



B I R D M U N C I

Blacksburg International Relations & Diplomacy
Model United Nations Conference

THE GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS AMID RISING CONFLICTS: UNHRC 2024



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DEI & Content Statement

Prejudice against anyone due to their race, gender, sexual orientation, or other identity will not be tolerated. Any delegates found to violate this policy, following thorough investigation, will be immediately disqualified from awards in their respective committee and will be subject to suspension from the conference. Any delegate found to be engaging in harmful conduct, such as violence, intimidation, harassment, discrimination, or threatening behavior will be removed and potentially banned from participation in future conferences.



Letter from the
Chair

Dear Esteemed Delegates,

On behalf of the Secretariat and the entire organizing committee, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to Virginia Tech's First Collegiate Model United Nations Conference. We are honored to have you participate in this momentous occasion event, where we will engage with you in meaningful, thought-provoking discussions over the coming days.

Our conference theme, "The Global Refugee Crisis Amid Rising Conflicts," could not be more timely or significant. With conflicts ongoing in Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan, and sub-Saharan Africa, we are seeing the largest movements of displaced people since World War II. This has tested the capacity of the international community, from refugee protection and resettlement programs to addressing the root causes of conflict and forced migration.

As delegates to the General Assembly, you will be tasked with tackling this complex and multifaceted issue. We encourage you to approach this debate with both a sense of urgency and an open mind, recognizing that millions of lives hang in the balance. Our goal is to seek solutions that not only respond to the immediate needs of refugees but also address the structural factors driving displacement, such as geopolitical conflict, political instability, and climate change.

I want to take this opportunity to thank each of you for your dedication to diplomacy, dialogue, and creative problem-solving. Your diverse perspectives and thoughtful contributions will make this conference a resounding success.

We look forward to the fruitful discussions and resolutions that will emerge from this conference as we work together to find sustainable, compassionate solutions to the global refugee crisis.

Once again, welcome to Virginia Tech's first-ever collegiate Model UN Conference. Let's make history together.

Warmest regards,

Gabi Mebrahtu
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Introduction

The global refugee crisis has escalated to unprecedented levels, primarily due to the conflicts in Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan, and parts of sub-Saharan Africa. As of 2024, over 100 million individuals have been forcibly displaced, with many seeking asylums across international borders. Refugees—those fleeing conflict, persecution, and human rights violations—constitute a significant proportion of the global displaced population, intensifying the need for urgent international action on protection, resettlement, and addressing the root causes of displacement.

This crisis is exacerbated by ongoing geopolitical instability, economic collapse, and climate-induced displacement. This background guide will explore the scope of the current global refugee crisis, examine specific regional conflicts driving displacement, and assess international efforts aimed at refugee protection and resettlement. Additionally, this guide will highlight past UN resolutions and agreements on refugees, providing context for the work ahead.

The Scope of the Refugee Crisis

Current Global Statistics

As of 2024, there are more than 30 million recognized refugees globally, largely originating from five countries: Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. Millions more are internally displaced and unable to cross international borders due to security or logistical challenges. These figures illustrate the growing scale of displacement, compounded by insufficient international cooperation and resources to address the crisis.

Major Regions of Concern

Ukraine: Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine has displaced over 8 million people, making it one of the fastest-growing refugee crises since World War II. Neighboring countries, particularly Poland and Romania, have borne the immediate burden of sheltering millions of Ukrainian refugees, testing the limits of the European Union's migration policies.

Syria: Over 6.6 million Syrians have fled the country after more than a decade of civil war, most seeking refuge in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. These host countries face significant economic strain and social tensions due to the prolonged hosting of refugees.

Afghanistan: The Taliban's return to power in 2021 has resulted in continued refugee flows into neighboring countries, including Pakistan and Iran, exacerbating regional instability.

Sub-Saharan Africa: Conflicts across the Sahel, exacerbated by environmental degradation and food insecurity, have displaced millions of people. Countries such as South Sudan, Sudan, and Mali remain flashpoints of ongoing refugee crises.



Root Causes of Displacement

Refugees are forced to flee due to a range of factors:

- Armed conflict and persecution: Wars and ethnic violence are primary drivers of displacement in regions such as Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan.
- Political instability: Failed states and repressive regimes push citizens to seek refuge abroad. Violent non-state actors, such as ISIS and Boko Haram, also force displacement.
- Climate change and environmental degradation: Climate-induced disasters are becoming a growing driver of displacement, particularly in areas like the Sahel where desertification and drought exacerbate existing tensions.

International Response

United Nations and UNHCR

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) remains at the forefront of global efforts to address the refugee crisis. The 1951 Refugee Convention, together with its 1967 Protocol, sets forth the legal framework governing refugee protection, outlining both the rights of refugees and the obligations of states to provide asylum. However, the increasing magnitude of displacement, coupled with limited funding, has placed significant strain on UNHCR's capacity to respond to current crises.

Regional Responses

- European Union (EU): The refugee crisis precipitated by the conflict in Ukraine has posed significant challenges to the EU's migration policies. While the Temporary Protection Directive has provided immediate protection for Ukrainian refugees, questions remain about the sustainability of these measures as the conflict continues. The broader issue of equitable burden-sharing among EU member states also remains contentious.
- Middle Eastern Host Countries: Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan have been at the forefront of hosting Syrian refugees, with Turkey alone accommodating over 3.5 million. These countries, already under economic strain, have called for increased international support and durable solutions.
- Africa: Countries such as Uganda and Ethiopia have implemented relatively progressive refugee policies yet face considerable challenges due to limited resources and the increasing scale of displacement from neighboring conflicts.

