Forum: GA3: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

Issue: Securing rights and improving conditions for refugees worldwide

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**Introduction**

In a world with increasing insecurities, the large scale of refugees seeking security and new lives inside of safe borders continues to be a fastly growing problem. The difficulties and mishandling of refugees and Internally Displaced People (IDPs) are causing many individuals human rights to become violated which is why it is more important for governments and international bodies to work out solutions and agreements in order to meet the requirements of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Most refugees have been forced to leave their countries due to war, climate change, starvation and social-,political-, religious-, or racial persecution. There are many important topics concerning the refugee crisis which needs to be debated in order to find a solution through laws and internationally binding agreements. Amongst some of the most important issues to be discussed are economic and physical aid, health care treatment, identification, living conditions in temporary spaces (i.e. refugee camps) and permanent residence of refugees and their immediate family.

As the nature of war has changed in the last few decades, many countries do not only suffer from international war but also internal between terrorist groups and governments within its own borders. The internal wars has led the number of internally displaced persons (IDP) to increase significantly. Numbers from The UN Refugee Agency (updated may 31 2018) show that 40 million of the 68.5 million forcibly displaced people are IDPs. No international agency or treaty has yet to focus on internally displaced people. As a result, the international response to internal displacement has been selective, uneven and, in many cases, inadequate. Large numbers of IDPs receive no humanitarian assistance or protection.

**Definition of Key Terms**

Refugee

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.

Asylum seeker

When people flee their own country and seek sanctuary in another country, they apply for asylum – the right to be recognized as a refugee and receive legal protection and material assistance. An asylum seeker must demonstrate that his or her fear of persecution in his or her home country is well-founded.

Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.

Refugee camp

A refugee camp is intended as a temporary accommodation for people who have been forced to flee their home because of violence and persecution. They are constructed while crises unfold for people fleeing for their lives.

The 1951 Refugee Convention

The 1951 Geneva Convention is the main international instrument of refugee law. The Convention clearly spells out who a refugee is and the kind of legal protection, other assistance and social rights he or she should receive from the countries who have signed the document. The Convention also defines a refugee’s obligations to host governments and certain categories or people, such as war criminals, who do not qualify for refugee status. The Convention was limited to protecting mainly European refugees in the aftermath of World War II, but another document, the 1967 Protocol, expanded the scope of the Convention as the problem of displacement spread around the world.

**Background**

The United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted in 1951, is the centrepiece of international refugee protection today. This convention has its grounds on a very important article of the 1948 Universal Declaration of human rights, Article 14, which recognizes the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries. Though having been effective in advocating refugees’ rights the 1951 Convention doesn’t

**The 1951 Refugee Convention**

As aforementioned, this convention plays a big role in the protection of refugees in many ways.

an attention by international law or the results of it in the form of key legal

documents.

The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees is the key legal

document in defining who is a refugee, their rights and the legal obligations of states.

There has also been a 1967 Protocol which removed geographical and temporal

restrictions from the Convention, further strengthening the power and capacity of

the convention. By the time WW2 had ended hundreds of thousands of refugees

were still aimlessly wandering across the European continent or were living in

makeshift camps. The international community’s former attempts to solve this

problem by approving conventions and establishing refugee organizations hadn’t

done much of an improvement as legal protection and assistance remained at a

rudimentary level. Then the countries decided to make a comprehensive work with

delegates from 26 countries as diverse as United States, Israel and Iraq gathered

together in Geneva, in 1951, to solve this issue. The result was a global legal

instrument explicitly covering the most important aspects of a refugee’s life. The

cornerstone of the 1951 Convention is the principle of non-refoulement. According

to this principle, a refugee should not be returned to a country where he or she faces

serious threats to his or her life or freedom.

**Bad living conditions**

Refugees and IDPs, while living in camps or sustaining a nomadic lifestyle, are

commonly stricken by deadly epidemics. This is especially hazardous because these

people tend to stay in groups and as the necessary sanitation measures are neglected

during crisis and conflict situations, epidemics can most easily spread. While

working to guarantee the rights of displaced people, it should not be ignored that

these people are, unfortunately, deprived of even the most basic needs such as access

to clean water, food, accommodation. When they live under such unhealthy

conditions it is not a matter of question whether they are subject to further rights

violations. An example might be Afghanistan; once the international conflict left its

place to internal power struggle, the country was already a scene of ruins. Thus, the

public was obliged to live in cities with destroyed infrastructure and they became

subject to a highly fatal illness caused by unsafe drinking water, cholera.

**Timeline**

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| December 1949  The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) created. |
| December 14, 1950  UNHCR was established by UN. |
| 1951  United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. |
| 1967  The Protocol removing geographical and temporal restrictions from the  1951 Convention is applied. |
| June 20, 2001  By the decision of the United Nations General Assembly in Resolution 55/76, 20th June started being celebrated as World Refugee Day. |
| September 2010  Dr. Chaloka Beyani was appointed as Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons by the Human Rights Council. |
| December 1, 2010  The United States Association for UNHCR launched “The Blue Key Campaign” which aims to provide a broadened base of support for the leading organization safeguarding the rights and well-being of displaced people around the world. |