

American South Model United Nations

Peace and Security through Diplomacy: In Search of a Better Tomorrow

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Dear Delegates:

Welcome to the 2008 American South Model United Nations Conference. My name is Kelsey Sellgren and I will be serving as your Director in the Executive Committee of the United Nations Refugee Agency. I am a junior at the University of Florida majoring in Political Science with a minor in International Humanitarian Assistance. This will be my 5th Model United Nations conference and my first time serving as staff member for AmSouth. The topics for our committee are as follows:

- I. The Refugee Crisis in Colombia
- II. Promoting Awareness of Refugee Situations through Governments, International Bodies and Civic Societies
- III. Iraq's Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons



The background guide has been prepared to stimulate your interest in refugee issues and to act as a base of knowledge for these three topics. I strongly encourage you to research these topics extensively through the eyes of your assigned country. As we will be working towards this end, please keep in mind that the theme of AmSouth 2008 is Peace and Stability Through Diplomacy: In Search of a Better Tomorrow.

To ensure every delegation has a working knowledge of the topics at hand, position papers are requirement for this committee. This is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate and enhance your understanding of the topics from your country's point of view. Position papers, which should be no longer than one and a half pages, are due on or before February 3, 2008 at 11:59 pm CST. For those of you studying in other time zones, please take note of and properly account for the time difference. They will be submitted to me via email at sellgren@ufl.edu. It is also encouraged to 'CC' the members of AmSouth's Secretariat. Email addresses may be found on AmSouth's website.

I look forward to an exciting and productive conference in the rich city of New Orleans! I wish you the best of luck in your research and in the preparation of your position papers. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Sellgren

Director, Executive Committee of the United Nations Refugee Committee

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Introduction and Committee History

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which oversees the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNRA), was established on 14 December 1950 under the authority of General Assembly Resolution 428. Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, the United Nations Refugee Agency is the successor to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). The UNRRA was created out of the ashes of World War II. As well as repatriating refugees, the UNRRA provided health, welfare and vocational assistance to the millions of displaced persons in post-World War II Europe. Spreading its resources too thin, the UNRRA disbanded in 1947 due to financial bankruptcy. The responsibility of attending to the remaining 643,000 European refugees was passed to the newly established International Refugee Organization (IRO). This body, unable to adequately address the situation, quickly became defunct and was replaced by the United Nations Refugee Agency.

The main purpose of the United Nations Refugee Agency is to “safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees” and “ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another state, and to return home voluntarily.” Over time, the scope of the UNRA has expanded to include internally displaced persons, humanitarian operations and the establishment of lasting solutions for repatriated refugees, all of which will be pertinent to the discussion and work of this body.

The definition of a refugee was determined through the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Article 1 of this convention defines a refugee as “A person who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.” This convention is of particular importance because it is the first international framework to recognize the right of refugees to be treated as foreign nationals and it is also the first to acknowledge the occurrence of refugee crises around the globe.⁴ A Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees was annexed in 1967 to give the original Convention a broader function; currently, 146 states have accepted one or both of these instruments. Together, these documents have been the cornerstone for the policies and activities of the United Nations Refugee Agency for forty years.

The United Nations Refugee Agency is headed by the High Commissioner for Refugees, currently Antonio Guterres of Portugal. The High Commissioner is elected by the General Assembly to head the agency for a term of five years. He must report his agency’s progress to both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) through an annual report.

In 1958 under the authority of ECOSOC, an Executive Committee was established for the United Nations Refugee Agency. While the General Assembly ultimately holds the power over the agency, the Executive Council does perform advisory and executive roles. According to its mandate, one of the Executive Committee’s main functions is to

“Determine the general policies under which the High Commissioner shall plan, develop and administer the programmes and projects required to help solve the problems (of refugee crises)...” In addition to this, the committee meets to discuss administrative, financial and procedural matters. The 72 members of the Executive Committee were elected by ECOSOC to fill permanent positions and more seats may be added as necessary. ECOSOC strives to ensure a diverse and encompassing membership by electing the “widest possible geographical representation”. Three officers oversee the workings of the committee for a term of one year. They are the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur.

Over the course of half a century, the United Nations Refugee Agency has aided over 50 million people in 116 countries. Currently, the agency is active in over 100 countries, serving 20.8 million refugees, internally displaced and stateless persons. Its efforts have resulted in Nobel Peace Prizes in 1954 and 1981.

Topic 1: Internally Displaced Persons in Colombia

Introduction

Like refugees, internally displaced persons are those who have been forced from their homes due to circumstances outside of their control, usually armed conflict or persecution. Unlike refugees, however, internally displaced persons stay within the borders of their home country and are rarely afforded the protections and assistance of refugees who seek asylum in other states. It should be stressed further that refugees gain the protection of international laws and covenants when they cross borders, while internally displaced persons remain subject to the often corrupt laws of their native state. Widespread internal displacement is a relatively new phenomenon. Before the fall of the Soviet Union, conflict was concentrated largely between two superpowers. But, the end of the Cold War ushered in the beginning of smaller, internal conflicts; many of which have led to the internal displacement crises occurring in the present day.

With at least 2.5 million, one of the largest populations of internally displaced persons is found in Colombia. The disruption of normal life in this country has been caused by widespread violence involving the state, two guerilla groups, the left-wing Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Party (ELN), along with many other right-wing paramilitary organizations. In addition to displacement, gross human rights violations, the recruitment of children into combat and extra-judicial killings are common. The needs of refugees and the internally displaced in Colombia are great. Among them are access to adequate health care and social services, the prevention of displacement, and the fostering of durable solutions for resettlement and peace.

History and Current Situation

The modern conflict in Colombia extends back more than 60 years. A fragile government, controlled by wealthy, land-owning elites held a tenuous peace until the last years of the 1940's. The fall of this government ushered in an age of proliferated

violence, known as *La Violencia*, which would last ten years and cost 200,000 people their lives. Hundreds of thousands were forced from their homes as vigilantes terrorized villages and confiscated land. The widespread violence ceased in 1958 with the joining of the Liberal and Conservative camps in a series of what is now referred to as the National Front Governments. The National Front restored peace, elite consensus, and did generate economic and social development. Social unrest ensued in 1974 as left-wing guerillas began to re-arm largely under the FARC and ELN banners. Unable to adequately defend the country from insurgent attacks, the notoriously weak Colombian government became a quiet sponsor of the right-wing paramilitaries, most of which assembled under the name of the United Self-Defense Units of Colombia (AUC).

In addition to destroying the FARC and its allies, the AUC seeks to protect the interest of large landowners, corporations and drug cartels. This complex situation breaks down into a three-way conflict: the FARC seeks to overthrow the government and control the state; the government is fighting to retain power; and brutal paramilitary groups function symbiotically with the Army to protect the interests of powerful elites. Since the mid 1970's chaos has been the status quo of Colombian life. Both the FARC and AUC are known for indiscriminate attacks on civilians, in stead of fighting between themselves and the state. The current state of affairs has become so devastating that it is considered as a humanitarian catastrophe, second only in intensity to the conflict in Sudan.

