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General Assembly Third Committee
Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee
(SOCHUM)

Committee	General Assembly Third Committee: Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian
Issue	301 The Question of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in the Middle East
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Introduction

As calamity rains down the Middle East, refugee influx remains a first-hand issue for European leaders to resolve. Since 2011, social unrest and upheavals had contributed greatly to the opening of a bloody civil war that has claimed tens of thousands of lives and left millions displaced. As internal pressure continues to build, European leaders are unable to secure a proper approach towards the refugee crisis. Public discontent is observed along with ferocity, violence, and hate particular towards refugees, which currently shows no sign of decrease. Legal immigration is welcomed. But, as Austria's far-right-conservative coalition, Sebastian Kurz, takes lead in chairing the European Council later this year, it is most likely to see a sharp turn in terms of the policies against illegal immigration to Europe. This shows great polarization in European leaders' refugee policies. For example, French President Emmanuel Macron is pressing British Prime Minister Theresa May to take in more unaccompanied child refugees. On the other hand, German Chancellor Angela Merkel continues to defend her Open Door Policy in Germany despite political cost and uproar from the far-right countries.

Currently, approximately 2.7 million refugees reside in the Middle East and Northern Africa. Many of them, whom were brought about by the Syrian Civil War, are desperate to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe by any means (though 3770 migrants have died in 2015). A considerable number of problems have arisen,

such as failure to allocate resources and manpower to the refugees, human rights violations against civilians, and breeding ground of illegal activities and gray areas. The international community have an obligation to take actions in order to sustain and provide relief for those suffering from this massive humanitarian crisis, for those who are forced to leave their home, and for those who have become coerced internal displaced persons (IDP).

From 2008 to 2009, Asia alone had experienced an enormous surge of refugees, an increase from 0.8 to 18.5 million people. They are mostly due to political conflicts, sectarian strife, wars, and clashes caused by geopolitical interests. To name a few, Syria, Afghanistan, Kosovo and Iraq are among the largest contributors of refugees in the region. Biggest host countries include Pakistan, Turkey, Lebanon, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Europe's condescending attitude, especially from rightist parties, is placing heavy burden upon the refugees and compromising their rights. Although there is a clear distinction between refugees and other migrants, the misconception that they are the same still exists. It is crucial to handle this situation with care and eliminate the root of the problem.

Definition of Key Terms

Refugees

As defined by the 1951 UN Refugee Convention Chapter 1 Article 1 Clause A(2): "A person owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

As declared by the same Convention, their rights include the following:

1. protection from being forcibly returned to a country where they would be at

- the risk of persecution;
- 2. the right to work, housing and education;
- 3. the right to freedom of movement; and
- 4. the right to identity and travel documents;
- 5. protection from discrimination;
- 6. protection from penalties for illegal entry.

Returnees

A returnee is a person who returns to the country where he or she was born, usually after one has been away for a long time. This may happen due to civil war, genocide, or even strife within a government.

Displaced Persons

Displaced persons are caused by the coerced movement of people away from their region of residence. If this happens in the country they are from, they are known as internally displaced persons (IDP). These people are subjected to many kinds of right violations since there are not as many international agencies or treaties directly focusing on the protection of IDP.

Asylum-seekers

The term asylum-seeker is often confused with that of refugees. The difference between the two is: an asylum-seeker is a pending refugee. They claim to be refugees, but their claim has not been validated by a higher authority. Sometimes, asylum seekers are rejected by the state. In this case, they are called failed asylum-seekers and are treated as illegal aliens.

Refoulement

Refoulement is the action of deporting refugees back to their country of origin.

It is currently an action against international law, since a failed asylum-seeker could still potentially endure great risks or even harm while returning to his or her country of origin.

Human Rights

Human rights is the minimum standard required for people to live in dignity. It is built upon the premise that everyone, regardless of sex, color, religion, nationality, or any other status, is treated fair and equal. The principle of human rights was first emphasized in the UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights) in 1948. This notion of human rights appears prevalently in numerous other conventions, resolutions, and declarations.

Background of the Topic

There are many refugees from the Middle East currently, and there is no simple explanation for this humanitarian tragedy. People from different places encounter different problems. For example, the people of Syria are not only facing problems from terrorist groups but also from their own government.

In 2010, the Tunisian Revolution broke out, setting to the Arab Revolutions in motion across West Asia and North Africa. People in nations such as Tunisia and Egypt overcame their obstacles and started new lives. However, for the people in Syria, things weren't working out as smoothly. The war between the Free Syrian Army and the Government has been in progress for more than 5 years. People are forced to leave their houses and properties. They moved to Europe either through Turkey or the Mediterranean Sea. Unfortunately, many of them couldn't reach their final destination. As a result, they have been living in refugee camps with poor living conditions. As for those who made it to Europe, they will have to or have had to face discriminations and even more difficulties.

Another major issue in countries like Iraq is the terrorist groups, one of which is the Islamic States. Those terrorist groups have forced many locals to move to

other places, occupied resources, and forced locals to obey them and do what they believe is correct. Women's rights in these occupied regions are severely damaged. Some terrorists see women as items and turn them into sex slaves. They even forbid young girls from studying, causing a serious education crisis. Moreover, when governments try to retain their lost territory, they usually bombard wherever they believe terrorists to be. However, sometimes those places are hospitals or civilian residences, and that has cost a lot of civilians their houses, property or even family.

In this committee, our mission is to discuss how to help the civilians in those conflict zones. We have to ensure that they are able to maintain their human dignity and their rights while considering each country's interests. We sincerely hope that delegates can figure out the best way to tackle this thorny issue.

Major Parties Involved and Their Positions

UNHCR and the UN Refugee Agency

The UNHCR is currently looking into this issue. They have been working on practical solutions to help refugees instead of just calling the globe for help. They have been helping those refugees to settle in shelters across Middle East, keeping on with their studies, and raising funds for survival. They have been taking a variety of measures, but still, they can't help all refugees.

Germany

Up until now, Germany has opened its borders to refugees for more than two years. In fact, their policy has changed overtime. Unlike their original policy, they have started setting barriers for asylum-seekers. The original welcoming policy could create a win-win situation for Germany; however, the policy is not accepted by all of its people. There are still discriminations against the refugees from some Germans. Even though some refugees have settled down, more challenges await them.

Austria

The situation in Austria has changed a lot since the far-right party won the presidential election. Refugees usually take Austria as a stopover to enter countries such as Germany or the Scandinavians, but Austria no longer welcomes them to cross its borders. Austria has been forced to face the refugee crisis, since many refugees are stuck in the nation before they are allowed to enter Germany. In response to this situation, Austria has passed new laws to tighten its refugee policy. They have also criticized the European Union for their refugee policy, claiming that no countries should be forced to accept refugees.

Turkey

As a transcontinental nation, Turkey is the first stop for many refugees when they are approaching Europe. Turkey has welcomed more than 3.5 million refugees, which is obviously a pressure to them. In order to help Turkey accommodate these refugees, the European Union promised Turkey up to 3 billion euros in funding. Turkey should use this money to help refugees in ways such as giving them education. Turkey has also been setting up “de-escalation zones” (or so called safe zones) in Syria, and has been trying to commit refugees to the zones ever since. However, the problem remains that the refugees are still skeptical towards the zones’ security and ability to provide basic needs. The question of how to accommodate refugees while satisfying their needs under a controlled budget remains at large today.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
28th July, 1951	UNHCR establishes the “1951 Convention of Refugees”, a multilateral treaty that defines and protects the rights of refugees.

May, 2011	The first refugee camp opens in Turkey, in response to the Syrian Crisis.
October, 2012	UNHCR urges the EU to provide the refugees with access to their territory and asylum procedures.
November, 2012	The number of refugees and internally displaced persons has reached 300,000 across Syria, and half of the population has fled to neighboring states.
September, 2013	Estimated by the UNHCR, Syrian refugees has reached 2 million and the number of IDP is about 4.25 million. At the same time, the UNHCR has urged Jordan, Iraq, Switzerland, Lebanon, and other EU countries to provide international help. Germany accepts the first group of refugees.
June, 2014	Islamic State in Syria and Iraq creates another wave of refugee crisis. Report shows that around 1.2 million Iraqi have been displaced.
July, 2015	The death of Alan Kurdi, a 3-year-old refugee, leads to the US announcing that it will take in 10,000 refugees by 2017; the UK follows suit and proclaims that it will take in 20,000 refugees. On the other hand, Hungary calls for “A State of Emergency”, which is brought out by the Conservative party for the problems of refugees.
June, 2017	UNHCR reports that more than 440,000 IDPs and approximately 31,000 refugees have been forced to return back to their country of origin (refoulement).

Important and Relevant Documents

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 428 (V)

Resolution 428 (V) of General Assembly stipulates to call upon governments to cooperate with UN High Commissioner in regards of refugees.

The 1951 Refugee Convention

This document remains the foundation of the UNHCR. It forms the legal documents that have been ratified by 145 states which outlines the definition of terms related to refugee crisis such as the state's obligation etc.

Geneva Conventions

The convention is composed of four treaties and 3 protocols that establishes the standards of international humanitarian law during wartime periods. The term “Geneva Convention” usually refers to the one drafted in 1949 (after WWII).

Analysis of Previous Attempted Solutions

The 1951 Geneva Convention on the protection of refugees

The need of asylum is one of the fundamental rights first recognized in this document, which is followed by the European Union. It is clear that all European Member States have the obligation to take care of refugees. Sadly, the fact is, with so many refugees flooding to Europe at once, some countries have no choice but to shut their borders to refugees. With those far-rightists in the council or elected as presidents, the future of this situation is unclear.

A/RES/71/172 - Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2016

The work to protect and re-accommodate refugees in the United Nations is practiced by United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR). Its works include sending refugees to de-escalation zones (not widely accepted), helping refugees to be properly educated, and providing them with jobs and so on. It is also their job to provide them with medical aid, thus they have set hospitals across the region. Unfortunately, it seems that their work is far from enough, and there are still a lot of refugees in need of aid but cannot get enough help.

Possible Solutions

Integrating refugees

One would have to look into the long-term scheme in the political, economic and social view of the crisis; measures to protect the national security of the hosting countries; and avoiding the situation from repeating itself. In fact, few have successfully integrated refugees into the society.

But that is not to say integration is unfeasible. Although lengthy, integration still is a viable approach taken by various European government. The following are methods incorporated in the OECD report which recommends ways to make integration work. For example, governments can enact policies to provide integration services as soon as asylum seekers are allowed to stay. Governments could also adopt measures to deal with mental and physical health issues early; and also to treat refugees in accordance to their backgrounds. Furthermore, governments should form and sponsor civil societies to integrate and campaign on behalf of humanitarian migrants.

Temporary shelters

Camps are common alternatives to shelters when it comes to housing refugees before they enter their final destinations. It is a common way to house refugees in Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, and other conflict zones. However, problems such as insanitation, theft, and rape are prevalent throughout these camps. Not only

are opportunities to work and study hard to come by but it is also barely possible to raise and sustain a family in those camps. Currently, humanitarian aids are the only source of relief that would help mitigate the difficulties caused by these refugees. Moreover, even more problems arise due to lack of attentions at these camps. For example, in Rwanda, refugee camps were controlled by former Hutu militants who used refugee camps as bases to launch attacks against the new government. As a result of their lack of action and care for the refugee camps, this soon escalated into the opening of the First Congo War.

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