Challenges in Resettlement

Global resettlement programs remain underfunded and underutilized. Only a fraction of refugees is resettled annually due to limited quotas and slow processing times. Wealthier nations must do more to expand their resettlement programs and facilitate the integration of refugees into host communities.



Past UN Resolutions and Frameworks

The United Nations General Assembly and Security Council have passed several key resolutions aimed at addressing the refugee crisis. These resolutions, alongside international frameworks, guide refugee protection, burden-sharing, and conflict resolution.

Resolution 46/182 (1991)

This resolution established the legal framework for the coordination of humanitarian assistance in emergencies, leading to the creation of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). It remains a cornerstone for humanitarian responses to refugee crises.

Resolution 70/1: Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)

While primarily focused on sustainable development, this resolution emphasized the need to "leave no one behind," including refugees and displaced persons. It stresses the importance of building resilient communities and addressing the root causes of displacement, including conflict and environmental degradation.

New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (2016)

This declaration reaffirmed international commitments to protecting the rights of refugees and providing humanitarian assistance. It paved the way for the development of the Global Compact on Refugees, which was adopted in 2018 to enhance burden-sharing and improve support for refugees and host countries.

Resolution 72/244: Global Compact on Refugees (2018)

Adopted by the General Assembly, the Global Compact on Refugees outlines measures to ease the pressure on host countries, enhance refugee self-reliance, and expand access to third-country solutions such as resettlement. It represents a landmark effort to promote international cooperation on refugee issues.

Resolution 74/169: Protection of and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons (2019)

This resolution focused on the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs), recognizing that many are unable to seek asylum abroad due to security, political, or logistical barriers. It calls for greater international support for IDPs and emphasizes the need for durable solutions.



Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015) - Syria Peace Process

While not solely focused on refugees, this resolution addressed the political framework for a ceasefire and political transition in Syria, recognizing the necessity of resolving the conflict to address the Syrian refugee crisis at its root.

Addressing Root Causes of Displacement

Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

Sustainable peace remains the most critical factor in reducing displacement. International efforts, such as peace negotiations and ceasefire agreements, aim to address the root causes of conflict. However, success has often been limited by geopolitical rivalries and competing interests in conflict zones.

Economic Development and Poverty Reduction

Poverty and underdevelopment exacerbate forced migration. International financial institutions, such as the World Bank, must work in tandem with local governments to implement long-term development programs that build economic resilience and reduce the risk of future displacement.

Climate Action and Resilience Building

As climate change intensifies, particularly in vulnerable regions like sub-Saharan Africa, displacement will only increase unless adequate climate adaptation and resilience measures are put in place. The Paris Agreement and subsequent frameworks underscore the need to integrate climate action into broader refugee responses.



Key Issues for Discussion

Strengthening Refugee Protection Systems

Delegates should explore ways to enhance international refugee protection mechanisms, including strengthening the implementation of the 1951 Refugee Convention. This may involve expanding the mandate of UNHCR, ensuring better compliance from states, and increasing international financial support for refugee programs.

Reforming Resettlement Programs

Delegates must address the chronic underfunding of resettlement programs and propose mechanisms to ensure fairer burden-sharing. This could include increasing resettlement quotas, streamlining asylum processes, and improving the integration of refugees into host societies.

Addressing the Role of Non-State Actors

Non-state actors, including NGOs and private companies, are vital in providing humanitarian assistance to refugees. The role of these actors should be expanded to include broader partnerships with international organizations to improve the effectiveness of refugee resettlement and integration efforts.

Conclusion

The global refugee crisis represents one of the most pressing humanitarian challenges of our time. As conflicts persist and climate change exacerbates displacement, the international community must act decisively to protect refugees, share the responsibility for resettlement, and address the root causes driving forced migration. This Model UN conference provides a critical platform for delegates to formulate innovative solutions that uphold the rights of refugees and ensure sustainable, equitable global responses to displacement.

Guiding Questions

1. How can the international community improve refugee protection and ensure compliance with international law?
2. What role should developed countries play in resettling refugees, and how can burden-sharing be made more equitable?
3. How can the root causes of refugee displacement be addressed, particularly in conflict zones and regions affected by climate change?
4. What innovative approaches can be used to support the integration of refugees into host countries?



Additional Sources of Information

1. International Crisis Group

- ICG provides in-depth reports on conflicts around the world, examining their root causes and the resulting displacement. It is a valuable resource for understanding ongoing crises in sub-Saharan Africa, Syria, and Afghanistan.
- Source: International Crisis Group. (2024). CrisisWatch. Retrieved from <https://www.crisisgroup.org>

2. Global Compact on Refugees

- This United Nations initiative aims to create a more equitable system for sharing responsibility for refugee resettlement and protection. It is a key document in discussions about reforming refugee protection systems.
- Source: United Nations. (2018). Global Compact on Refugees. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org>

3. World Bank Report

- This report analyzes the economic impact of refugee inflows on host countries and offers policy recommendations for managing large refugee populations.
- Source: World Bank. (2023). The Economic Impacts of Refugees on Host Communities. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org>

4. Amnesty International

- Amnesty International's work on refugee rights covers human rights violations that drive people to flee and the challenges refugees face in accessing asylum and protection.
- Source: Amnesty International. (2023). Annual Report on Refugee Rights and Humanitarian Crisis. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org>

5. Oxford Refugee Studies Centre

- The Refugee Studies Centre publishes research on the causes of displacement, resettlement programs, and the effectiveness of international refugee law.
- Source: Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford. (2024). Research on Refugees and Forced Migration. Retrieved from <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk>