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30th Annual

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE

Sponsored by the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies
Friday, November 8th, 2019 – Provo, Utah

Esteemed Delegates,

Welcome to the 30th annual Brigham Young University Model United Nations Conference (BYUMUN)! My name is Joshua Brown, and I am delighted to direct the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In reading this, you already demonstrate a desire to propose and support solutions to the many humanitarian crises of the world.

I am currently studying Middle Eastern Studies and Arabic and have worked extensively with refugees from the Middle East and Asia in Sweden. Like you, I participated in Model United Nations (MUN) throughout high school, and it has been a springboard for success in my college career and in my work with refugees abroad. Upon graduation, I intend to apply the skills I have developed in MUN to my career in the military.

This year, the UN Refugee Agency, or UNHCR, will deliberate on the following topics:

I. Providing Infrastructure Support For Syria and the Return of Refugees to Syria;
II. Ensuring Suitable Living Standards in Refugee Camps.

The United Nations needs to present a united front in addressing both issues. UNHCR's mandate is to bring relief to refugees and enable host countries to effectively administer aid. I encourage you to invest time in understanding the jurisdiction of UNHCR, as it will help you tailor your solutions to what the Committee can implement.

This Guide will be organized by topic. It should be studied, but not used as the only source of information you employ in preparing for the Conference. Take the time to understand your country's policies and develop the key points you want to see in resolutions coming out of this Committee. If you prepare, you will exude confidence and play a key role in the decision-making of this Committee.

I look forward to your arrival at BYUMUN this year. If you have questions concerning this Guide or the Committee in general, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

Joshua Brown
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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
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Committee History

"To be called a refugee is the opposite of an insult; it is a badge of strength, courage, and victory."
— *Tennessee Office for Refugees*

Establishment and Membership

The United Nations was established on October 24th, 1945. The first committee founded was the General Assembly. The General Assembly established the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on December 14th, 1950, stipulating that the High Commissioner "acting under the authority of the General Assembly, shall assume the function of providing international protection…and of seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees."[1] This came as a direct response to the influx of refugees after World War II, where Jews, Germans, Russians, Italians, and many others fled their home countries due to persecution. Israel, West Germany, and the United States were only some of the recipients of these refugees. Similarly, finding refugees a permanent home and stabilizing refugees' countries of origin are two of the main challenges the world faces today. UNHCR's proposed and ongoing solutions to both challenges will be discussed throughout Topics 1 and 2 in this Background Guide. In short, UNHCR has adapted to these situations by creating specific procedures for the creation and maintenance of refugee camps.[2] These procedures allow UNHCR to respond uniformly to political and environmental crises across the world. One-hundred and twenty-eight countries are represented in the Committee today, with the General Assembly electing a new High Commissioner for Refugees every five years.[3]

Terms and Definitions

UNHCR takes on the challenge of caring for the world's refugees. As defined by the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, a refugee is "someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence."[4] Sixty-seven percent of the world's refugees come from five countries: Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, and Somalia. While the term "refugee" is generally used to describe anyone fleeing from their home country, there are situations that, due to complexity, require a more specific term to describe their condition. This includes internally displaced persons (IDP's), stateless persons, and asylum seekers. IDP's are people who have been forced to flee their home but never cross an international border.[5] IDP's include people displaced by internal strife and natural disasters, but do not share a refugee's protection under international law. Because IDP's are within their home country's borders, they are legally under the protection of their own government. Governments can take advantage of this and deny basic human rights to citizens who oppose their points of view. Some of these basic human rights include the right to education, water, food, and shelter.

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[1] Para. 1 of the Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees [hereafter the Statute], as revised by General Assembly [hereafter GA] res. 58/153, 22 December 2003.
[2] UNHCR, *Emergency Handbook,* (New York, United Nations, 2015).
[3] UNHCR, *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: Membership Detail,* (New York, United Nations, 2018).
[4] UNHCR, *What is a Refugee? Definition and Meaning: USA for UNHCR,* (Washington D.C., United Nations, 2018).
[5] UNHCR, *What is a Refugee?*

More human rights can be found in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989). A stateless person is an individual who is not a citizen of any country. This can be accomplished by legal, administrative, or sovereign decisions or oversights.[6] For instance, the Soviet Union made a point of denying uncooperative citizens citizenship in the USSR the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* states that "everyone has the right to a nationality," and UNHCR helps stateless persons find accommodations in agreeing Member States. An asylum seeker is a person who flees their own country and seek sanctuary in another county. This means that they apply for refugee status in another country, alongside legal protections and material assistance.[7] The ultimate goal of UNHCR is to "ensure that everybody has the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State."[8]

Implementation Tools

One way that UNHCR accomplishes this mission is through the work of the High Commissioner. The High Commissioner acts as the designated spokesperson for the Committee. They speak for the Committee at conferences and with world leaders to garner support. The High Commissioner also encourages other Member States to provide aid to refugees within their borders. Filippo Grandi, the current UN High Commissioner for Refugees, has been a long-standing advocate in support of resuming the rescue of refugees at sea. Because of the strain refugees from the Middle East and Africa have put on European countries, countries such as Italy and Greece have halted search parties in the Mediterranean. Without those search parties, hundreds have drowned at sea.

UNHCR also passes resolutions allocating funding to support existing refugee camps, research projects that focus on improving conditions in refugee camps, and events that raise both awareness and monetary funds for refugee conditions in the most severe locations of the world. Unlike most other UN committees, UNHCR allocates its own budget. This is a critical difference; the United Nations recognizes how important it is for UNHCR to have the funding it needs to support human life. UNHCR is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions, with eighty-seven percent of its' budget coming from individual Member States and organized groups of Member States, most notably the EU. Another ten percent comes from private donors internationally.

Because UNHCR allocates its' own budget, the Committee has greater freedom to raise funds to support refugees. UNHCR also arranges transport and assistance packages for people who return to their native country, alongside income-generating projects for those who resettle elsewhere. All of this is accomplished by both United Nations funding obtained from Member State donations and fundraising carried out by UNHCR. This greatly aids developing countries, where 85 percent of the world's displaced people are located. For example, Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are in dire need of shelter, food, and water. Bangladesh is, currently, housing the majority of Rohingya refugees from the Rakhine State in Myanmar. Myanmar purged the Rakhine province in 2017 of an estimated 745,000 Rohingya, driving them into Bangladesh.

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[6] UNHCR, *What is a Refugee?*
[7] UNHCR, *What is a Refugee?*
[8] UNHCR, *Membership Detail.*

UNHCR carries out its mandate by providing emergency assistance in the form of clean water, sanitation, healthcare, shelter, education, and jobs to those in Bangladesh.[9] Recent examples of UNHCR attempts to fund Rohingya relief packages include the Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis, which called for 951 million US dollars in funding from UN Member States, and an online petition for funding on Global Giving made by UNHCR subsidiaries and supporters.[10] Alongside the mass media campaign launched by UNHCR to bring attention to this issue on its own website and social media feeds, JRP and non-governmental organizations alike are working together to raise the money needed to support the Bangladeshi government.

Further, UNHCR tracks how many refugees, IDP's, and asylum-seekers exist around the world. As of November 2018, there were more than 40 million IDPs, 25.4 million refugees, and 3.1 million asylum-seekers worldwide. UNHCR's statistical data informs the way host countries respond to new refugee crises. UNHCR works with 138 countries and employs 16,765 personnel worldwide to aid in the distribution of supplies to refugees and in planning for and reacting to refugee situations. This can be seen throughout Europe as private buildings and public property were transformed to meet the needs of arriving refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and Sudan. UNHCR also uses data to motivate both Member States and individuals into action.[11] UNHCR provides materials for teachers on the complexities of the refugee situation, enabling them to teach their students about refugees. This curriculum explores the various types of refugees, refugee rights, and potential solutions to the refugee crisis.[12] Education is a prerequisite to advocacy; once teachers and students understand the refugee crisis, they are more likely to be invested in finding a solution.

Recent Developments

The most recent session of UNHCR occurred in October 2018, where the Committee ratified several fiscal and administrative resolutions for the upcoming year. Changes included a new economic plan for the upcoming year, general debates over funding, the allocation of funds received, discussion of solutions to the displacement of refugees from their host and home countries, and the reprimand of the High Commissioner's Office for not providing Member States explicit reports on the Agency's actions abroad.[13] It also oversaw the groundwork for an unnamed agreement that could unilaterally allow refugees across the world access to education and even resettlement.[14] Family reunification programs, student scholarships, and humanitarian visas were also discussed and are pressing topics for future debate.

While these talks are ongoing, UNHCR continues to work towards stabilizing regions of origin by providing a wide variety of resources to those in need, ranging from manpower to food supplies. UNHCR has also sought to integrate peacekeeping missions with UNHCR relief missions, providing even more stability and protection for refugees inside and outside of camps.

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[9] UNHCR, *Emergency Handbook.*
[10] OCHA, *Rohingya Refugee Crisis,* (New York, United Nations, 2019)
[11] UNHCR, *What is a Refugee?*
[12] UNHCR, *Teaching about Refugees,* (New York, United Nations, 2019).
[13] United Nations, *Report of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,* (New York, United Nations, 2018).
[14] UNHCR, *Emergency Handbook.*

These peacekeeping missions are in place as UNHCR assists local governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in setting up and maintaining camps. However, peacekeeping missions are rarely used in countries where local security forces can be allocated to camp protection.

Conclusion

UNHCR's mandate enables Member States to secure better standards of living for refugees across the world and change lives forever. UNHCR envisions an era of peaceful relations between nations, where refugee camps and national instability will be a relic of the past. UNHCR strives towards a better world with all diligence, meeting the basic needs, promoting the education, and securing the basic human rights of refugees.

Annotated Bibliography

OCHA. "Rohingya Refugee Crisis." Accessed August 17, 2019.
https://www.unocha.org/rohingya-refugee-crisis

> *Provides a summary of the devastation occurring in both Myanmar and Bangladesh due to atrocities committed and the unsustainable number of refugees flooding into Bangladesh. This article also provides examples of how UNHCR has provided relief to these Rohingya refugees, alongside different methods that they have gone about raising money and distributing aid to these refugees.*

"Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees." Membership Detail. Accessed July 28, 2019. http://www.unevaluation.org/about/memberagencies/detail/15

> *A general summary of statistical information concerning UNHCR internationally, reporting contributions made to the committee, the number of refugees, IDP's, a link to the Mandate of the High Commissioner, and forms of aid provided to refugees in Member States.*

UNHCR. "Emergency Handbook." UNHCR. Accessed July 28, 2019.
https://emergency.unhcr.org/

> *General guidelines on how to set up and run an effective refugee camp. The handbook includes standards and topics ranging from health and safety rules to food distribution to camp economics. A very good handbook to study and see how refugee camps are being run in theory, compare to actual standards, and see how we can improve said standards and what is actually being implemented.*

UNHCR. "Teaching about refugees" Accessed August 9, 2019.
https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/teaching-about-refugees.html

> *UNHCR's Teachers' Toolkit really helps provide some major insight into how UNHCR itself goes about talking about refugees. It is extremely helpful and enlightening, providing media materials, reports, facts and figures about refugees, and even how to include refugees in the classroom.*

UNHCR. "What Is a Refugee? Definition and Meaning: USA for UNHCR." Accessed July 28, 2019. https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/

> *UNHCR's website defines a refugee and differentiates a refugee from an IDP and asylum Seeker.*

United Nations. "Report of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees." Accessed July 28, 2019.
https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/73/12/add.1

An official report of the proceedings of the 4-day conference held in October 2018 by the Executive Committee of UNHCR. References many modern and prevalent resolutions concerning the allocation of funds to different regions, as well as new topics opened up to the committee for debate and consideration. Also details UNHCR's ongoing efforts to work with both Member States, Peacekeeper forces, and non-governmental organizations on keeping UNHCR sites secure locations.

United Nations. "The Mandate of the High Commissioner for Refugees and His Office." UNHCR. Accessed July 28, 2019. https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/basic/526a22cb6/mandate-high-commissioner-refugees-office.html

The document listed offers an explanation to the origin of the committee, as well as its functions and purpose. It also references many key resolutions that have defined the committee and said functions over the past 68 years since its establishment.

I.   Providing Infrastructure Support for Syria and the Return of Refugees to Syria

"Some live for medals. Others find their gratification in living for an ideal."
― *Ammar Habib, Syrian Civil War Author*

Introduction

Following the end of World War I, the former Ottoman Empire was divided into mandates by the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 and given to Allied victors. The French were given control of Lebanon and Syria, the British were given what is today Palestine, Jordan and southern Iraq, and Russia obtained Western Armenia. The goal of these mandates, on paper, was to civilize the territories and treat them as vassals, until the Allied victors saw fit to give them independence. These seizures of land won in the war quickly turned into occupations where the lands and peoples were exploited for resources. The French occupation of Syria formally began in 1920. The French overhauled 400 years of Ottoman administration to a European style of governance in an act of colonial conquest.[15] This, along with a series of grievances and crimes against the Syrian people, resulted in the Great Syrian Revolt (1925-1927) against French occupation. While French control was again established following the Revolt, the Revolt led to the *1936 Franco-Syrian Treaty of Independence* between France and Syria. Syria retained its independence but gave France military and economic power in the country.[16] At this point, Syria appointed itself a Republican government and elected a President. This regime was the first in a series of modern republics in Syria.

At the advent of World War II, British and free French troops (troops from German-occupied France) occupied Syria. However, following the War's end, Syria officially declared independence from France with the help of the British and the League of Nations. The years between 1946 and 1958 are marked by instability and several successful government coups. The importance of this period and all following periods of instability in Syria cannot be stressed enough. By understanding what Syria was and what many Syrians wanted Syria to become during these times of stress, officials today can get a better glimpse into the deeply rooted cultural aspects of Syrian culture. Distrust of the government is deeply rooted among the older generations, and that same sentiment has been taught to their children. That distrust is well founded in Syrian history.

Several wars wracked Syria between 1946 and 1958, including the famous Arab-led invasion of Palestine in May of 1948. The subsequent Syrian defeat in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War was one of many contributing factors to the 1949 coup d'état by the Syrian military, commonly described as the first military overthrow of the Arab World since the start of the Second World War.[17] Within the same year, another general in the Syrian military seized power; however, he was shortly overthrown by a second general and the Parliamentary system was abolished altogether. The second general was overthrown in a 1954 coup, where the Parliamentary system was restored. However, as a result of these two rulers, the power of the central government was focused in the

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[15] Ayse Tekdal Fildis, *The Troubles in Syria: Spawned by French Divide and Rule,* (United Kingdom, Middle East Policy Council, 2017).

[16] History, *Syria,* (New York, A&E Television Networks, 2018).

[17] Britannica, *Syria,* (London, Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019).

military and security establishments.[18] Following a strengthening of relations with the Soviet Union (USSR) in 1958, Syria and Egypt officially became one country, dubbed the United Arab Republic. This merger forcefully eliminated all political parties in the Republic. Outraged by this, several Syrian Ba'athist officers formed a secret military committee, which resulted in the destruction of the United Arab Republic and the coup of the Syrian Government by the Ba'athist party. Ba'athism is an Arab nationalist ideology that promotes the creation of a unified Arab state through an overt focus on Arab culture, values, and society. While the Ba'athists were the leading advocate for the United Arab Republic, they played the largest part in its collapse. Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser refused to share power with Syrian parties within the Republic. Because of this, divisions in the Ba'athist party came to a head, and the faction led by General Hafez al-Assad won the power struggle.

Supporting the creation of a one-party state and rejecting political pluralism, Ba'athism and the Ba'athist party in Syria drew a lot of support from the USSR. Consequently, the Soviet Union funded Syria's military interests and wars in Lebanon and Israel. The Ba'athist party quickly used this support to establish its power in Syria through force of arms. Following several more exchanges of power within the Ba'athist party, Hafez al-Assad, one of the founders of the military secret committee under the joint Syrian-Egyptian government, became President in 1970. This came due to dissatisfaction within the party towards the former acting President who failed in the 7-Day War against Israel. It was in the 7-Day War that Syria lost the Golan Heights to Israeli military occupation. This has continued to be a major barrier in Syrian and Israeli relations to this day. The Golan Heights not only served as a strategic military base of operations for Syria, but also housed many Syrian villages that have reported discrimination and abuse by the Israeli government since the time of its occupation. Under Hafez al-Assad, Syria lost more of the Golan Heights to Israel. Under the joint Egyptian-Syrian assault against Israel during the Yom Kippur War in 1973, Syria suffered heavy losses in both territory and credibility throughout the Arab World. In early 1976, Syria invaded Lebanon, which began a thirty-year Syrian military occupation of the northeastern section of the country. Syria held this region until 2005, when Bashar al-Assad officially withdrew his armed forces to deal with increased tensions at home.

The Arab Spring, ISIL, and Factions in the Syrian Conflict [19]

Hafez al-Assad died on June 10, 2000. His son, Bashar al-Assad, was elected President after running uncontested in his 2000 election. Following a decade of minor clashes within Syria, the Arab Spring in 2011 sparked a chain of peaceful protests in Syria and across the Middle East.[20] This chain began in Tunisia as protesters to the Tunisian government demanded free elections and a cessation of human rights violations. Tensions in Tunisia peaked as Mohamed Bouazizi, an enraged and abused Tunisian street vendor, set himself on fire in front of the governor's office. This was soon followed by large protests across the country, resulting in the overthrow of longtime president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011. Seeing the success these protesters had in Tunisia, the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa exploded with anger and protested against their autocratic regimes. In Syria, al-Assad's government used harsh measures

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[18] Britannica, *Syria.*

[19] Al-Jazeera, *Syria's War: Who Controls What?* (Qatar, Al-Jazeera).

[20] History, *Arab Spring,* (New York, A&E Television Networks, 2019).

to prevent future protests from occurring. Due to the severity and intensity of al-Assad's methods, a large portion of the Syrian populace became increasingly dissatisfied with their government's human rights record. Beginning in July 2011, defectors from the Syrian government's armed forces declared the formation of the Free Syrian Army and withdrew to seize control of remote parts of the country, where some areas continue to resist government occupation today. The effects of this conflict can be felt across the EU and the Middle East, where a reported 5.6 million Syrian refugees have fled Syria into the surrounding regions.[21]

Today, there are four factions with varied levels of involvement in this conflict. The first and most prevalent faction is the Syrian government, who control the most territory in the country. The Syrian government is headed by President Bashar al-Assad, and they control the main cities of Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, Latakia, Tartus, Palmyra, and Albu Kamal, as of early April.[22] Following an inquiry led by the United Nations, Bashar al-Assad was added to the International Criminal Court's list of war criminals for ordering the original crackdowns and military sieges on the Arab Spring protests. The regime today is backed by Russia, Iran, Hezbollah (a strong, radical military group in Lebanon), and Iraq.

Kurdish forces in Northeastern Syria compose the second largest and most powerful force in the area. Throughout the Syrian Civil War, the Kurdish minority in Syria continue to be attacked by Turkey, the Free Syrian Army, and ISIL. The Syrian government has refrained from moving against the quasi Kurdish State, focusing instead on the rebels and ISIL. As of 2019, the borders of the Kurdish territories have stabilized, with Kurdish forces now controlling Raqqa, Qamishli, and Hasakah. Kurds are seeking greater autonomy and seem willing to work with the Assad regime towards those goals. The Kurds have allowed the Assad regime to maintain multiple strongholds deep within Kurdish territory. Talks between the Kurds, Russia, and Syria to fend off a Turkish invasion of the Northwestern Kurdish province seem to be ongoing.[23]

The Free Syrian Army and its main ally, Turkey, are the third largest group in Syria. In recent months, the Free Syrian Army has been the sole target of the Assad regime's assault. The Free Syrian Army held most of Syria south of Damascus and most of Syria's Northwestern region, until it was beaten back by Russian-assisted air strikes. Demanding the resignation of Assad and the appointment of a new President, these rebels are composed of a conglomeration of armed forces held together by those who defected from the Syrian army in 2011. The main swath of land they hold is the Idlib province in Northern Syria.[24] Turkey supports the Free Syrian Army due to the group's desire to remove Assad, whom Turkey has condemned from the beginning of the civil war. Turkey also supports the Free Syrian Army because of their desire to crush Kurdish forces in Syria.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL, began as an allied insurgent group to al-Qaeda during the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. There, it was adamant in its opposition to the Western offensive. In the chaos that ensued post-Arab Spring and post-US invasion/departure, the group declared itself a worldwide Sunni Islamic Caliphate and began referring to itself as the Islamic

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[21] UNHCR, *Syria Emergency,* (New York, United Nations, 2019).
[22] Al-Jazeera, *Syria's War: Who Controls What*?
[23] Tom Perry, *Where do the Kurds fit into Syria's war?* (Beirut, Reuters, 2019).
[24] Tom Perry, *Where do the Kurds fit into Syria's war?*

State.[25] From this time in June 2014 to May 2015, at its peak, ISIL conquered over half of Syria in the East, a huge swath of Turkey in the southwest, and a quarter of Iraq in the northwest. ISIL's version of Islamic law was, at this time, implemented across its controlled territories. Women and children's rights were suppressed, and several human rights atrocities were committed. Starting with the fall of ISIL's self-proclaimed capital of Raqqa in 2017, however, ISIL has continued to diminish in strength. Today, ISIL only holds a select few isolated pockets across Syria. The victories of Syrian, Turkish, Kurdish and Iraqi forces have left several people without homes, dramatically increasing the refugee population. Further, these refugees pose complicated political questions: what should the international community do with ISIL prisoners or the radicalized wives and children of ISIL prisoners and combatants? Refugees from former ISIL-occupied territories provide complex challenges for UNHCR and host countries, namely the treatment of former ISIL prisoners and radicalized members of ISIL combatants.

Refugees: The Challenges of Returning Home

Syrian refugees in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa face the challenge of eventually returning home. As of 2018, statistics show that over 100,000 structures throughout Syria have been damaged by some type of ordinance.[26] The same data predicts that the reconstruction of Syria will cost around $200 billion dollars. Syrian refugees are in a state of limbo. Because all countries involved plan on helping Syrian refugees return to Syria, long-term solutions incorporating Syrian refugees who are awaiting their return are almost non-existent.

Syrian refugees have fallen into the same category Palestinian refugees did following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. All sides harboring Palestinian refugees planned on their return within a couple of years following their expulsion. Because of this, Palestinian refugees were not granted the same privileges as citizens in their host countries and were forced into refugee camps. Today, these refugee camps have become permanent settlements for the descendants of these Palestinian refugees.[27] These countries argue that giving citizenship to Palestinians would recognize that Palestinians do not have a right to return to lands taken from them in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. To avoid damning Syrian refugees to this fate, Member States should look forward to rebuilding Syria, but planning for an extended war in Syria will allow these Syrian refugees to have a life while they are away from home. Member States will be forced to assimilate or address assimilation seriously as these Syrian refugees become more and more at home in their harboring countries. Stalled negotiations between the three factions, due to Bashar al-Assad's continued assaults on rebel positions, do not provide hope of swift return to Syria. Furthermore, Kurdish forces have an unspoken truce with the Syrian Government, but are facing increased pressure from rebel forces in the north. These rebel forces are backed by Turkey, who has historically oppressed Kurdish peoples in Turkey's southeastern provinces.

UNHCR has continued to support Syrian refugees by providing medicine and food, distributing stoves and fuel for heating, insulation for tents, thermal blankets, and winter clothing.[28] UNHCR has also joined forces with other United Nations humanitarian and development agencies, such

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[25] BBC, *What is 'Islamic State?'* (London, BBC, 2015).
[26] Alameen Najjar, *Damage Caused by the Syrian Civil War: What the Data Say,* (N/A, Medium, 2018).
[27] Abbas Shiblak, *Stateless Palestinians,* (United Kingdom, University of Oxford, N/A).
[28] UNHCR, *Syria Emergency.*

as the World Food Programme (WFP), to raise money and meet specific needs. While UNHCR has focused most of its efforts on helping Syrian refugees via refugee camps and supplies, the Organization has also worked on ceasefires and peace talks between all parties involved. The Astana talks in December of 2017 has provided the clearest idea of what the Syrian government is demanding in any peace negotiation. In 2017, the Syrian government demanded the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Syrian territory, specifically targeting Turkish and US forces both in rebel-held areas and in Kurdish-occupied territory. Since the March 2017 Astana talks, rebel forces have advocated for a concrete deal between the Syrian government and rebel forces that calls for the cessation of military air strikes against rebel-held territory. This deal was almost accepted by both sides, but rebel forces backed off after seeing major loopholes in the deal that would allow the Syrian government to continue air strikes against rebel-occupied areas. Kurdish forces have not been included in any official talks but are widely suspected to want greater autonomy to govern themselves in Syria. More on how UNHCR has helped Syria in regards to camps and supplies will be discussed in Topic 2 later on in this guide.

In 2018, UNHCR urged all parties in Syria to protect 140,000 displaced civilians in the southwestern portion of the country. This request from the Syrian government was accompanied by a proposed route of safe passage through the southwestern territory to a safer area where UNHCR assistance, protection, and shelter would be provided.[29] Under the same request, UNHCR reaffirmed its commitment to work with the Syrian and Russian governments towards solutions for refugees within their territories. ISIS had previously denied humanitarian aid; however, and the Kurdish and Rebel forces have agreed and accepted UNHCR assistance. With most IDP's in Syria being in the Syrian government's territory, UNHCR has especially focused its efforts on creating a ceasefire between pro-Assad forces and rebel forces.

Today, UNHCR takes special care to prioritize the autonomy of refugees in the development of humanitarian solutions. The return of refugees and IDP's, it has stated, must not be "pressured, rushed or premature. Refugees need to be able to make a free and informed choice about their future and basic elements to anchor voluntary returns and make them sustainable must be in place."[30] Based upon these principles, UNHCR has committed itself to long-term solutions for refugees who may not be able to return home for years to come. These include primary education programmes, housing made from local construction materials, and trade instruction for adults wanting to learn new skills for local work forces. While negotiations between factions progresses, UNHCR has committed itself to caring for Syrian refugees and IDP's.

Conclusion

While getting these factions to work together has proven to be extremely difficult, within that resolution lies the solution to the problems of Syrian refugees left stranded across the world. Potential solutions to the conflict will have to incorporate the three major factions, and each may have to make considerable concessions to each other in order to have a functional, long-lasting peace.

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[29] Andrej Mahecic, *UNHCR appeals for safe passage for civilians in southern Syria, says international standards on refugee returns essential,* (Geneva, United Nations, 2018).

[30] Andrej Mahecic, *UNHCR appeals for safe passage for civilians in southern Syria, says international standards on refugee returns essential.*

Questions to Consider

1. How should UNHCR facilitate cooperation between the Syrian Government, Kurdish forces, and Syrian rebel forces to ensure that refugees can peacefully return to Syria?
2. What can the UN do to help de-radicalize refugee youths?
3. How should the international community deal with captured members of ISIS who came to Syria internationally?
4. How can host countries for Syrian refugees coordinate efforts to return said refugees to Syria when the time comes?
5. What other non-governmental organizations can be asked to coordinate with UNHCR to make refugee lives better while they stay in camps?

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> *This article analyzes how host countries for Palestinian refugees have defended their inaction regarding Palestinian citizenship and equal rights to citizens in their host countries. Good academic article and source.*

Alameen Najjar. 2019. "Damage Caused by the Syrian Civil War: What the Data Say". 2019. *Medium. Accessed August 9, 2019* **https://towardsdatascience.com/damage-caused-by-the-syrian-civil-war-what-the-data-say-ebad5796fca8**

> *Records the amount of destruction caused by the civil war up to 2018. Useful statistics.*

Al-Jazeera. 2019. "Syria's War: Who Controls What?". *Aljazeera. Accessed July 28, 2019.* **https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2015/05/syria-country-divided-150529144229467.html**.

> *Up-to-date map on which factions control what parts of the country. Also provides a run-down of key cities and provinces controlled by the major factions.*

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> *French rule in Syria has had a profound effect on Syria's culture and governing system. This article highlights why that is.*

BBC. 2019. "What Is 'Islamic State?". *BBC News. Accessed July 28, 2019* **https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29052144**

> *A BBC article written at the outset of ISIL in 2014. It describes the group's history, motives, and land controlled at the peak of its power. It also details the relations of the group to the countries and other terrorist groups in ISIL's immediate vicinity.*

Britannica. 2019. "Syria | History, People, & Maps". 2019. *Encyclopedia Britannica.* *Accessed July 28, 2019* <u>https://www.britannica.com/place/Syria</u>

Another brief history of Syria and the lands that it occupies, currently.

History. 2019. "Arab Spring". *HISTORY. Accessed July 28, 2019* *<u>https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/arab-spring</u>*

A brief summary of the origin and effects of the Arab Spring.

History. 2019. "Syria". 2019. *HISTORY. Accessed July 28, 2019* *<u>https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/the-history-of-syria</u>*

Provides good background through the several eras of Syrian rule and culture, leading up to the present Assad regime.

Reuters. 2019. "Where Do The Kurds Fit Into Syria's War?". *U.S. Accessed July 28, 2019* <u>https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-kurds-explainer/where-do-the-kurds-fit-into-syrias-war-idUSKCN1OX16L</u>

Written after the US forces withdrew, the article describes the Kurds' relations with the surrounding countries and groups, alongside the Kurds' goals in what they want for their semi-autonomous Kurdish state in Syria.

UNHCR. 2019. "Syria Emergency". *UNHCR. Accessed July 28, 2019* *<u>https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/syria-emergency.html</u>*

Statistics on Syrian refugee numbers, alongside other internally displaced people and those who are currently under siege.

II.   Ensuring Suitable Living Standards in Refugee Camps

"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services."
—*Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25*

Introduction

The first modern definition of a refugee came following World War I, with the establishment of the League of Nations. The League formed the Commission for Refugees in 1921. The Commission was originally charged with helping the 1,500,000 people who fled the Russian Revolution of 1917 and its subsequent Civil War. More than 800,000 of these refugees were deemed stateless after the new Russian government revoked citizenship for all Russian expatriates. In the time that the Commission for Refugees was formed to the founding of the United Nations in 1945, the Commission had its mandate expanded to include the one million Armenians who fled the Armenian Genocide, alongside Assyrian, Turkish, Greek, and Jewish refugees fleeing the growing tensions that would fuel World War II. Due to the Commission's lack of action, the Nansen International Office for Refugees, still under the League of Nations, was created as its successor. The Nansen Office for Refugees was the first to propose, and have ratified by 14 countries, the *Refugee Convention* (1933). This Convention served as a general human rights charter. The Convention included refugees' rights to freedom of labor and protection from exploitation; access to education and welfare; right to travel and identification papers; and access to courts within the state these refugees may find themselves in.[31] The Convention also led the way for an organized assistance program that provided aid to one million refugees worldwide through the distribution of the Nansen passports.[32] These passports were travel documents given out by the Nansen Office to stateless refugees allowing them to travel, stay, and work in participating states that were members of the League of Nations.[33] Due to the partial cooperation of Member States, the Nansen Office continued this and other programs with mixed results, until it was disbanded alongside the League of Nations in 1945.

The 1933 Refugee Convention was superseded by the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. This second Convention was adopted as Resolution 2198 (XXI) in 1951 by the General Assembly. The 1951 Refugee Convention reiterated and expanded those rights established by the 1933 Refugee Convention. These rights include: rights against discriminatory actions based on race, color, gender, or religious beliefs; rights protecting refugees from tax laws in the land they are being harbored in; rights to identity papers; rights to transfer assets; rights to courts; and, among many other rights specified in the 1933 Refugee Convention, the right of States to hold refugees accountable to follow the laws of their state of residence. These rights are built upon those granted in Article 14 of the *1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which affirms the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries.[34]

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[31] League of Nations, *Convention on the International Status of Refugees,* (Geneva, League of Nations, 1933).

[32] The Nobel Prize, *Nansen International Office for Refugees,* (Norway, Nansen International Office for Refugees, 2017).

[33] Care Giaimo, *The Little-Known Passport That Protected 450,000 Refugees,* (USA, Atlas Obscura, 2017).

[34] United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* (Paris, United Nations, 1948).

Refugee Camps Today

Refugee camps were established in large, undocumented quantities following World War I, but standards for such camps were not established until the *1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The 1948 Declaration provided a foundation for further procedure, protocol, and basic amenities and supplies to be provided to refugee camps. Some of the documents that built upon the 1948 Declaration have been the General Assembly resolution 44/25, dubbed the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, and the *Convention on the International Status of Refugees*. While these are all separate and distinct, each subsequent Convention built upon and referred to the ideas given by previous Conventions. Documentation of how these refugee camps have evolved on a worldwide scale is scarce, but with an increase in funding and improved technologies, standards of living in refugee camps have continued to improve. UNHCR has set standards and goals for the establishment and maintenance of refugee camps, which are specified in its "Camp Planning Standards*"* section of the *Emergency Guidebook*.[35] This Section sets out standard procedures for how a camp should be run and organized, with specifics ranging from the minimum amount of square meters to be given to each refugee to how to dispose of human waste. These can be separated into nine different organizational areas: Facilities, Arrival and Registration, Administration, Housing and Sanitation, Food, Economy, Security, Health Care, and Mandate.

The average camp size recommended by UNHCR is 45 square meters, or 480 square feet, per person of accessible camp area.[36] This means that, of a camp size of 10 people, approximately 450 square meters will be allocated for the refugee camp, including headquarters, a hospital, hygiene facilities, etc. This accounts for an individual's private quarters and the amount of land lent to any refugee camp to take care of camp administration.

Facilities that are generally provided by the host country or by UNHCR are: an administrative headquarters for the coordination of all nine different services; sleeping accommodations in the form of tents, huts, or local dwellings; gardens attached to family plots (UNHCR recommends 15 square meters per person); hygiene facilities, such as latrines, washing areas, and toilets, with the amount provided dependent on how many refugees live in the area (i.e. for every 50 persons, one communal shower is provided, etc.); water collection sites; clinics and immunization centers; food distribution centers; schools and training centers; security headquarters; and markets and shops.[37] Each of these facilities are built and upgraded based on the population of any given refugee camp. Other additional facilities include cemeteries or crematoria, waste disposal locations, churches or other places of worship, and transit center where refugees can enter and leave from. The development and organization of camps today are closely monitored by the host countries and by UNHCR through surveys, record keeping, and even by satellite.

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[35] UNHCR, *Emergency Handbook,* (New York, United Nations, 2015).
[36] UNHCR, *Emergency Handbook.*
[37] Sara Fajardo, *Refugee Health: An approach to emergency situations,* (USA, Catholic Relief Services, 2013).

Camp Administration

Arrival, registration, and administration fall under the same general guise of management and organization. With many new arrivals suffering from malnutrition, dehydration, and trauma, reception centers are built to allow new arrivals the chance to register themselves at the camp and receive food and water quickly. However, some of these reception centers are so overwhelmed that this process can take months to complete. Until refugees register at the camp they arrive at, they are forced to stay in the reception center, where conditions vary. In Greece, reception centers in 2018 were overcrowded and wait times exceeded 6 months.[38] During this time, reception centers were built to accustom 2,000 people held 7,000 people, including children. Most centers reported an increase of sexual harassment and sexual assaults, alongside rapidly deteriorating conditions. Refugees in need of medical assistance were forced to wait hours before receiving treatment. Following registration, refugees can leave the registration center and begin life in the camp.

Housing and sanitation, along with food, are allocated to individuals and families based off of UNHCR standards.[39] When prefabricated housing is not available for distribution, refugees are expected to make their own shelters on residential plots allocated to them. Sanitation in camps is a priority, as it reduces the spread of disease among compact communities. However, resources to provide increased amounts of latrines and water stations have proven expensive. Sanitation has been improved with minimal expense, but only in small camps.[40] The distribution of food to refugees by UNHCR has historically been in conjunction with WFP.[41] Starting in 2006, UNHCR and WFP began implementing multi-story gardens (MSG) in refugee camps as part of a food security strategy campaign. These MSG are meant to "support dietary diversity and enhance refugee contributions to their own food consumption."[42] They are also designed to provide arable farm land and key farming skills, particularly in dry and non-fertile areas where soil quality is poor and water quantity insufficient. UNHCR is developing innovative solutions for both sanitation and food insecurity in camps.

Economic and Security Infrastructures

Refugee camp economic structures vary, depending on their proximity to other cities, but in principle UNHCR is committed to "assist[ing] refugees in becoming self-reliant. Cash/food/rental assistance delivered through humanitarian agencies should be short-term and conditional and gradually lead to self-reliance activities as part of a longer-term development."[43] Despite UNHCR urging Member States to allow refugees to work in their host countries, many countries do not allow refugees to work legally. In such cases, the employment opportunities provided to refugees are either low-paying jobs inside of the camp or higher-paying, but illegal, jobs outside of the camp. Some refugees who choose to work in camps set up their own businesses, which ensures money circulates inside the camp but harms the overall mandate of

[38] United Nations, *UNHCR Urges Greece to Address Overcrowded Reception Centers on Aegean Islands,* (Geneva, United Nations, 2018).
[39] UNHCR, *Emergency Handbook.*
[40] Sara Fajardo, *Refugee Health: An approach to emergency situations.*
[41] United Nations, *World Food Programme,* (New York, United Nations, 2019).
[42] United Nations, *Nutrition and Food Security,* (New York, United Nations, 2019).
[43] UNHCR, *Promoting Livelihoods and Self-reliance,* (New York, United Nations, 2019).

UNHCR—which is to refrain from creating a permanent refugee settlement. Some established refugee camps offer services ranging from repair to groceries. Most of these services and businesses are started by refugees. Official camp facilities can also provide employment opportunities for qualified refugees. In short, refugees can be both entrepreneurs and employees in the camp. Within the camp, payment is usually accepted in the form of UNHCR given vouchers/cash, or by voluntary work.

Security and health care quality within camps vary. UNHCR's 1993 resolution entitled, "Personal Security of Refugees" states that "responsibility for ensuring the safety of refugees is entrusted first of all to the Governments of countries of asylum, in cooperation with UNHCR and other relevant organizations."[44] This resolution also recognized the many sources that refugees can receive persecution from. These include bandits, military or irregular forces, guards and officials, members of the local population, and other refugees. Despite the recognition provided by this resolution, refugee camps continue to have a large criminal problem. Sexual abuse and harassment are particularly rampant within camps. Women and children are the most vulnerable to harassment, the solicitation of sexual favors, and theft. UNHCR has delegated refugee camp security first and foremost to the host country. However, refugees can be subjected to persecution from these security personnel assigned by the state. Health care is another right UNHCR tries to guarantee in every camp. UNHCR teaches disease prevention, sexual and reproductive health courses, general sanitation procedures, and provides ready access to medical personnel in case of emergency.[45] The conditions, methods, and quality of care given varies from camp to camp, depending on the number of refugees coming in on a weekly basis. For example, at the beginning of the Syrian civil war, camps in Greece were overwhelmed with refugees and their quality was difficult to maintain.

The mandate of each refugee camp is to provide refugees with a temporary place to stay and recuperate, while eventually preparing refugees to move back to their home country or find asylum in another. It is never the goal of a refugee camp to serve as a permanent settlement.[46] While food, water, shelter, and basic medical attention are important qualities of any refugee camp operation, they are costly and often encourage permanent residence in the camps. These refugee camps are, however, built with the infrastructure to be able to continue to expand and grow for years—if innovative solutions to the unique challenges of temporary international housing are found.

Conclusion

Refugee camps take on many sizes, and vary in administration styles based on the region that they are located in. Standard procedure for how to set up a camp and keep it running has changed significantly over the years and will continue to improve as time goes on. The system currently in place is the product of 70+ years of research and implementation, but there is always a better way to provide refugees long-lasting opportunities for growth in less than ideal circumstances.

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[44] United Nations, *The Personal Security of Refugees,* (New York, United Nations, 1993).
[45] United Nations, *Emergency Handbook.*
[46] UNHCR, *What Is a Refugee Camp? Definition and Statistics: USA for UNHCR,* (New York, United Nations, 2019).

Questions to Consider

1) How can the rules set in UNHCR Emergency Handbook be better implemented and evaluated? Is there anything that can be added?
2) How can security be strengthened in refugee camps to better protect women and children?
3) How can UNHCR prepare host countries for the possibility of permanently adopting Syrian refugees?
4) Is there a way to better streamline how quickly a refugee camp is constructed? If so, how?

Annotated Bibliography

Cara Giaimo. 2019. "The Little-Known Passport That Protected 450,000 Refugees." Atlas Obscura. February 07, 2017. Accessed July 28, 2019. https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/nansen-passport-refugees

While this article is in French, it was the foundation for saving millions of European refugees pre- and post- World War II. Some key ideas from the Nansen passports could be taken and implemented today, if a solution could be agreed upon by all, or a majority of, Member States.

League of Nations. 2019. "Convention on the International Status of Refugees." WDL RSS. October 28, 1933. Accessed July 28, 2019. https://www.wdl.org/en/item/11580/

The original Convention functioned as the groundwork for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The basic principles transferred from the first to the second document easily, but there is always more to learn from the original document.

Sara Fajardo. 2019. "Refugee Health: An approach to emergency situations." CRS. April 10, 2019. Accessed July 28, 2019. https://www.crs.org/stories/refugee-camp-priority-health-and-sanitation

Instead of pouring extra resources into medical care and an increased number of doctors, teaching refugees how to sanitize their living spaces and steer clear from disease is a lot more cost effective.

UNHCR. 2019. "Emergency Handbook." UNHCR. Accessed July 28, 2019. https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/45582/camp-planning-standards-planned-settlements

A detailed structure of how to set up a refugee camp. Different parts of the website detail different aspects of a refugee camp's basic structure. Really handy in analyzing how refugee camps are currently operated and maintained.

United Nations. 2019. "Nutrition and Food Security." UNHCR. Accessed July 28, 2019. https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/nutrition-and-food-security.html

Making sure refugees are well-fed and know how to take care of themselves on their own is the first step to letting them get on with their lives following often traumatic experiences.

UNHCR. 2019. "Promoting Livelihoods and Self-reliance" *Accessed July 28, 2019.* **https://www.unhcr.org/4eeb19f49.pdf –**

Allowing refugees to acquire life skills while in camps gives refugees a sense of purpose and keeps the peace better than security personnel can, at times.

United Nations. 2019. "The Personal Security of Refugees." UNHCR. Accessed July 28, 2019. https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/excom/scip/3ae68cd10/personal-security-refugees.html

Refugees have faced security problems and corruption since the beginning. Being able to reduce this corruption while increasing security is one solution that has been very long and hard in coming.

United Nations. 2019. "UNHCR Urges Greece to Address Overcrowded Reception Centers on Aegean Islands." UNHCR. Accessed July 28, 2019. https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/briefing/2018/8/5b88f5c34/unhcr-urges-greece-address-overcrowded-reception-centres-aegean-islands.html

This article is one of many examples of how refugee centers have become overwhelmed recently. The question that these problems pose are how we can better accommodate large numbers of refugees at makeshift refugee centers.

United Nations. 2019. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." United Nations. Accessed July 28, 2019. https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/

It's the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Know it well!

UNHCR. 2019. "What Is a Refugee Camp? Definition and Statistics: USA for UNHCR." Definition and Statistics | USA for UNHCR. Accessed July 28, 2019. https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/camps/

UNHCR has defined what constitutes a refugee camp, and the basic principles that it stands for (the end goal of every refugee camp).

United Nations. 2019. "World Food Programme." UNHCR. Accessed July 28, 2019. https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/world-food-programme-49eed2ba6.html

UNHCR works in conjunction with the World Food Programme to provide food and relief to refugees across the world, but the Programme's funding and resources are becoming ever thinner as refugee numbers keep growing.