In order to maintain a lasting peace, short and long term goals must be established for the people of Colombia. On the short term side, access to basic health care and housing are urgently needed. In addition to being forced from their homes, many have been beaten, tortured or have had family members killed at the hands of the insurgents. This inflicts not only physical pain, but also leaves the victims at high risk for psychological trauma and disorders. Only 34% of the internally displaced have access to basic health services. While this figure is accurate, even fewer actually receive treatment as armed groups are known to encircle displacement camps to block the passage of people and humanitarian services. The housing situation for Colombia's displaced is just as dismal. Over half of the internally displaced live in extreme poverty and are confined to shanty towns. Attacks on villages remain commonplace, leaving many to begin the displacement process over again with virtually nothing. The government's disdain for the internally displaced is crippling the health care and housing situation. The Colombian government adamantly states that the numbers of internally displaced persons are at their lowest levels since 1999 and are steadily decreasing. This huge discrepancy can be accounted for by the fact that the government will only recognize an individual as displaced if he or she has applied for assistance through the government's Social Solidarity Network (RSS). Most choose to forgo this process as promised assistance rarely arrives. The people of Colombia are in dire need of increased humanitarian services. But, perhaps most of all, the people of Colombia need international legislation in the forms of treaties and frameworks to protect the internally displaced and help bring them the assistance they so desperately need.

If this war-torn country is to ever see peace within its borders, long term approaches to this conflict are also needed. The greatest long term challenge is achieving a peace

between all parties. For decades, the current conflict raged without any hope to begin peace talks. But, in 1998, under former President Pastrana, peace talks began with the FARC. And the road to peace has been a long, torturous one. It is one which the weary people of Colombia continue to walk today. The past nine years have been witness to a series of stop and start negotiations between the government and the three crucial paramilitaries. Until recent years, these peace talks were largely unfruitful, often resulting in a resurgence of violence by both parties when agreements could not be reached. The most progress has been made under President Alvaro Uribe Velez, who was elected to a second four-year term in 2006. In 2004, a major breakthrough occurred when the AUC declared an official ceasefire. While thousands have laid down their weapons, many more continue to inflict violence under the AUC banner. Presumably due to their close association, Uribe is viewed by many human rights activists as too lenient on former AUC combatants. Many who have committed grave human rights violations are subject only short prison sentences.

After 43 years of resistance to the Colombian government, the ELN is also showing signs of laying down its weapons. In 2006, after four rounds of exploratory sessions in Havana, the government and the ELN officially began peace talks. After just several months of discussions, the peace talks hit a roadblock. In late July 2007, the ELN refused to disclose the names of its members, a condition set forth by the Colombian government. It is expected that the parties will work through this obstacle and talks are set to resume in August 2007. With 3,000 combatants, the government does not consider the ELN to be the most volatile of the left-wing guerrilla groups. But, the government is eager to resolve its conflicts with the ELN in order to concentrate on negotiations with the largest of the left-wing guerrilla groups, the FARC.

With 16,000 members, the FARC has long been the most formidable rebel group in the eyes of the Colombian government. Both sides have endured years of peace talks which have resulted in inflaming the conflict. The most recent attempt at resuming peace talks ended in June 2006, when President Uribe refused to appease the FARC demands of releasing some 500 rebels from custody while demilitarizing several zones in Colombia. Uribe, whose offensive strategies have forced retreat in some areas, refuses to negotiate with the FARC until they lay down their weapons. Analysts agree that dissolving the FARC is possible, as their political vision has significantly deteriorated. With three separate rebel groups still fighting, a new approach to peace must be formed if the violence in Colombia is to ever cease.

The current situation today is a grim one. After 40 years of civil conflict and infighting between government, paramilitary, and guerilla forces, the resulting refugee situation is the second worst on the planet with the lone exception of genocide ravaged Sudan. While the Colombian government has provided hope in the form of progressive legislation passed to bolster protection and to give assistance to the refugees and IDP's, failure to appropriately execute these laws are amongst many shortcomings of the Latin American state. Other issues center on access to vital resources necessary for survival including fresh water and housing. One of the major complications with the disbursement of these assets amongst refugee populations in neighboring countries is proper identification.

Many indigenous refugees along side other Colombian nationals have yet to be given appropriate status by the UNHCR and thus has amplified a very difficult life in their new homes. The matter is complicated further by geographical hindrances such as the relocation of refugees to jungle areas which are difficult to navigate and in turn, difficult to properly account for refugee populations.

Committee Directive

The UNHCR has before it a well known agenda item. However, familiarity that leads to complacency will assure further deterioration for the millions of Colombian refugees and internally displaced persons. The committee must find appropriate measures to facilitate essentials to human survival and a respectable quality of life. These measure include, but are not limited to: health care, primary and secondary education, security, access to clean water, and proper sanitation within refugee camps. Another item for consideration are methods of properly identifying and the recognition of refugees to ensure these necessities may be awarded accordingly. In order to allow Colombia's newly enacted laws pertaining to IDP's, the international community must also consider efforts aimed at lobbying the nation for proper enforcement of these laws. Although the history of the conflict is invaluable to helping combat the refugee and IDP problems that Colombia and neighboring regions are faced, it goes without being mentioned that talks should be centered around humanitarian assistance rather than military coercion or peace talks.

Topic 2: Promoting Awareness of Refugee Situations through Governments, International Bodies and Civic Societies

Introduction

There are numerous underreported refugee crises in the world today. States such as Myanmar, the Central African Republic, Indonesia, Somalia, and their neighbor-states are forced every day to prevent masses of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from becoming simple statistics to the west. In order for states to gain aid in helping refugee situations around the world their situation must be brought to the attention of the international community, usually through the mass media. However, divided attentions and limited resources prevent many dire situations from becoming leading news, and thus the people involved are relegated to suffer due to a lack of media focus. While the preponderance of telecommunications technologies has increased globally, many areas in the world that face refugee crises lack the technological sophistication of the west and instead must rely on government agencies, international bodies such as non-governmental (NGO) and inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) to promote awareness. An active and caring civil society, in both nations hosting the refugees and possible donor states able to help alleviate the crises greatly aids in the facilitation of aid as well.

History and Current Status

Throughout history refugees have existed, however, following decolonization and the waves of "democracy" that followed the amount of those classified as refugees and IDPs

has grown exponentially, often due to the prevalence of civil wars in recently independent states. One of the most striking examples is Somalia, a war torn state in which many thousands have died as a result of famine and violence. While the world now focuses on the refugees in Darfur Somalis continue to die while trying to reach the relative safe havens of welcoming states, including 1,400 who have died trying to cross the Gulf of Aden into Yemen. The refugee crisis spawned by the 1994 genocide in Rwanda aided in the quick spread of war and violence to neighboring states that willingly or unwillingly played hosts to the refugees. Violence in this region, and the refugee crisis, are far from over despite the lack of news coverage over the past decade. The crisis lingers on, yet it is no longer leading news, and as such western viewers see little of the crisis.

African states currently play host to over 2.5 million refugees in "protracted" refugee situations including 400,000 Angolan refugees and over 500,000 refugees from Burundi. International organizations such as the International Red/Cross Red Crescent and Amnesty International are involved in but with limited resources such groups are limited to alleviating immediate suffering and cannot tackle other important problems that are intimately involved in such situations. Each of the following are issues that must be addressed:

Conflict – Ending the conflicts that often give rise to many of the refugee problems is necessary in order to begin rectifying the situation. Civil wars are often the culprit; however, conflict can also spread with the refugees across state lines if actors involved are interstate bodies. The conflict spread quickly outside of Rwanda due to the nature of the Hutu and Tutsi groupings. Both sought control of the state but also to perpetuate revenge campaigns on the other. This made goals outside state borders viable and prevalent. Refugee camps were often the target of malicious violence. In this situation and others the International Community, through bodies such as the United Nations, the African Union, and others, must broker a peace between warring factions before refugees can ever hope to return to some semblance of a normal life.

Repatriation – Many refugee populations, specifically first generation refugees, often hold on to their right of return, though other more protracted situations will sometime seek the same rights as well. In this respect pressure on the state refusing a right of return must be applied as well international aid for the facilitation of emigration back to said state. Palestinian refugees are some of the most vocal in respect to the right of return issue following the 1967 War. However, Israel has staunchly refused to recognize this right despite continued international pressure to do so. In the event that populations are unable or unwilling to repatriate, there is another option.

Integration – In the event that repatriation is impossible host nations can assimilate the refugees. The willingness to do so varies greatly between

each state and depends on the nation of origin of the refugees. For example, the United States of America has a willing acceptance of Cuban refugees and aids their integration through the legalization of their immigrant status as well as programs designed to aid refugees in job hunting and housing. However, during the Haitian refugee crisis the United States refused to accept refugees and deported those who made it to their coast back to a nation in turmoil. Currently, the UNHCR and other bodies aid host states through "care and maintenance" programs. However, these programs are aimed at aiding host nations in supplying food and other necessities to the refugee population in order to avoid a humanitarian crisis. There is no organized international program designed to aid nations in truly assimilating refugee populations, only calls for action with no support.

Residual Caseloads – Refugees that refuse to repatriate, integrate, or relocate to a more welcoming state are known as "residual caseloads." The Liberian refugee crisis spawned a number of such residuals. In the late 1990s a never government had been elected to power and many Liberian refugees returned home, however, a large number also decided to remain in Ghana, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. There are many factors that contribute to residual caseloads. Ethnic tensions between refugee groups and majority groups in their home country may lead them to believe it to be safer as a refugee. Lack of capital for relocation or the utter destruction of the homes has also led to an unwillingness to return.

Donor Fatigue – "Donor fatigue" manifests itself in decreased funding and donations or manpower and materials. Lack of continued international attention to a situation gives the wrong impression that the situation has been controlled. The International Rescue Commission's Kakuma refugee camp addressing the situation in Kenya has had a steadily decreasing budget for 10 years, continually constricting their effectiveness. In the case of protracted refugee situations, after initial funding was used to build a temporary infrastructure, no funding came later in order to make the necessary permanent infrastructure. Such fatigue must be combated through continued international attention to the dire situations in need of aid.

International attention is limited at best when it comes to refugee situations. States such as Tanzania have largely been ignored by the international community due more visible, but no more or less dire, situations such as Darfur. In this respect the media is the culprit. Information and education campaigns have to some extent been successful in the past. The most recent successful education campaign has brought international attention and aid to the refugees of Darfur. In the past more decisive action has been taken with the help of successfully run public relations campaign. Kuwaiti refugees forced from their homes during the Iraqi invasion launched an extensive information campaign in the United States that helped turn the tide of public opinion in favor of ousting Saddam

Hussein from Kuwait. The United States Congress quickly approved Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm following the trend of public opinion.

In the case of Kuwait, money flowed from wealthy business interest and deposed leaders. However, many refugee crises do not benefit from the same type of patronage. NGOs often seek to alleviate human suffering and thus are actively involved in campaigning for aid for refugees, however, with limited resources such organizations are forced to help only a small fraction of the suffering. IGOs must begin to take direct action. Strong international opinion, dedication through funds and manpower, and cooperation are all necessities. The United Nations has historically decried the suffering of refugees but has a limited record of successes. Oftentimes, failures to protect, such as the Srebrenica Massacre, outweigh more successful operations. The regional nature of the problems complicates the role of the United Nations. Regional bodies such as the African Union, or in the case of Eastern Europe the European Union, are often in a better position to coordinate humanitarian programs within their spheres of influence. However, outside of the European Union, many such organizations lack the cultural cohesion and funding that makes the European Union so effective. These are issues that must be resolved if such regional bodies can hope to attain some measure of success in the repatriation and integration of refugees.

Strong and outspoken domestic civil societies facilitate the work of NGOs and IGOs on the ground, aiding in preventing humanitarian disasters. Efforts at integration are nearly impossible without an accepting civic society. Palestinian refugees suffer in large part due to a passive, if not hostile, interest in their plight by civic societies in and around Israel. The engagement of civic societies in dialogue by both host governments and NGOs and IGOs is essential to the process of integrating or repatriating refugees. Refugee situations involve a number of actors, some with no seeming interest in the circumstances and others unwillingly dragged into it. Every actor must be made aware of the severity of the problems facing the refugees.

Block Positions

Bloc positions are difficult to determine along traditional lines except in the cases of IGO member states whose international bodies have taken action regarding refugee situations. Bloc positions will stem from a nation's refugee status and action taken on international treaties regarding refugee crises. States unwillingly forced to house war refugees of a neighboring state may come into conflict with state unwilling to repatriate refugees. The Institute for Global Studies' website listed at the end of the document includes a list of important treaties concerning refugee situations. Member-states should check their ratification status.

Committee Directive

While it may be tempting to seek to resolve individual humanitarian crises that affect the member states of this body, that is not the goal of this agenda item. Promoting awareness of such situations is. Committee efforts should never be focused on single situations, but rather should use knowledge of such crises and expand it to the world community. In

addition, delegates should seek to address such issues as weak or uncaring civic societies and lack of international attention to a given crisis.

Research and Preparation Questions

What is your state's ratification and compliance status concerning major international treaties about Refugees and IDPs?

Are there currently refugees from your state seeking asylum in another? Does your country currently, or have they ever, hosted a large number of refugees or IDPs?

Has your state taken an active interest in any refugee situations it has no direct connection to? Why?

How active is your state in international humanitarian crises?

Suggested Websites

<http://www.refugeesinternational.org/> - An excellent source of up to date news regarding refugees.

<http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/palestinecenter/index.php> - The Jerusalem Fund's Palestinian Center provides news concerning Palestinian rights, including Palestinian Refugees.

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home> - The UNHCR homepage provides recent and archived news about numerous refugee crises world wide.

http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/center/asylum/refugee_index.html - Institute for Global Studies and Minnesota Human Rights Library: Refugee and Asylum Resources

www.kubatana.net - An archive of Zimbabwean news articles provide on the ground perspectives of some of the refugee situations in Africa.

Topic 3: Iraq's Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

Introduction

The plight of the Iraqi refugee did not begin with the American invasion of Iraq, nor with the first Gulf War. For the past thirty years the number of refugees has been steadily increasing due to a repressive regime, poor economic conditions, and war. Between 1979

and 2002 approximately 3 million people had fled the country, and estimates put the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) between 600,000 and 1 million. Many of the IDPs are due to the use of forced expulsion as a means of punishment against a single family, village, or ethnic group by the Hussein regime. This includes the campaigns against the Kurds in the 1980s, also marked by mass killings, and the campaigns against the Marsh Arabs in the 1990s.

Though Kurds received the bulk of attention and protection from the international community, most ethnic groups received the same treatment from the previous regime. When Saddam Hussein embarked on an "Arabization" campaign he targeted the Kurds, Turkmen, and Assyrians, forcing most to leave the country. However, prior to the 2003 war many neighboring states were unwilling, or unable to adequately absorb the number of refugees pouring out of Iraq and so arrested and deported many refugees leading to the high number of IDPs within the country. Religious groups too were targeted, despite the loyalty of most Sunnis during the Iran-Iraq War many were targeted for expulsion due to the overwhelming majority Sunnis held in Iran.

History and Background

During Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 and the ensuing occupation by American and Coalition forces an additional 1.5-2 million Iraqis fled the state, a significant portion of the total population. An additional 1.7 million were counted as internally displaced persons, though the number is highly debatable due to the influx of foreign fighters following the destruction of any semblance of border security in the nation. In addition, Coalition forces count many among the number cited by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees as "enemy combatants" and thus do not recognize them as IDPs.

However, despite Coalition and US unwillingness to recognize the plight of many Iraqis many other states have offered assistance where possible. Jordan, while not as hospitable to Iraqis as to Palestinian refugees, has accepted over 750,000 refugees into their borders. Though Jordan has been criticized for religious intolerance concerning the newcomers, as well as other abuses, they have acted in a considerably more humane fashion than the US which has accepted roughly 70 asylum seeking Iraqis since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Syria, another oft-criticized nation has maintained an open border for Iraqi refugees and currently has accepted nearly 1.5 million refugees into their borders, half of them Christians.

While there have been several meetings among states resolving to solve the Iraqi refugee crisis, little headway has been made. The League of Arab states has made grand gestures such as applauding members Syria and Jordan for the hospitality, but little concrete action has been taken. Western nations too have been mostly talk, with the United States pledging a scant \$150 million per year to help solve the crisis. Compare this to the more than \$1 billion Jordanian delegates asked for at a late July meeting on the problem and the enormity of the problem becomes clear.

Currently, the UN High Commissioner on Refugees estimates that 50,000 refugees leave

Iraq monthly, while Amnesty International suggests that unless this problem is dealt with the entire region will be engulfed in a humanitarian crisis it is not likely to withstand.

Definitions and Conventions

According to the United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is in Article 1 of the Convention defined as:

"A person who 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.."

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees observes this definition as the internationally recognized standard used to classify refugees. Using this definition, over 4 million Iraqis are officially categorized as refugees. However, Jordan and Syria, two nations accepting the most refugees, have both refused to signed the convention. This increases the difficulty for UNHCR to monitor and guarantee those rights to the Iraqi refugees.

In addition to defining refugees, the status of Internally displaced persons, known as IDPs, is established by the United Nations in the "*Guiding principles on Internal Displacement*" report, as:

"internally displaced persons are 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."

Current Situation

Since the beginning of the American occupation of Iraq in 2003 , no issue has increasingly remained out of the headlines and public eye as much as the issue of the Iraqi refugee situation. This issue does not involve the troop buildups and firefights, the capturing of insurgents, or violent civilian deaths that capture the media's attention. However, this issue, due to its scope is the most damaging to the future peace, security and stability of the nation of Iraq and it's people. It has been classified by Refugees International as "the fastest growing humanitarian crisis in the world".

As the UNHCR, we are charged with the duty of addressing the situation as it currently stands, making necessary prescriptions for action on the ground to aid the people of Iraq and reduce the humanitarian crisis. It is imperative to work with neighboring countries as

they too have felt the ill effects of population movement and displacement.

Refugee Camps

Refugee camps are not long term living arrangements. The UNHCR provides the necessary essential items such as tents, blankets, food supplies and water within their camps that administer security and healthcare services. These camps are not established with infrastructure capable of sustaining people long term nor are they intended to do such. The refugee camp represents a response to an emergency situation. The rudimentary infrastructure of the camps is costly for the UNHCR and host countries. It must be considered that camps are not a permanent solution.

Social and Economic Impacts

The socio-economic standing of refugees is another issue of vital concern. As a refugee in a foreign country, most do not possess the right to work legally. Therefore, they are driven into industries that do not require just working papers. A prominent issue in Syria is Iraqi women resorting to employment as prostitutes. In an Islamic nation, this behavior is regarded as a disgrace to the family. Women are limited in their ability to work and earn money, but it becomes a necessity due to the fact their husbands and fathers were killed in the conflict.

Children are not being educated as they would be in their home countries, adequate health services are sparse and the need is great due to the close quarters of the settlements make diseases spread faster, and Iraqis are being harassed and discriminated against for being refugees in a land that is not their own.

The Right of Return

As enshrined in international human rights doctrine, refugees possess the vital right of return to their home country as it becomes secure. Due to the circumstances in Iraq, many refugees have found themselves unable to return to their previous homesteads due to the length of time they have been gone. Houses have been destroyed, and property lost; a returnee today could easily find a new family living in what was once his house. This causes a dilemma. It is a right of the people to be able to return to their homes, however, if their security cannot be guaranteed and they choose to forgo this right, who bears the burden of their residence?

This has become a severe issue of repatriation. Many countries have taken in Iraqi refugees to date, but how many more can seek asylum in other nations?

Bloc Positions

Africa:

Also plagued by violence, humanitarian crises and refugee movements, the countries of Africa are sympathetic to the plight of the Iraqi refugees. However, most African nations are limited in their ability to contribute to assisting with support or resettlement initiatives due to their underdevelopment. Nations in Africa who have been affected themselves

with refugee situations, are willing to share knowledge and technical assistance in solving this crisis. Africa currently is facing its own severe population movements in Sudan, Ethiopia, DRC and South Africa.

Asia:

Many countries in Asia have been active in discourse on the Iraqi war, and the issue of refugees. None such as fervently as Japan, who in addition to contributing financially, has assisted with refugee repatriation and resettlement. Experience in successful refugee resettlements in Asia, have added to the qualification of nations to assist technical assistance.

Latin America:

Latin America is currently facing the world's largest internal population displacements on their continent. In Colombia, civil wars and violence have created a severe situation of internally displaced persons and refugees in Northern South America. The Iraqi case falls second only to Colombia. However, the situation in Colombia due to its similarities to the Iraqi case, such as security, lack of resources and rugged terrain, can serve as a guide as policy prescriptions are made and programs implemented.

Middle East:

The issue of Iraqi refugees is of central importance to nations in the Middle East for security, economic, social and political reasons. The mass exodus of refugees out of Iraq have taken refuge in neighboring states, most notably Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. The situation becomes more complicated as many of the nations harboring refugees do not adhere to international legislation on refugee issues, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention. Many of these countries do not grant the Iraqi refugees the status of a refugee and refuse to sign the Convention. This makes daily life increasingly complicated for refugees as they work and cross borders illegally. This policy issue is of significant importance in regards to the humanitarian situation as status is contingent on the cooperation of these nations. However, the League of Arab States has been a partner of the UNHCR in launching a fundraising and awareness campaign to aid Iraqi refugees.

Western Bloc:

Countries in the Western Bloc represent the most developed and wealthy nations in the world. Countries, such as the United States, have passed congressional bills that welcome refugees into their country for an extended period of time. However, it has to be considered that the United States led the coalition into Iraq in 2003 and therefore should be held responsible for addressing the humanitarian situation it contributed to creating. European nations have been gracious donors to the cause of Iraqi reconstruction and have been open to accepting refugees for resettlement. Most notable is Sweden, who to date, has accepted 25,000 asylum seekers and is a loud voice in the EU for enhanced support to Iraq.

Committee Directive

It is the duty of this committee as the UNHRC to address what can be done to decrease the humanitarian situation that has unraveled due to the influx of Iraqi refugees both in Iraq and neighboring countries. As the UNHRC, we are responsible for the administration of the camps, relief initiatives and coordinating national policies on resettlement and repatriation efforts. It is important to consider the fundamental human rights of the Iraqi refugees and how we can restore them to those who have been so unjustly denied. Please consider the intersection of roles on behalf of the government, UN, and civil society actors (non governmental organizations) in addressing this situation. It is important not to lose sight of our initial goal: improving the humanitarian situation faced by the Iraqi refugees, however, feel free to consider contributing factors and long term effects throughout debate.

Research and Preparation Questions

Has your nation signed on to the relevant international treaties and conventions pertaining to refugees and internally displaced persons?

Has your nation ever been affected by a refugee situation?

What stance did your nation initially take on the Iraq war? Protesting? Participation? Contribution of forces?

What barriers do you see as most critical in addressing the Iraqi refugee crisis? political? economic? geographical? social?

What is your country's stance on current policy (USA, UN, civil society) on the repatriation efforts of Iraqi refugees? How would you improve this policy? What is the role of the UNHRC?