations faces is whether restricted religious liberties, such as the ones in Myanmar, protect civilians and acquiesce to UN values. This issue remains unsolved due to the fear that any actions taken may infringe upon national sovereignty. Not only is state-condoned religious persecution a threat to the growth of happiness and UN values, but non-government affiliated religious persecution devoid of justice is also a major concern for the international community. Both have attributed to the establishment of a United Nations' Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, whose purpose is to recognize breaches of religious freedom and assemble ways to reinforce the quintessential liberty. This elected official fulfills his or her obligations to the United Nations by traveling to member states, making sure that they abide to the freedom of religion or belief. The Special Rapporteur then briefs the

Human Rights Council and General Assembly delegates about violations on the freedom of religion and belief.

The universal right to practice any religion is outlined by the General Assembly in the *Declaration of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief*. Correlating with reasons for the establishment of the entire United Nations, this document aims to avoid worldwide atrocities such as the ones seen in World War II. Every human being on this earth has the right to health, happiness and the abundance of life. For many the way to attain happiness is through religious practice and so the importance of religious freedom must be underlined, understood and universally protected.

## HISTORY

When debating the conflict of religious persecution, the Southeast Asian region is an area of concern due to the fact that Brunei and Singapore are the only countries that protect the freedom of religion. Although the governments of these two countries do not condone religious persecution, they overtly turn a blind eye to atrocities in lower levels of their respective societies. Moreover, the Southeast Asian country Myanmar houses one of the most persecuted minorities known as the the Rohingya Muslims. Overall, the United Nations(UN) has called upon Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and other Southeast Asian countries to end hostilities restricting basic human rights to no avail (6). These rights include healthcare, education, employment, clean food/water, security under law, etc.

The two greatest causes of religious persecution are the politicization of religions and inadequate or corrupt government. Outside nations have refrained in the past from getting involved with the conflict of religious persecution due to their fear of interfering with the grave conditions inside the offending countries of Southeast Asia such as Burma. This lack of involvement has allowed the issue continue to worsen, in 1982, Burma passed a law that legally denied the Rohingya people citizenship resulting in the this minority being legally stateless (7). The lack of citizenship is an issue that needs to be dealt with in any effective solution due to the fact that without citizenship, the Burma government is not required to provide any rights to the Rohingya people.

The conflict of the religious persecution Christians have faced in Southeast Asia for centuries started in the 17th century when Portuguese and Spanish christian missionaries went to Japan to spread their religion. Christianity was spreading rapidly among the peasant farmers and lower levels of society but the government remained loyal to tradition. Christian were soon falsely accused of destroying Buddhist idols which resulted in a law being passed that outlawed the practice of christianity and lead to centuries of the religious persecution against Christians in South East Asia. All

Japanese Christians were forced to either leave Japan or renounce their religious beliefs and conform to traditional Buddhist, Japanese culture (5).

After years of being restricted in their practices, Christians were targeted in a horrific way; Christians were the main victims to the Cambodian genocide lead by Khmer Rouge. This genocide resulted in the Christian minority group being dispersed and the creation of strict rules concerning in their belief and practice. This genocide triggered the increase of violent and discriminatory acts against Christians in South East Asia. Many governments in the South East Asian region such as the governments of Burma, Indonesia, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, Laos as well as others controlled how someone could participate in their faith and even went to the great extent of murder if they felt threatened by those who proclaimed to be Christians.

## PAST UN ACTION

Religious persecution, an issue affecting the entire world for centuries, has been a grave concern specifically in South East Asian countries. Despite the severity of this issue, there has been minimal involvement from the United Nations (UN) to solve this issue. In 2007, the United States in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) drafted a resolution that urged Myanmar to discontinue the persecution of their minorities. This resolution was not passed due to a veto from both Russia and China. After years of inaction from the UN, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) was urged by the Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC) to pass Resolution 16/18 on "Combating Intolerance, Negative Stereotyping and Stigmatization of, and Discrimination, Incitement to Violence and Violence Against, Persons Based on Religion or Belief" in 2011. In December of 2012, shortly after resolution 16/18, The Special Rapporteur's report to the Human Rights Council provided the necessary legal framework that allowed them to focus upon and combat the rights of religious minorities including their right to freedom and practice of religion.

Unfortunately, the aforementioned UN actions had little impact and did not solve the issue of religious persecution in South East Asia. In 2012, the president of Myanmar, Thein Sein, proclaimed a state of emergency after mass murder and rape conducted and received by both Buddhists and Rohingya muslims in the country. This horrifying event, entitled the Rakhine Riots, was initiated by the Rohingya people who resulted to violence against the Buddhist citizens after being immensely mistreated and persecuted against by the government of Myanmar as well as the Buddhist citizens. Following the Rakhine Riots left 88 dead and over 90,000 displaced, the UNHRC held a meeting in 2013, recognizing the fact that religious freedom is diminishing and the European Union (EU) publicly condemned the recent acts of persecution. Despite the unified concern on the issue of persecution, no solution was reached during this international meeting. Later in 2015, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) chief advised the governments of South

East Asia to take immediate action. Once again, there was no solution reached nor did any country get physically involved in the issue.

Religious persecution has been a grave global conflict for centuries, with multiple councils such as the UNHRC and the EU publicly condemning recent acts of religious persecution, but there have been few solutions have been pushed forward due to a lack of consensus. It is important to keep in mind that these resolutions have resulted in few actions of the UN, therefore have been relatively ineffective due to the lack of follow through within the countries of concern in South East Asian countries. This has been thought to be a result of corrupt governments, lack of resources, and an absence of international support and involvement.

## CURRENT SITUATION

### CLOSURE OF MOSQUES IN INDONESIA

In Indonesia, the Ahmadiyah muslim community has been victims to discrimination and religious persecution for several years. Another severe act of religious persecution took place in July 2015 when a series of Ahmadiyah mosques were closed by the Jakarta administration (1). The sealing of the mosques has prevented the Ahmadiyah community from practicing their religion with a lack of explanation from the Jakarta. The Jakarta administration has stated that the reason for the closure of the mosque was due to the fact that the administration was receiving numerous complaints about the presence of the mosques from surrounding residents and that they believed the mosque was being used inappropriately. The continuous lack of acceptance from citizens of the Ahmadiyah community has revoked their ability and right the practice their religion in their country.

### THE BURMA BUDDHIST WOMEN'S SPECIAL MARRIAGE LAW

The Burma Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Law was passed in August 2015 and was proposed by a group of anti-muslim Buddhist monks. This law regulates the marriage of a Buddhist woman to a non-Buddhist man. The law requires that the couple must have both consent from the woman's parents and then submit an application to the government (2). After the application has been received the case will be offered to the qualifying unions as well as to the local registrars and they will be given the opportunity to object to the marriage. In order for the marriage to be legal there must be no objections.

### THAILAND PUSHES BOATS OF FLEEING ROHINGYA MUSLIMS BACK

The conflict of religious persecution in Burma continues to grow worse and the Rohingya Muslim victims receive no rights and find hope in the possibility that they

can find help and resources by fleeing to surrounding countries. In May 2015, over 1,000 Rohingyas arrived in Thailand by boat but were pushed back into the water without receiving any help. When questioned, the Thai prime minister, Prayuth Chan-ocha, claimed that they did not have the resources to help the Rohingya people and stated that he believed it was unfair that the world expected a transit country, such as Thailand, to offer their assistance in such a complicated conflict (3). Many countries feel the same apprehension Thailand does when discussing the issues of religious persecution; however, until there is international cooperation, the conflict possesses no possibility of a solution.

## SEGREGATION OF BUDDHISTS AND ROHINGYA MUSLIMS

After years of persecution and conflict between Buddhists and the Rohingya Muslims in Burma, violence finally exploded in 2012 during the Rakhine State Riots. The Rakhine State Riots were a series of conflicts between Buddhists and the Rohingyas which resulted in the gang rape and murder of multiple women by Rohingya people. This conflict resulted in the segregation of these two groups that was enforced by the government and still remains today (4). The separation of the groups has only led to a greater issue of this conflict and is allowing the intolerance and persecution to increase.

## BLOC POSITIONS

### COUNTRIES WITH HIGH LEVELS OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

South East Asian countries have numerous cases of religious discrimination and persecution of citizens, to citizens, in addition to government-sanctioned persecution. However, it is also important to note that, in many countries a lack of religion is also an issue and is seen as a potential threat in the eyes of the government and in some cases leads to extreme persecution. For example, atheism is considered a crime in Indonesia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. As for Christianity, Eritrea, Iraq, and North Korea are infamous persecutors of Christians, while Cambodia and Vietnam have executed genocides against Christians (8). In addition, China has recently placed restrictions on Uighur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists, with the police having shot and killed several Uighur Muslims during protests and house raids (9).

Further, a Tibetan Buddhist monk was severely beaten in police custody due to having “sensitive political documents” in his possession. Additionally, Burma is often considered the country with the most religious persecution in the entire world. It is important to remember that a range of different religions are persecuted worldwide and international involvement will be necessary in a solution to end religious persecution in South East Asia.

## COUNTRIES WITH RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Several Western nations have freedom of religion and religious practice, such as Brunei, Canada, Singapore, the United States as well as most of the EU. In this bloc, the government does not interfere with or prohibit any religious practices. These countries still have cases of religious persecution and discrimination within their individual societies; however, these actions are not condoned or practiced by their governments. The motive for having freedom of religion is usually to give citizens more civil liberties and rights to increase nationwide government approval. Some of these countries have taken in refugees from victims of religious persecution in Southeast Asia, or have otherwise helped financially through foreign aid.

## COUNTRIES WITH OFFICIAL STATE RELIGIONS

In contrast to countries with religious persecution or freedom, there are some that have established national religions. These countries do not necessarily persecute their inhabitants due to varying types of practiced religions however their government and rulings are largely attached to one religion. This bloc consists of national religions based on various religions. Examples of Christian nations include England and its Church of England, as well as Vatican City (10). Muslim nations include Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Palestine. Buddhism is another state religion in some parts of the world. Many Latin American countries are part of this bloc, seeing as Catholicism plays a major hand in their culture. Usually, a country establishes an official state religion because the religion is a major part of their nation's cultural identity. Otherwise the country was conquered by people of another religion, or converted due to missionary efforts. Intensity of national religious practice varies greatly within this bloc.

## CASE STUDIES

### 1998 RIOTS IN INDONESIA AGAINST THE ETHNIC CHINESE

In May of 1998 a mass riot was held against the ethnically Chinese Indonesians in Jakarta, Indonesia, resulting in an approximate 1,000 deaths and 87 rape cases (11). This was a grave year in Indonesian history because of an Asian financial crisis which Chinese were blamed for, resulting in the Jakarta riots; both contributed to the oust of the Indonesian President Suharto in the same year. In regards to the riots, Suharto allegedly supported discrimination against the ethnic Chinese in order to relieve political pressure on his administration for rising unemployment and inflation -this support is believed to have resulted in any military involvement in the Jakarta riots (11).

Parliamentary committees on two different judicial cases in July 2001 stated that the deaths caused by the riots were not “gross violations of human rights,” preventing any further investigation of the 56 suspects found by the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) in 2003 (12). These suspects were given to the Office of the Attorney General to investigate, but the Office returned the document containing the names stating that it “lacked testimony from key members of the [Indonesian] security forces” (12). In contrast to the statement by the previously mentioned Parliamentary committees, the third Commission on law and human rights recommended reinvestigation of the mass riots -three military tribunals responded to this recommendation and found 15 officers guilty, however no senior officers were held responsible nor were there any independent judicial inquiries. As of today any investigation or prosecution relating to any human rights violations dating before 2000 in Indonesia is required to be investigated by a non-existent ad hoc human rights court (12). The creation of this court requires a recommendation from the House of Representatives; this recommendation is thought to be disapproved by Representatives. No guilty party has been held responsible for the Jakarta Riots, and the likelihood of any responsible party being found is relatively small.

## FLEEING OF CHRISTIANS IN KAREN FROM BURMESE MILITARY

One of the longest-lasting civil wars is between the Myanmar central government and the Karen Christians; an ethnic minority group residing within Myanmar, making up 30 per cent of the country’s population. This civil war has been ongoing for 66 brutal years<sup>1</sup>, largely between the Myanmar army and the Karen National Liberation Army (13). The liberation army’s headquarters is located on the Moei River, which acts as a physical border between Myanmar and Thailand, allowing the Karen National Liberation Army easy access to Thailand from within Myanmar. By 2012, 160,000 Karen Christians were reportedly taking refuge in Thailand and hundreds of thousands were internally displaced (13). These figures ultimately question religious freedom requirements for the United Nations within the Buddhist country.

During the week of January 25, 2010, the Myanmar army domineered a particular Karen village. This week saw approximately 2,000 villagers internally disperse from this one particular village to the neighboring eastern Burmese jungle (14). The deaths of three villagers, the burning down of homes, and multiple cases of forced labor triggered the village diaspora; these atrocities were all at the hands of army personnel deployed by none other than the government of Myanmar (Free Burma Rangers). Out of all 66 years of this struggle between the Karen and the government, this was the largest number of displaced Karen in one week’s timespan. Meanwhile in the eastern Burmese jungle, the villagers were devoid of almost all necessary materials that could have helped them survive the cold month of January like blankets or fire -the fire could have let their location be known to the soldiers nearby. Humanitarian aid groups were concerned for the 2,000 Karen because of lack of food and especially because the cold season could introduce major health concerns (14). Currently the army has

conducted many human rights abuses against the Karen such as rape, forced labor, torture, and even murder. This entire conflict has not only caused a large emigration crisis, but also an internal displacement crisis. The United States has said that they would even lift sanctions that are currently in place on the Asian country if they could find peace with ethnic groups residing within their country, such as the Karen or the Rohingya (14). Saw Hla Hgwe of the Karen National Union summarized the major issues that Burmese people face, stating that, "We have two big problems in [Myanmar], ethnic rights and democratic rights," which have yet to be properly introduced and effectively implemented (13).

## GUIDED QUESTIONS

- How do the rights to free practice effect religious persecution?
- How can persecution that is not condoned by the government be detected as well as eliminated?
- How can persecution that is hidden from the general public be detected?
- How does ethnic purging and genocide play into persecution?
- How can international cooperation be introduced without infringing upon national sovereignty?

## FURTHER READING

- <http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/burma-four-race-and-religion-protection-laws-adopted/>
- <http://www.irinnews.org/report/101392/forced-separation-life-inside-myanmars-rohingya-and-buddhist-camps>
- <http://www.refworld.org/docid/45f1474911.html>
- [http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/\\_news/2012/04/06/11055405-war-has-yet-to-end-for-the-karen-a-christian-minority-in-myanmar](http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/04/06/11055405-war-has-yet-to-end-for-the-karen-a-christian-minority-in-myanmar)

## TOPIC 2

# PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS IN SYRIAN REFUGEE CAMPS

## TOPIC INTRO

The UN recently identified almost 7 million Syrians internally displaced within their country and about 5 million Syrian refugees outside of the country, with about 3 million living in Turkey. The topic of refugee rights is extremely pertinent today given these large numbers of people living in refugee camps. These refugees are people who have fled Syria since the 2011 beginning of the Syrian Civil War. The war began with unrest caused by protests against the existing government and became an armed rebellion with a factional nature. The Syrian Civil War caused an exodus of Syrians, some of whom found shelter in camps. Generally speaking, the definition of refugee camps is a temporary settlement with the purpose of accommodating displaced people. On average, camps hold approximately 1,100 individuals (14). These refugees sometimes lack legal documentation or citizenship and can be political exiles. Other reasons for their departure are natural disasters and war, as is the case for many Syrians today.

### Syrian conflict

#### The facts

**Death toll**  
**240,000** Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) estimate, July 2015

**Political prisoners**  
Arrests recorded by the Violations Documentation Center – 51,811  
Estimated number of people detained by regime, 2014<sup>3</sup>

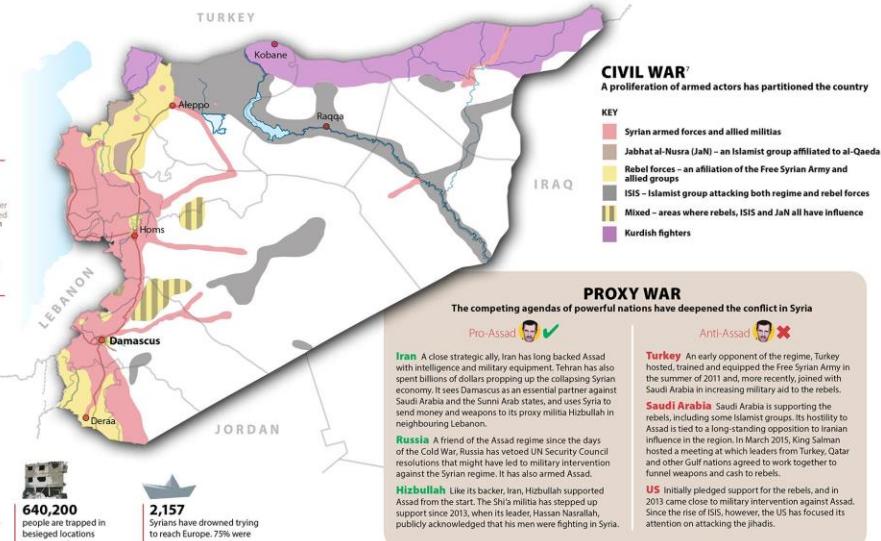
**Humanitarian crisis**  
50% of Syria's population displaced by conflict

Over 11,000 Syrians killed in regime prisons by torture, starvation and execution<sup>4</sup>

7.6 million internally displaced and 4 million refugees  
12.2 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria<sup>5</sup>  
4% the share of Syrian refugees hosted by EU countries<sup>6</sup>

#### TIMELINE

**2011**  
March Inspired by the Arab Spring, anti-regime Deraa graffiti anti-regime slogans. Their subsequent arrest triggers a series of peaceful protests calling for reforms.  
President Bashar al-Assad announces conciliatory measures while security forces violently open fire on unarmed protesters.



**2012**  
April Civilian death toll reaches 20,000 as people call for an end to the Assad regime.  
May The first refugees from the village of Al-Khalidiyah, near Deraa, cross into Deraa, Banyas, Homs and suburbs of Damascus. The US and European Union impose sanctions.

**2013**  
January Jabhat al-Nusra, an al-Qaeda affiliate, announces its formation in Syria.  
February Government steps up the bombardment of towns and cities. The UN says more than 7,500 Syrians have now been killed.  
July The Red Cross declares conflict a full-scale 'civil war' in Jordan. The Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan will soon become home to over 120,000 refugees.

**2014**  
March Regime massacred more than 1,000 civilians, including 49 children, in Houla, near Homs, Britain, Canada, Australia and other countries expel Syrian diplomats.  
April Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announces the formation of ISIS. Conflict breaks out between the regime and Islamist (jihadi) groups, ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra.  
July The regime begins the siege of Yarmouk, a Palestinian refugee camp in Damascus. Hundreds of civilians will die of disease or starvation.

**2015**  
January–February UN-brokered peace talks in Geneva fail. The UN resolution demands an end to the indiscriminate bombing of civilians.  
March The US begins a bombing campaign over commercial fronts.  
April Sooud Nofal begins her 'one woman' demonstration outside 100 HQ in Hama.  
May Government retakes the historic city of Aleppo after three-year siege.  
June UN reports that indiscriminate attacks on civilian-inhabited areas are committed across Syria 'by most, if not all, of the warring parties'.

**January** With help of US-led anti-jihadist Kurdish forces retake Kobane.  
**June** UN reports that indiscriminate attacks on civilian-inhabited areas are committed across Syria 'by most, if not all, of the warring parties'.

Refugee camps are generally plagued with several problems. Often, when people are living in refugee camps, conditions are unsanitary. Refugee camps can also be severely understaffed and undersupplied, as a result of financial restrictions. Furthermore, the camps themselves tend to be overpopulated and lacking in adequate financial resources. Disease rates are high because of the previously mentioned conditions, while access to medical treatments and clean water are often difficult to obtain - the lack of infrastructure in the refugee camps can make transportation difficult. This lack of infrastructure occurs as a result of a lack of monetary funds and a surplus of refugees to accommodate. As an additional human rights violation, and partly due to a lack of infrastructure, food supplies and access to education can be scarce. Furthermore, refugee women and girls can be coerced into providing sexual acts in exchange for basic human rights to food, shelter, or other necessities such as proper documentation. Although of course, nearly all refugees lack significant protection, the lack of protection for female refugees in particular remains an unfortunate situation. It is important to remember that these aforementioned human rights issues in refugee camps are merely examples, and that many more are present in camps.

A relevant UN body to consider within the context of the Syrian refugee crisis is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a UN program that supports refugees, helping them with local integration or other options (14). It is essential for the international community to address this issue and work toward protecting human rights of refugees, seeing as refugees are already in very vulnerable positions.

## HISTORY

Although the media began focusing on the Syrian refugee crisis somewhat recently, the Syrian Arab Republic has been having many political changes in government since at least the 1920s. At the San Remo conference of 1920, Syria was placed under a French mandate rule (15). Syria achieved its independence in 1946 and has had many changes in government - different constitution and cabinets - ever since (16).

During the First Arab-Israeli War of 1948, Syria sided with other Arab nations led by Egypt in the fight against Israel. Throughout this time, there was an exodus of Syrian Jews from the country, as they faced religious persecution. In 1971, Syrian Jews who had tried to flee the country were kidnapped in Lebanon and tortured in Damascus (16).

As the Arab-Israeli conflict continued, Syria hosted Palestinian refugees in camps such as Yarmouk and Al Tanf. However, the Syrian people themselves have only really begun to live in refugee camps themselves in more recent history.

After the Iraq War began in 2003, about 1 in 6 Iraqis left their home, most settling in Lebanon and Syria. In Syria, Iraqis often lived without the protection of

refugee laws and have been facing more violence and unrest in Syria. Thus, not only does the Syrian refugee crisis affect Syrians, but the lack of safety and protection of people in refugee camps from the violence in Syria poses a serious problem to the human rights of refugees.

The Syrian Civil War began in 2011, creating catastrophic violence in Syria. Since then, many refugee camps have been created, such as the Za'atari camp in Turkey, which opened in 2012; it now hosts about 106,000 Syrians (17). This camp in particular struggles with poor accommodations and food shortages, despite the fact that it is connected to a highway. Due to these problems, there have been riots, which have resulted in death and injury for the refugees in the camps. In addition, there has been a rising number of crime reports, from drug dealing to prostitution (17).



Source: <http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnnnext/dam/assets/130223174704-78-syria-unrest-horizontal-large-gallery.jpg>

However, it is important to note that some camps in Turkey have operated with better conditions, such as the Kilis Oncupinar Accommodation Facility. Called the “perfect” and “nicest” camp by the Western media, this facility has streets which are cleaned regularly, children who are educated in schools as well as handymen and health and safety crews to help. The streets are lit at night with lamps and the schools, and one refugee woman said she felt so safe in the camp that she could go out at 3:00 a.m (18).

## PAST UN ACTION

The only standing international legal documents that cover the most quintessential aspects of a refugee's life are the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention) and the 1967 Protocol. Created to protect millions of European refugees after the Second World War, the 1951 Convention is focused

primarily on non-refoulement, a policy that prevents a refugee from being returned to a member state that prohibits the abundance of livelihood or freedom (19). The 1967 Protocol got rid of constraints built by the 1951 Convention like referring specifically to refugees from Europe before January 1, 1951. These two documents outline the criteria needed in order to regard a person as a refugee, rights belonging to a refugee, and the obligations that are expected of the country of refuge. Limitations to become a refugee include crimes against peace, humanity or serious international crimes or war crimes. Today, 148 member states have ratified the 1951 Convention and it has determined the status of 2.2 million refugees worldwide (19).

With nearly 4.8 million Syrian refugees known to the United Nations, the importance of international support and cooperation has never been more important. The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) works to highlight the importance of donors on an international scale to the Syrian Refugee Crisis; the plan has appealed for nearly 6 billion US dollars in 2016 alone (<http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/the-3rp/strategic-overview/>). This response plan works with multiple UN agencies, IGOs, and NGOs, underlining leadership roles for the governments of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt (20). With a continual growth in numbers of Syrian refugees, the United Nations hopes that the 3RP's procedures for 2016 will be more effective, specific, and efficient. Some changes that the Plan has taken include maintenance of refugee camps rather than construction, and larger investments in the Education Sector and the Livelihood and Social Cohesion Sector. Specifically regarding education, the Plan hopes to bring more than 700,000 refugee children back to school, and increase the nations-of-refugee's student capacity within schools. Meanwhile, the Livelihood and Social Cohesion Sector has hosted initiatives for refugees, and the unemployed and underemployed from nations-of-refugee, teaching them life and vocational skills (20). The 3RP works harder every year to become more relevant to the ever-changing Syrian refugee scenario, striving for efficiency, resilience and sustainability.

In 1984, Latin, Central, and Northern American countries came together in order to form the Cartagena Declaration. This dialogue is currently in effect in order to help integrate migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees, and stateless people in American member states. It highlights some of the key issues that have prohibited the growth of peace within Latin American countries and the Caribbean. These issues include: violence, especially organized crime and internal displacement, megaprojects, natural disasters, gender-based violence, unaccompanied children, violence against human rights defenders, and extra-continental mixed migratory flows (21). Working almost entirely on transparency between organizations, the Cartagena+30 was created as an international protection agenda to replace the Brazil Declaration. It is now effective in 14 American countries, collaborating with civil society organizations such as Help for Progress, and Project Counselling Service; it is also striving to confront discordance with international protection and promote the culture of American tradition (21). This Declaration has been widely appraised, and is often considered a model for worldwide refugee crises; the Syrian Refugee Crisis has multiple common themes with this effective dialogue.

Formulated in December of 2013, the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) is the leading framework pertaining to the United Nations, humanitarian aid, and refugee operations (22). RCM was created with hopes to provide all refugees adequate protection and assistance, especially in large-scale emergencies. This model clarifies the roles and responsibilities of refugee operations using the Inter-Agency Standing Committee cluster system. While integrating essential humanitarian operations such as resource mobilization or response fundraising, the RCM has designs on relevancy and continued reliability for potential refugee situations. This humanitarian coordination response plan correlates with the Refugee Response chapter of the Strategic Response Plan in order to confront the growing demand for humanitarian aid in the Syrian Refugee Crisis (22).

The Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination is a United Nations entity that works hand-in-hand with member states, their deployed militaries, and humanitarian organizations (23). This UN conglomerate propagates communication between the average civilian, the foreign military actors and their assets. Its purpose is to promote humanitarian principles by pursuing common goals and developing policy based on the context of the humanitarian situation. Based in Geneva, Switzerland, this United Nations group uses military assets, training, workshops, conferences and simulation exercises to confront catastrophic emergencies (23). It has become extremely detrimental in the Syrian Refugee Crisis, so that every refugee is protected adequately and do not have to be exposed to harm or violence that they thought they were leaving behind in Syria.

All of these five documents and groups represent imperative roles in the Syrian Refugee Crisis. The United Nations has particularly implemented certain groups and solutions in order to uphold every Syrian refugees' fundamental rights as outlined by the United Nations charter. It is important that the four million Syrian refugees worldwide are able to progress through life, and are available to opportunities that could make their life that much better. With a diaspora that has completely changed population distribution, it is difficult for any country or individual not to become overwhelmed. These documents and groups are used by the United Nations to showcase their continual helping hand, and belief that a better tomorrow can be reached for every living being on this earth.

## CURRENT SITUATION

### RUSSIAN AIRSTRIKES

The Syrian War has led to an immense refugee crisis due to the fact that Syrians are not safe in their own country and face horrific violence in their communities. In September of 2015, President Bashar al-Assad of Syria approved of Russia beginning a series of airstrikes against the civilians in opposition held areas of Syria. The goals of these airstrikes is to allow the Syrian Government to regain territory as well as to

prevent rebel advances. Currently Bashar al-Assad has regained control over Apello and Salma by killing over 250,000 people including children and women in the targeting of schools, hospitals, etc (1). 11 million Syrians have been forced to flee from their homes in order to protect themselves from their families.

## INTERNATIONAL RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT AID IN JORDAN

Jordan's foreign policy allows it to exist as a welcome country for refugees including those of the Syrian conflict. Ramtha is a large city in northern Jordan that has taken in over 80,000 refugees but now is facing great strain in their infrastructure due to the exponential population increase. In April 2014, the US based NGO, International Relief and Development (IRD), rehabilitated two water wells, a transmission pipeline, water treatment station and the sanitation sector of Ramatha and other northern areas of Jordan including the Za'atari refugee camp which overall immensely improved the water and sanitation situation in Jordan (2). The IRD plans to continue implementing assistance to Jordan through projects such as financial support to qualifying families, psychological support for children, access to health care and vocational training. The IRD hopes that through their programs they will help reduce the strain between refugees and their host countries.

## 2016 REGIONAL REFUGEE AND RESILIENCE PLAN

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has formed the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) which exhibits the goals for the Syrian Refugee Crisis in 2016. This plan targets Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey due to the fact that they house the most Syrian refugee camps. The plan has set a series of individual goals that are specific to each country and are hoped to be accomplished by the end of 2016. These goals include: health care, psychological support, water, sanitation, financial assistance, child protection and the enrollment in formal education. Overall, the 3RP plans to vaccinate 15.4 million children against polio, provide 854,000 children with access to enroll in formal education and to provide access to child protection or psychological support to 548,000 children in 2016 (3). In order to be executed the 3RP will require \$847,329,602 USD and is unlikely to receive that necessary support and will therefore not exceed the 2016 goals, similarly to the unachieved goals of 2015.

## ZA'ATARI HITS MAXIMUM CAPACITY

As the Syrian conflict continues to grow after years of violence, people continue to be displaced from their homes and are forced to flee to other countries and enter refugee camps. Jordan houses a large number of Syrian refugees and is home to the largest refugee camp in the Middle East, Za'atari. In July 2016, Za'atari hit maximum capacity with over 81,000 Syrian Refugees which prevented them from housing any of the growing numbers of refugees (4). This led to the number of urban refugees

increasing exponentially and causing immense financial distress among the urban refugees. The urban refugees are now facing the fear of starvation and lack of housing until the population of urban refugees is reduced through increased infrastructure and the opening of a new refugee camp.

## BLOC POSITIONS

### NEIGHBORING HOST COUNTRIES

Host nations near Syria take in a large number of refugees each year, largely aided by their geographical proximity to Syria. Some host nations, like Turkey, have refugees living in government-run camps near the border with Syria. Other nations, such as Lebanon, have had refugees settle throughout the country, rather than living in camps. Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt are also among the bloc of neighboring host countries. Some of these countries, such as Jordan, are struggling due to the influx of refugees - infrastructure may be inadequate due to a rapid increase of population.

### DISTANT HOST COUNTRIES

Countries in Europe and North America also host refugees, despite the fact that some of their citizens and leaders feel as though allowing Syrian immigration will create a dangerous situation with opportunities for terrorism. Some examples of these countries include the United States, France, Germany, and other EU nations. France and Germany have recently changed their perspectives, fearing immigration more, as a result to pressure from citizens. Many of these distant host countries, rather than having specific refugee camps for Syrians, integrate them into cities. Some countries, like the United States, donate heavily to the refugees' because, despite not taking in many refugees (5). Latin American countries have also been helping refugees, through resettlement programs and humanitarian visa programs (6).

### SYRIA

Clearly, Syria is a central player in the refugee camp situation. Syria's refugees leave for camps outside of its borders in search of safety from the dangerous civil war in their country. 6.5 million Syrians are internally displaced within their country, while around 11 million have fled Syria. The refugee crisis is worsening due to numerous war crimes, such as torture, rape, and murder that are being supported by the Syrian government. Toxic chemicals and bombs are being condoned by the Syrian government in opposition areas in order to increase control and prevent advances of rebel forces which therefore causes more Syrians to flee creating a larger refugee crisis. Further, the Islamic State has many foreign fighters, creating more chaos and unrest, and thus driving Syrians to leave their homes (7).

## COUNTRIES NOT TAKING IN REFUGEES

Many countries have refused to host refugees. Governments and people alike cite fear of acts of violence and terrorism which could be committed by Syrian refugees, as a result of xenophobic mindsets. These countries include namely the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The GCC includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Although reports differ, it is internationally recognized that these nations have accepted little to no refugees into their borders, despite calls for them to do so from the international community, including the UN. In addition to the GCC nations, Japan, Russia, Singapore and South Korea have not offered significant resettlement options for Syrians. However, many of these countries have heavily donated to help refugees - for instance, the UAE states that it has given \$530 million in relief aid. However, there are numerous countries who refuse to take in refugees due to the financial aspect. Taking in refugees can be costly - it often requires paperwork, materials, and other financial burdens for governments. This bloc includes many smaller, developing nations, who are already struggling even without setting up camps for refugees or creating programs for resettlement.



Source: <http://fm.cnbc.com/applications/cnbc.com/resources/img/editorial/2015/11/18/103179288-GettyImages-487998468.530x298.jpg?v=1447860973>

## CASE STUDIES

### CLOSED JORDANIAN BORDER ON JUNE 21

21 June 2016 at 5:30 AM, Islamic State jihadists drove a pickup truck full of explosives into a Jordanian military base on the Jordan-Syria border (9). Four Jordanian soldiers, a police officer, and a civil defense officer lost their lives from this suicide bombing; 14 others were wounded. Shortly after the attack, the Jordanian military closed the last entry point from Syria into Jordan declaring the area a “closed military

zone" and that "any vehicle and personnel... mov[ing] without prior coordination... [would be] treated as enemy targets and... without leniency" (8). Meanwhile, matters became increasingly complicated for approximately 60,000 Syrians seeking refuge in Jordan, located a kilometer away from the base, half of whom were reportedly children (Doctors Without Borders).

In nearby refugee camps, water was the only form of aid being admitted entry, even actual refugees. Jordanian officials refuse to expand their refugee camps at this time nor build anymore without additional international support. They also said that the 60,000 Syrians on the border is a problem belonging to the international community, seeing as Jordan is overburdened with their current 650,000 admitted Syrian refugees, who make up approximately 10% of the nation's population (8). This large per cent of Syrian refugees residing within Jordan has caused issues with unemployment rates, and availability of places to live. The Jordanian refugee budget has been affronted mainly by the monarchy, but only 29 per cent of their budget has been funded (8). Currently the United Nations has had difficulty inspiring their member states worldwide to help fund and protect these Syrian refugees: with an appeal of 4 billion US dollars for 2016 alone, the United Nations has only received 30 per cent of this number. Since the spike of immigrating Syrian refugees in 2014, the number of Syrians that have evacuated their country has doubled (10). The Jordanian government is correct when they say that the international community has a major responsibility role to fill in this diaspora, but the lack of acceptance of that imperative role should not entail the abandonment of innocents nor undernourishment of those barely surviving in desert refugee camps.

## HUNGARY AND THE MIGRANT CRISIS

Hundreds of Hungarian civilians handed Syrian refugees food and water as they walked from the Budapest central train station to the Austria-Hungary border in August and September of 2015 (12). These actions taken by the Hungarian civilians contrast with those taken and statements made by their government officials on the subject of the Syrian Refugee Crisis. Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia -neighboring countries to Hungary- began to prevent entry to any individual without a valid passport or European Union visa in early March of 2016 (12). This requirement made by the three aforementioned nations resulted in the number of Syrian refugees attempting admittance into Hungary to soar. In October of 2015 through January of 2016, there were a handful of refugee arrivals per day; compare this number to approximately 248 arrivals per day in February and March of 2016(12).

Of all Syrian refugees who enter Hungary, 100-200 refugees are arrested at the Serbia-Hungary border daily (11). The problem with these daily arrests at the border is that facilities where the arrested are taken before prosecution are entirely full (11). In a national consultation in 2015, following the establishment of an anti-migrant campaign, the country stated that they see migrants and asylum seekers the same as they see terrorists (11). Continuing with this regressive approach, police officers and

army personnel refuse to tell Syrian refugees any relative information as they wait for the Hungarian verdict on their migrant status. The United Nations has urged Syrian refugees in this waiting period to be patient (13). Meanwhile, Hungarian officials have claimed that the transit zone for Syrian refugees and the area outside the Serbia-Hungary border-fence are not within its territory, therefore illegal immigrants such as refugees or asylum seekers are not part of its responsibility as a nation. Criticism against Hungary for its response to the refugee crisis has not stopped them from only granting 146 asylums in 2015, a number that starkly contrasts from the nearly 200 thousand asylum applications the Hungarian government received that year (11). Not only did Hungary admit a limited number of refugees in 2015, but the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban promised that the government would get rid of numerous subsidies and services that are currently in place for refugees or asylum seekers (11). With the more than a million Syrian refugees that came to Europe solely by boat from the Middle East in 2015, it seems as if Hungary is not taking their fair share to confront this major diaspora and help this chaotic world heal from its countless acquired wounds.

## GUIDED QUESTIONS

- How can friction between refugees and host countries be reduced?
- What can be implemented in order to reduce the harm of population growth?
- What can non-host countries do to help the refugee crisis?
- Should Syrians be prevented from fleeing Syria in order to limit the amount of refugees?
- What can be done, if anything, to encourage able countries to host Syrian Refugees?

## FURTHER READING

- <http://www.unicef.org/appeals/syrianrefugees.html>
- <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/syrian-civil-war-guide-isis/410746/>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/04/russian-bombs-trigger-mass-aleppo-exodus-syria-conference-told>

# SOURCES

## TOPIC 1

1. <http://www.csw.org.uk/2014/05/28/news/2119/article.htm>
2. <http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/burma-four-race-and-religion-protection-laws-adopted/>
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/14/malaysia-turns-back-migrant-boat-with-more-than-500-aboard>
4. <http://www.irinnews.org/report/101392/forced-separation-life-inside-myanmars-rohingya-and-buddhist-camps>
5. <https://history105.libraries.wsu.edu/spring2015/2015/01/19/persecution-of-christians-in-vietnam/>
6. <http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199804/msg00440.html>
7. <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/burm005-02.htm>
8. [http://www.opendoorssuk.org/persecution/country\\_profiles.php](http://www.opendoorssuk.org/persecution/country_profiles.php)
9. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>
10. [http://www.catholic-pages.com/vatican/vatican\\_city.asp](http://www.catholic-pages.com/vatican/vatican_city.asp)
11. <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jul/04/world/la-fg-indonesia-chinese-20100704>
12. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/45f1474911.html>
13. [http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/\\_news/2012/04/06/11055405-war-has-yet-to-end-for-the-karen-a-christian-minority-in-myanmar](http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/04/06/11055405-war-has-yet-to-end-for-the-karen-a-christian-minority-in-myanmar)
14. <http://www.thedailystar.net/news-detail-123386>

## TOPIC 2

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/04/russian-bombs-trigger-mass-aleppo-exodus-syria-conference-told>
2. <https://www.devex.com/news/refugee-crisis-management-beyond-jordan-s-camps-83391>
3. <http://www.unicef.org/appeals/syrianrefugees.html>
4. <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2015/7/55b7737b6/jordans-zaatari-refugee-camp-turns-three-challenges-future-thousands-living.html>
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2013/mar/06/syrian-refugee-crisis-in-numbers>
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/09/latin-american-countries-welcome-syrian-refugees>
7. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26116868>
8. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/01/jordan-must-help-not-punish-trapped-refugees>
9. [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/22/world/middleeast/jordan-syria-attack.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/22/world/middleeast/jordan-syria-attack.html?_r=0)
10. <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>
11. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/refugee-crisis-hungary-sends-troops-border-160309134453267.html>
12. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/03/09/dispatches-hungarys-new-bigger-migrant-lockout>
13. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/04/04/dispatches-asylum-seekers-stuck-outside-transit-zones-hungary>
14. [http://unhcr.org/globaltrendsjune2013/UNHCR%20GLOBAL%20TRENDS%202012\\_V05.pdf](http://unhcr.org/globaltrendsjune2013/UNHCR%20GLOBAL%20TRENDS%202012_V05.pdf)
15. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/interactive/2013/jul/25/what-happened-history-refugees>
16. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/syrian-civil-war-guide-isis/410746/>
17. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26908587>
18. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/16/magazine/how-to-build-a-perfect-refugee-camp.html>
19. <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/about-us/background/4ec262df9/1951-convention-relating-status-refugees-its-1967-protocol.html>
20. <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/the-3rp/strategic-overview/>
21. <http://refugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Cartagena-30-Initiative-Executive-Summary-English.pdf>
22. <http://www.coordinationtoolkit.org/wp-content/uploads/Refugee-Response-Coordination-Presentation-For-distribution-Ext.pdf>
23. <http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination-tools/UN-CMCoord/overview>