

Forum: Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee (SOCHUM)

Issue #2: The Question of Global Refugee Responsibilities and Asylum Policies

Student Officer: Zachary Wolf

Position: Chair of the Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee



The Independent. "Refugees Welcome Here protest: Thousands march on Downing Street." *The Independent*, 17 Sept. 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/refugees-welcome-here-protest-thousands-march-downing-street-theresa-may-uk-britain-resettle-more-migrants-a7313441.html>

Introduction

The debate over countries' humanitarian responsibility to take in refugees and asylum seekers is a multifaceted and nuanced issue. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that since 2020, the number of refugees has increased by almost 13

million, leaving the international community with a major refugee crisis to address ("UNHCR Figures at a Glance "). Refugees and asylum seekers may have to flee due to conflict, persecution, human rights violations, or other crises ("Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Migrants"). When these people flee, simply moving to another country is no easy task. Applying for asylum status or refugee status does not guarantee that a person will be able to resettle in a new country; in fact, only 4% of refugees in 2022 were legally able to reach a new country safely ("2023 Global Compact on Refugees Indicator Report").

Some countries may want to limit the number of refugees and asylum seekers they take in for reasons such as concern that they will take jobs, the high cost of hosting refugees and asylum seekers, and security concerns ("The World's Swelling Refugee Population Has Shrinking Options"). Furthermore, anti-refugee and asylum seeker sentiment has caused anti-refugee, right-wing populist parties to rise in popularity, especially in Europe (van der Brug and Harteveld). On the other hand, some countries and NGOs believe that countries have a humanitarian obligation to take in refugees under international humanitarian law, and that refugees can help contribute to the economy ("*The Obligations of States towards Refugees under International Law*"; "*New Report Reveals Refugees' Profound Economic Contributions*"). The actual impact of refugees on security, for example, is something that is being studied across the world, offering differing results in different countries. For example, a study done by the Centre for Economic Policy Research, a European non-profit dedicated to providing policy-guided research to policymakers and private sector individuals, found that in Turkey, the influx of Syrian refugees caused a 2% to 4.75% increase in crime per year (Turan et al.). On the contrary, a report released by New American Economy, a bipartisan non-profit dedicated to shaping research-based immigration policies, found that in American cities receiving the highest influx of refugees per capita, between 2007 and 2015, the crime rate decreased ("Is There a Link between Refugees and U.S. Crime Rates?"). The differing results of the two studies show that this issue is very nuanced, and the impact of accepting refugees and asylum seekers may be different depending on the country.

It is also important to note that a country's refugee and asylum policy may shift based

on the political party in charge and the changing public sentiment associated with refugees (Higashijima and Woo). Changing policies may make it hard for refugees due to delays and increased uncertainty, as evidenced by the change in government in the United States in 2025, when the government shifted to a stricter stance on refugees and asylum seekers (Derrick). Because of these factors, many refugees end up in refugee camps, often with limited access to clean water, poor sanitary conditions, and overcrowded living conditions ("Refugee Camps"). Moreover, the UNHCR reports that 71% of refugees are hosted in low to middle-income nations, which can strain these countries' already limited resources ("Refugee Hosting Metrics"). In summary, whether countries believe they have a responsibility to take in refugees and asylum seekers or not, it is essential to evaluate the refugee question and use it to shape a global policy and plan to address the current refugee crisis.

Definition of Key Terms

Refugee: A Refugee is a person who flees their country to go to another country in search of safety. A person may flee due to factors such as persecution, ongoing conflict and unrest, and violence for reasons such as religion, sexuality, gender, and political beliefs ("Refugees").

Asylum Seeker: An Asylum Seeker is a person who is seeking protection in a country before their refugee application has been approved. Individuals may seek asylum to escape immediate threats and human rights violations and do so by crossing an international border, claiming asylum status. Under international law, every person has the right to seek asylum to flee conflict or threats to their lives ("Asylum-Seekers").

International Humanitarian Law: International Humanitarian Law is a part of the broader public international Law. It is a set of rules that are applied in armed conflict to limit the effects of the armed conflict on those not actively involved in the fighting of a conflict ("What Is International Humanitarian Law?").

International Refugee Law: International Refugee Law is a set of rules that lays out the fundamental rights of refugees. International Refugee Law also sets international

standards when it comes to taking in refugees and asylum seekers. International Refugee Law was established by the 1951 UN Convention relating to the status of refugees ("Protection Induction Programme Handbook").

The Global Refugee Crisis: The Global Refugee Crisis refers to the ongoing trend of an increase in the number of refugees globally. The refugee crisis is a result of ongoing persecution, conflict, and grave human rights violations, which have driven people from their homes in search of better opportunities. Addressing not only the refugee crisis itself but also the root causes of the refugee crisis is of the utmost importance ("The Global Refugee Crisis, Explained").

Non-Refoulement: Non-Refoulement refers to one of the pillars of international refugee law. The principle of non-refoulement prohibits a country from forcibly returning refugees and asylum seekers to their home countries. This principle does not apply, however, to individuals who may be a danger to a country's national security, only to those who would face immediate danger if returned to their home country ("Forced Return / Refoulement").

Expulsion: Expulsion, also known as deportation, involves a country expelling a non-citizen for violating that country's civil, criminal, or immigration law ("Key Migration Terms").

Refugee Camps: Refugee Camps are short-term solutions for refugees to be able to escape the immediate danger that they face. Refugee camps are temporary and can provide food, water, and shelter to individuals fleeing violence and persecution. Refugee camps can also provide long-term support for refugees. This support includes education services and livelihood opportunities. However, these refugee camps often lack sanitary conditions, allowing disease to spread quickly. The largest refugee camps are located in Bangladesh, East Africa, and Jordan ("What Is a Refugee Camp?"; "Refugee Camps").

Stateless Person: A Stateless Person is someone who does not have citizenship in any country. Statelessness results from a person coming from a country where their

legislation regarding citizenship is unclear. Often, stateless people can be refugees or asylum seekers, but their lack of citizenship can make it difficult for them to gain asylum status or refugee status in another country ("Stateless Person Definition").

Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration: Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration programs involve assistance for refugees wishing to voluntarily leave their country of refuge to return to their home country, when conditions become safe. Some programs also offer reintegration assistance, which means help in former refugees adjusting back to life in their home country. This assistance may be logistical, such as humanitarian aid like food and water, or financial assistance ("Key Migration Terms").

Burden Sharing: Burden Sharing is a concept in which non-host countries assist host countries, especially those that are developing nations, with their logistical challenges in hosting refugees and asylum seekers through financial and humanitarian aid. Burden sharing can also mean countries distributing an influx of asylum seekers among themselves. Burden sharing involves a high level of international cooperation, and some countries may justify themselves as fulfilling their refugee responsibilities, even if they do not host many refugees, through the concept of burden sharing (Boswell).

General Overview

The Big Picture

There are three main aspects of the question of global refugee responsibilities and asylum policies that make the issue so controversial. The first aspect is the way that International Humanitarian Law is interpreted among UN member nations, as different nations may interpret humanitarian law differently, and this is one of the most fundamental topics in determining whether nations have a humanitarian obligation to take in refugees and asylum seekers. The second aspect of this issue that makes it so controversial is the impact of accepting refugees and asylum seekers on a country's national security, as countries may argue that their countries national security is more important than accepting refugees, while others may argue that refugees do not impact a countries crime rate or domestic terrorism. The last controversial aspect to consider is the impact of accepting refugees on a country's resources and welfare

system, as much of the anti-refugee sentiment expressed by individuals and politicians is about the financial and social welfare impact of taking in refugees and asylum seekers, and if taking in these refugees will take resources away from a country's citizens. The greatest thing to think about when considering the highly controversial aspects of an issue is whether accepting refugees and asylum seekers is something that is obligated under humanitarian law by nations, and whether refugees and asylum seekers impact a country's national security, social welfare programs, and national identity and culture.

International Humanitarian and Refugee Law

International refugee law and humanitarian law relating to refugees and asylum seekers are outlined in the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees ("The 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees"). Before even considering how different nations may interpret these documents and laws, it is important to note that some countries have not ratified these documents and therefore are not obligated under their regulations. 44 UN member states are not parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention (Janmyr, "UNHCR's Promotion of the 1951 Refugee Convention"). Therefore, these nations are under no international legal obligation to take in refugees, provide them with protection, or even maintain a non-refoulement policy, though many non-signatory nations still customarily adopt certain parts of convention when creating their national asylum and refugee policies (Owen and Strang; Janmyr, "The 1951 Refugee Convention and Non-Signatory States: Charting a Research Agenda").

Regarding nations that have ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention, some may choose to strictly interpret the convention, while others may more loosely interpret the convention. Countries that adopt a strict interpretation define a refugee as a person fleeing life-threatening persecution, and therefore will only accept refugees fleeing what they determine as dangerous situations of persecution, while countries who loosely interpret the convention will accept refugees fleeing a wider range of situations ("Doctors without Borders | the Practical Guide to Humanitarian Law"). Another controversial aspect of the convention, in which varying policies by signatories to the convention have been adopted, is illegal entries. The convention outlines that a country must take in refugees and asylum seekers even if they illegally cross that

nation's borders ("UNHCR Issues Latest Guidance against Penalization of Asylum-Seekers for Irregular Entry | UNHCR"). However, because the convention states that committing a crime disqualifies a person from being refugee, many countries argue that they do not have to accept refugees and asylum seekers who illegally cross the border ("Refugee Definition"; "At Europe's Borders, Migrants and Refugees Are Denied Their Basic Human Rights | Oxfam International").

Refugee Impact on National Security and Crime

One of the most controversial topics when discussing refugee responsibilities is balancing national security with humanitarian obligations. There are many countries where a conservative government was elected, and they decided to reduce refugee resettlement, yet a study by Cambridge University found that in the United States, there was no significant difference between crime rates when countries have reduced refugee resettlement (Masterson and Yassenov). However, a study in the European Economic Review, a peer reviewed journal focusing on studying economics and social science, found that in the Greek Islands when comparing those which have accepted refugees as oppose to those that had no refugees, when there was a 1% increase in the refugee population of that island, crime also increased by 1.7-2.5% (Megalokonomou and Vasilakis). The differing impact on crime and national security can be attributed to the effectiveness of a country's integration programs. Countries with effective integration programs, which focus on language training and finding employment opportunities for refugees, generally have a decreased impact of the acceptance of refugees on crime (Turan et al.). However, large influxes of refugees can strain a country's resources and lead to an increase in crime due to a country's lack of ability to provide proper integration programs to refugees (Turan et al.; Megalokonomou and Vasilakis). Regarding terrorism, there has been no significant difference in terrorism when accepting refugees, especially in developed nations, yet countries in which refugees may experience poor conditions or are fleeing or close to conflict zones may see an increase in terrorism and radical ideology (Klein; Ekey). The results of the above studies call attention to the importance of both preconditions and host-country conditions and refugee programs. Preconditions, such as the origin of refugees and whether the refugees flee a conflict, can lead to an increase in crime and terrorism. Yet, host-country conditions such as refugee camps, integration programs, employment

opportunities, and public sentiment can also impact the effect of refugee influx on crime and terror (Turan et al.). Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to consider the varying factors that affect refugees' impact on crime rates and terror, while also noting that even though effective integration programs may reduce refugee and asylum seekers' crime, a country must use its resources and social welfare infrastructure to create successful integration programs and this is a big factor to consider, when evaluating the humanitarian and national security implications of accepting refugees.

The Impact of Refugees on Taxpayers and Social Welfare Programs

While having a high-quality refugee integration program clearly shows a positive impact on the contribution refugees will make to their host country's economy and society, the way a country chooses to allocate its resources, and balancing refugee integration programs with a country's taxes and spending on programs for its citizens, is another complex topic which must be considered when evaluating the question of global refugee responsibilities and asylum policies (Turan et al.). For example, the average cost to resettle one refugee in the United States costs taxpayers around \$79,600, and annual refugee resettlement costs American taxpayers 1.8 billion US dollars (Raley and O'Brien). In Germany, the annual cost of refugee and asylum-related programs cost German taxpayers 33.2 billion US dollars ("Refugees and Asylum in Germany: Federal Expenditure 2018-2025"). However, in Hungary, which has accepted a much more limited number of refugees and asylum seekers, taxpayers pay very little for refugee resettlement and integration ("Funds for Migrant Integration in Hungary"). In regards to the general global cost of refugees on a country's welfare system, meeting refugees basic needs has a significantly high cost globally, however, when refugees do contribute economically to a country, they can help offset this cost (*Economic Participation and the Global Cost of International Assistance in Support of Refugee Subsistence Needs*). Therefore, it is evident that a country must balance humanitarian needs with the high financial cost of refugee and asylum programs that taxpayers must pay. Noting that refugees do use social welfare resources, but in some cases, can offset the cost of social welfare with employment. The most crucial aspect of the question of global refugee responsibilities and asylum policy, is to understand the delicate balance that the UN must strike when considering the impact of accepting refugees, both financially and security wise, while also noting the contribution a refugee can make to

a country when participating in high-quality integration and resettlement services.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United States

In 2024 alone, the US received 733,912 asylum applications, and still has 3.2 million pending asylum seeker applications ("UNHCR Figures at a Glance "). The US has long been a destination for individuals seeking asylum from Latin America and the Caribbean, but shifting conservative policies towards refugees and asylum seekers may interfere with these asylum seekers' efforts to enter the United States and have their asylum application approved (Rfat et al.). However, throughout the decades, there have been differing positions between Republican and Democratic parties in balancing refugee responsibilities with national security and resource allocation (Baron-Lopez and Schmitz). Additionally, there is much controversy among the American public over refugee and asylum responsibility, with protests occurring both for and against taking in asylum seekers (Rozner). Under the current Trump Administration, the US Refugee Program, which is the US government agency dedicated to the resettlement of refugees, has been temporarily shut down, and refugees are only admitted on a limited basis, when the Secretary of Homeland Security and Secretary of State, both determine that a refugee is not a threat to US national security (Kosten).

Turkey

As of 2023, Turkey hosts 3.6 million refugees, the majority of whom are fleeing nearby Syria, due to persecution, and hosting one of the largest refugee populations in the world (A. Kaya). Due to its geographical location, between Europe and Asia, Turkey has often been a country that has historically hosted many refugees (Kaya). However, recently, there has been a rise in anti-refugee sentiment in Turkey, leading the Turkish government to develop stricter policies in encouraging Syrian refugees to return to their homeland (Akin). Especially following the collapse of the Assad regime in Syria, the Turkish opposition party, the Republican People's Party, has raised concerns about the financial strain, effects on the health system, and national security situation, and has called for Syrian refugees to return to Syria (B. Kaya). The ruling Justice and Development Party, however, has developed a more lenient policy of letting Syrian

refugees temporarily return to Syria to assess the situation and make the decision (Kadkoy). However, due to Turkey's geographic location and remaining large refugee population, Turkey remains a key nation when discussing the topic of refugee responsibilities.

Canada

Canada has long been a world leader in refugee and asylum policy. Canada has an extensive legislative framework and programs to allow for refugee resettlement and economic opportunity ("Canada Reaffirms Strong Leadership Role in Refugee Protection"). Moreover, the majority of the Canadian public has held favorable attitudes toward refugees and asylum seekers. The Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Department's annual survey from 2024-2025 found that 43% of Canadians view their country's acceptance of refugees as positive ("Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada"). Canada's extensive refugee programs also train refugees in skills and provide them with social services, allowing them easier integration into the country, as Canada believes they have a humanitarian responsibility to take in and resettle refugees (Roy and Cheatham; "Canada Reaffirms Strong Leadership Role in Refugee Protection").

Uganda

Hosting 1.6 million refugees, Uganda hosts the fifth most refugees in the world ("UNHCR Figures at a Glance "). Motivated by the belief in a humanitarian responsibility and progressive values, Uganda has been one of the most accepting countries for refugees, allowing them to come and resettle in Uganda, based on shared humanity ("Uganda's Unique Refugee Policy"; Zapata). Uganda, however, is struggling in regards to refugees due to a lack of resources to effectively manage its large refugee population and provide them with aid, and has asked for support from other countries in providing them with resources to manage their large refugee population ("Uganda Multi-Year Strategy 2023 – 2025").

European Union

The European Union engages in a policy of responsibility sharing among member nations and requires all nations to accept asylum seekers and treat them humanely

("Asylum in the EU"). The EU has a uniform legislative framework in regards to its legislation on accepting refugees through its pact on migration and asylum ("Asylum in the EU"). Additionally, the EU encourages its member nations to be inclusive in their approach to refugees and provides its members with guidance in creating effective integration programs ("Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion"). However, because 29 nations make up the EU, different EU countries have adopted different policies regarding asylum seekers and accepting refugees.

Poland

In the past few years, Poland has closed its borders to refugees and suspended the rights of migrants to seek asylum (Easton and Aikman). The Polish government has cited growing security risks and economic problems associated with taking in refugees, which has caused it to close its borders ("NGO Statement in Response to the Migration Strategy in Poland"). Because of Poland's controversial opposition to taking in refugees, Poland has experienced some backlash from the EU and has even been tried in the European Court of Human Rights for allegedly forcibly sending Belarusian migrants back across the border (Lindsay). However, Poland defends its position by stating that accepting refugees could cause threats to public safety, especially for women, and to Polish society (Cienski).

Hungary

Similar to Poland, Hungary has taken a restrictive stance towards accepting refugees. Hungary has cited national sovereignty as the main driver of their decision to believe that they do not have an obligation to accept refugees, and has also severely restricted its acceptance of asylum seekers ("Human Rights in Hungary"; "Short Overview of the Asylum Procedure in Hungary"). Hungary has also suspended any governmental integration programs, demonstrating the country's view that countries do not have a major humanitarian obligation to accept refugees, and that the acceptance of refugees can cause terrorism and cultural conflicts (Barry).

Germany

Hosting 2.7 million refugees, Germany has long been one of the most open countries to refugees and asylum seekers in the European Union ("UNHCR Figures at a Glance").

Germany has robust legislative frameworks and integration programs to deal with the integration of refugees, through education and skills training initiatives ("Governance of Migrant Integration in Germany"). However, following the rise of the right-wing Alternative for Germany Party in the German Federal Legislature, in the German elections in 2025, Germany has suspended its UN-associated refugee resettlement program ("Germany Halts UN Refugee Resettlement Programme"). Germany still hosts one of the largest populations globally, however, and has maintained a commitment to providing the refugees settled in the country with integration programs and social services ("Upcoming Government Publishes Immigration Policy Plans").

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The UNHCR is the UN agency responsible for refugee integration programs and ensuring that refugees can become self-reliant once they reach host countries ("Integration Programmes"). The UNHCR advocates that countries have a humanitarian responsibility to legally protect refugees and asylum seekers and ensure that refugees are included and integrated effectively, and given equal opportunity in the society and economy of host countries ("Local Integration").

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

The NRC is the leading NGO promoting the social and economic integration of refugees and believes that countries have a strong humanitarian obligation to take in and support refugees (*Humanity Neutrality Independence Impartiality Policy Programme*). The NRC collaborates with host governments to ensure refugees can properly resettle and give back to the communities that supported them, with a strong emphasis on ensuring refugees are self-reliant ("Shelter and Settlements"). The NRC also advocates that countries should adopt policies that ensure durable solutions and legal protection of refugees (*Humanity Neutrality Independence Impartiality Policy Programme*).

Timeline of Events, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

| Date | Description of Event |
|------------|---|
| 1921 | The League of Nations (UN Predecessor) established the High Commissioner for Refugees, following mass displacement caused by World War I and the Russian Revolution (Limbach; Jaeger). |
| 1945-1948 | Following the end of World War II, millions of refugees, including holocaust survivors and displaced people, sought refuge across Europe and the Americas (Limbach). |
| 1951 | Following both World War I and World War II, the UN consolidated all previous international refugee regulations and guidelines and created new refugee and asylum seeker policies to protect European refugees' human rights and ensure international standards for future situations of mass displacement due to conflict. This document, the July 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, did things such as establish a singular international definition for "refugee" and set an international standard to adopt a non-refoulement policy ("The 1951 Refugee Convention"). |
| 1967 | The UN amends the 1951 Convention with the October 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, which expanded the guidelines and regulations established in the 1951 Convention for European Refugees, globally, to ensure protection of refugees from around the world ("The 1951 Refugee Convention"). |
| 1979/1980 | Following the Vietnam War, millions fled Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, in an event called the Indochina refugee crisis. As a result, the international community coordinated resettlement programs and set the stage for future multilateral refugee actions and coordination ("Refugee Timeline USCIS"). |
| 1980s-1994 | Political instability and financial hardship, including a September 1991 |

Coup, drove millions of Haitians to flee to the United States and other Caribbean nations by boat. The United States intercepted fleeing Haitians, detained some of them at Guantanamo Bay, repatriated others, and a very limited number were allowed to seek asylum. Other Haitians fled to the neighboring Dominican Republic, where they were often returned to Haiti, with very few being granted asylum status in the Dominican Republic (Gavigan).

- 1991 The dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and the Balkan Wars caused mass displacement in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. As a response, UNHCR and the Red Cross provided aid to displaced populations, and resettlement attempts occurred to return people to their home countries. The outcome of these events was a new international strategy that could be implemented to provide humanitarian aid and support to refugees (Young; Ambroso)
- 2011 The Syrian Civil War broke out on March 15, causing 14 million refugees to flee Syria, with many requiring urgent humanitarian assistance. These refugees fled across Europe, the Middle East, and the Levant, as well as the Americas, with many living in unstable and impoverished conditions. The Syrian Civil War, having a major impact on countries taking in refugees, caused many countries to evaluate their humanitarian obligation to refugees ("Syria Refugee Crisis Explained").
- 2014 (Ongoing) The Venezuelan refugee crisis, caused by widespread poverty, political instability, crime, and shortages of food and medicine, has led to millions of people fleeing Venezuela. The majority of these refugees have migrated to nearby South American countries, and the UNHCR has worked to integrate these Venezuelan refugees into their new host communities ("Venezuela Crisis Explained"). However, the crisis has prompted some countries to reject and deport these refugees due to security concerns, while critics of these moves have

argued that countries are failing to protect Venezuelans' basic human and refugee rights ("White House Explains Venezuelan Deportations Amid Growing Questions").

2015

In 2015, a mass influx of refugees numbering over one million people fled countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan to Europe in search of better opportunities, stability, and security. Refugees traveled thousands of miles through treacherous conditions, with some dying in the middle of their journey. Some countries opened their borders, granted refugee status to those fleeing, and worked on integrating the new refugees into their societies. Others, however, are concerned about security and the major strain on resources that would occur with the great influx of refugees, closed their borders and tightened their security. The crises sparked a major debate among European nations about the humanitarian obligation for countries to accept refugees, as well as the impact on security and resources that accepting a large influx of refugees can have (Evans).

2017

In 2017, massive armed attacks and human rights violations forced hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims out of Myanmar to neighboring Bangladesh. These stateless refugees, numbering nearly 1 million, sought refuge across Southeast Asia, with the majority settling in the Cox Bazar region of Bangladesh, where the world's largest refugee camp is located. These refugees are in unhygienic and crowded conditions, and most require some form of humanitarian assistance ("Rohingya Refugee Crisis Explained").

2022

The February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused millions of Ukrainians to flee to neighboring European countries. This crisis is the largest European refugee crisis since World War II. European countries have acted fast to provide humanitarian aid to Ukrainians, streamline legal processes, and set up temporary shelters, medical centers, and aid centers (Roy).

| | |
|----------------|---|
| 2023 (ongoing) | Conflict in Sudan drove over one million Sudanese to seek refuge in neighboring countries, which have been overwhelmed by them. These countries require assistance to manage the large influx of refugees coming from Sudan ("Sudan Crisis Explained"). |
| 2024 (ongoing) | In December 2024, the fall of the Assad Regime in Syria, following 14 years of a devastating civil war, was met with celebration both in Syria and by Syrian refugees who expressed a desire to return home. Some Syrians started returning to Syria, and some European countries even suspended all pending asylum claims, and some politicians called for the refoulement of all Syrian refugees, as they no longer faced persecution. The new Hayat Tahir al-Sham (HTS) government has prioritized facilitating the return of refugees to Syria, as they rebuild and stabilize the country (Horwood et al.). |

United Nations Involvement

The United Nations and UNHCR have played a significant role in shaping refugee and asylum seeker policy, global refugee responsibility, ensuring the protection of refugees, and ensuring international coordination and burden sharing when dealing with refugee crises.

1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees

As a response to the mass displacement in Europe following World War II, the UN consolidated previous international treaties relating to refugees as well as the work of the League of Nations and the High Commissioner for Refugees, and expanded upon them to create the 1951 Convention. The convention made sure to explicitly define a refugee as well as who would not be considered a refugee. This convention also worked to ensure a global standard for the protection of refugees. Therefore, its core principle is that of non-refoulement, which prohibits a country from returning a refugee to a place where they experienced persecution and human rights violations. Additionally, the treaty outlines the obligations that countries party to the convention

have in taking in refugees and providing them with social services and humanitarian aid ("The 1951 Refugee Convention"). Whether a country is party to the convention or not, it is customary international law to engage in non-refoulment ("Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees"). In 1967, an amendment to the 1951 convention was passed to expand the rules and protections outlined in the 1951 convention for Europeans to apply to all refugees and nations ("The 1951 Refugee Convention").

New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, 2016

Following a record number of refugees and asylum seekers due to conflict and persecution, and the strain that the developing nations taking in these refugees felt, the UN unanimously passed the New York Declaration. The declaration emphasizes the need for the human rights of refugees to be protected and to prevent xenophobia and racism relating to refugees ("New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants"). The declaration also included a global plan called the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). The CRRF has four main goals, to ease the strain and pressure that host countries face when managing large influx of refugees, working to increase refugee self-reliance, focusing on expanding international cooperation through third country solutions like resettlement plans, and working to stabilize and secure refugees countries of origins to allow them to return and rebuild ("Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework"). Furthermore, the declaration established a unanimous commitment to shared responsibility, and places a special emphasis on protecting child refugees and preventing their detention, and preventing refugee sexual and gender based violence ("New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants - Refugee Council of Australia").

Global Compact on Refugees, 2018

The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) works to combine the 1951 Convention and CRRF outlined in the New York Declaration and put them into action. The GCR ensures that countries are equipped to handle refugee crises and that burden sharing occurs through international partnership. This prevents countries, especially developing nations, from unequally receiving the burden of refugees, and eases the strain refugees may have on a country's resources and infrastructure. Additionally, the compact ensures equality in refugee and asylum seeker policies, to prevent refugee discrimination

(Cahn-Gambino). Moreover, the GCR outlines measures for both short-term and durable, sustainable solutions for refugees to ensure better outcomes for both host countries and refugees. These solutions work to provide both humanitarian support to refugees while also allowing host communities to benefit economically through investment and employment programs (Zamfir).

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees

The 1951 Convention was highly effective following World War II in standardizing international refugee policy, allowing the millions of displaced people to resettle and rebuild ("The 1951 Refugee Convention - Immigration History"). The convention was highly effective in defining and setting parameters surrounding refugees and asylum seekers, and establishing global standards for refugee rights. However, the convention is not something that every country ratified, thereby decreasing the impact of refugee law on every nation that did not ratify the respective policies of the treaties for refugees. Additionally, the convention can be interpreted in different ways, allowing different countries who did ratify the treaties to have drastically different policies. Moreover, the convention was created nearly 70 years ago and therefore may be outdated when applying its rules to the modern refugee crisis, due to its incompatibility with the contemporary refugee situation in which burden sharing and increasing refugee self-reliance are essential (Kirisci). Overall, while the convention was highly effective when it was first implemented, and still remains as the foundation of many nations' refugee policy and global standards, the convention is not clear enough and outdated to effectively address the present refugee crises, and provide clear global humanitarian standards.

The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and Global Refugee Forum (GCF)

The GCR was adopted by the UN to address some of the gaps in the 1951 Convention. The GCR especially focuses on burden sharing and international cooperation to more efficiently resolve the contemporary refugee crisis. The GCR, however, is not legally binding, and therefore, a country can choose not to adopt any of the principles in the GCR, which does not standardize a global policy to protect refugees. Moreover, the

GCR still does not address the vagueness of the 1951 Convention, leaving countries to develop individualized policies ("Outcomes of the Global Refugee Forum 2023").

The GRF, focused on making progress for the GCR goals, takes place every four years, with nations, other global influential individuals, and groups such as NGOs, faith leaders, and sports actors. With individuals from over 160 countries, the GRF has made significant progress in areas such as international cooperation, enhancing refugee self-reliance, and increasing humanitarian aid for refugees ("Outcomes of the Global Refugee Forum 2023"). However, the pledges made at the GRF are not binding, and therefore, stakeholders are not held accountable, and there is no additional follow-up on pledges made ("Successes, Challenges and Progress: The Impact of Pledges on the Lives of Refugees"). Moreover, an international burden-sharing solution has not been implemented, which leaves certain countries to take the burden of more refugees than others ("Outcomes of the Global Refugee Forum 2023"). In conclusion, while the GCR and GCF both have taken strides to address the gaps in the 1951 convention, and standardize refugee policy through international cooperation, there is still no clear solution to address the legal and humanitarian obligations of a country to take in refugees, and its status as a non-legally binding document, further reinforces the global division among refugee and asylum seeker policy.

Possible Solutions

Fundamental Refugee and Asylum Seeker Principles

While many countries have highly nuanced and different views on refugee obligations, certain fundamental principles must be agreed upon to better align the international community in resolving the refugee crisis. Creating a document outlining the principles of refugee and asylum seeker global policy allows the international community to align to a certain extent in ensuring better international cooperation, based on shared universal values. These principles must ensure the protection of refugee rights, however, these principles should not include policy or legal obligations. Essentially, the fundamental principles must be a foundation on which different countries can base their refugee policies. Ensuring that each country agrees on exactly how to address the refugee crisis and being obligated to do so is not the goal of the fundamental

principles, as these principles are merely a method by which the international community can come together to more effectively address the refugee crisis and protect refugee rights. This is different from the 1951 Refugee Convention, however, as it does not legally obligate any party to take in refugees or follow international refugee law. Instead, the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Principles ensure that while countries may have different policies and beliefs over global refugee obligations, every country is ensuring that they are protecting refugee rights and ensuring sustainability and durability in shaping solutions and preventative measures for refugees.

Comprehensive Flexible Burden-Sharing Strategy

Due to the complexity and controversy surrounding different countries' refugee responsibilities and asylum policies, uneven burden sharing between nations has caused certain countries to experience a major strain on resources, with other nations having a limited impact of refugees on a government's resources ("Outcomes of the Global Refugee Forum 2023"). To address this, a comprehensive yet flexible burden-sharing strategy may be effective in aligning each UN country to adopt a global plan to address the current refugee crisis while ensuring each country is doing its part. The comprehensive nature of a burden-sharing strategy allows all aspects of the refugee crisis to be addressed by ensuring the protection of refugee and asylum seeker rights, proper resettlement and reintegration, and social services if necessary. The flexibility of the strategy is that every nation can contribute equally to address the refugee crisis, while still ensuring that their role in the global strategy aligns with that country's legal obligations, values, and legislation, and sovereignty. For example, a country with more liberal policies may make it easier for refugees to enter their country and provide social services, and comprehensive resettlement and reintegration support. On the contrary, a more conservative country may choose to provide financial or humanitarian aid to another country hosting refugees or taking on a diplomatic and logistical role in putting a stop to the persecution a refugee may face in their country. Using a comprehensive, flexible burden-sharing strategy, the refugee crisis and uneven burden-sharing can be effectively addressed, while still ensuring the sovereignty and autonomy of all UN member nations in determining their stance on refugee responsibilities and asylum policies.

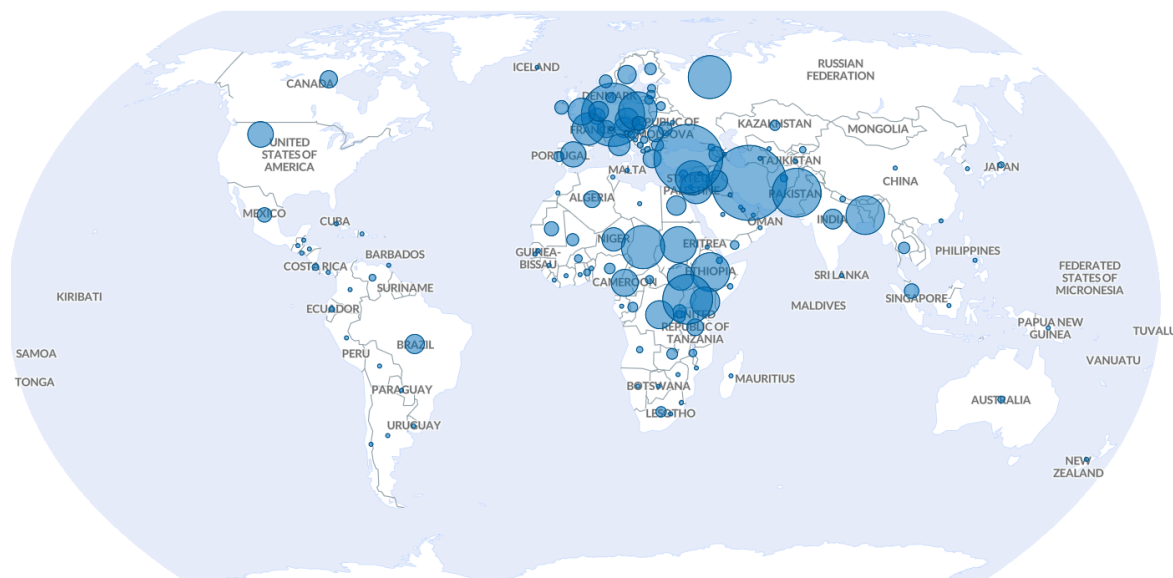
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

SDG 10, Reduced Inequalities

SDG #10, Reduced Inequalities, works to decrease the income gap between a small number of wealthy people and a larger number of impoverished people, and reduce discrimination, both within a country and on a global scale ("Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities"). According to the UN Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024, at the end of 2023, there was a record number of 37.4 million refugees, a number that has nearly doubled since 2015. Moreover, there were more migrant deaths than in any other year in 2023, with 8,177 deaths, with the majority of migrants fleeing war-torn nations ("The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024"). The rising number of refugees, as well as the increase in migrant deaths, are just some of the issues that SDG #10 works to address. The question of global refugee responsibilities and asylum policies aims to evaluate a country's legal and humanitarian responsibilities to refugees and asylum seekers, and work to reduce discrimination against refugees, thereby solving the refugee crisis durably and sustainably, which relates to the main point of Goal #10, and especially part 10.7 of SDG #10, responsible and well-managed migration policies. The UN is working to achieve all 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Addressing the question of global refugee responsibilities and asylum policies allows the international community to work together to make progress towards achieving Goal #10.

Appendix

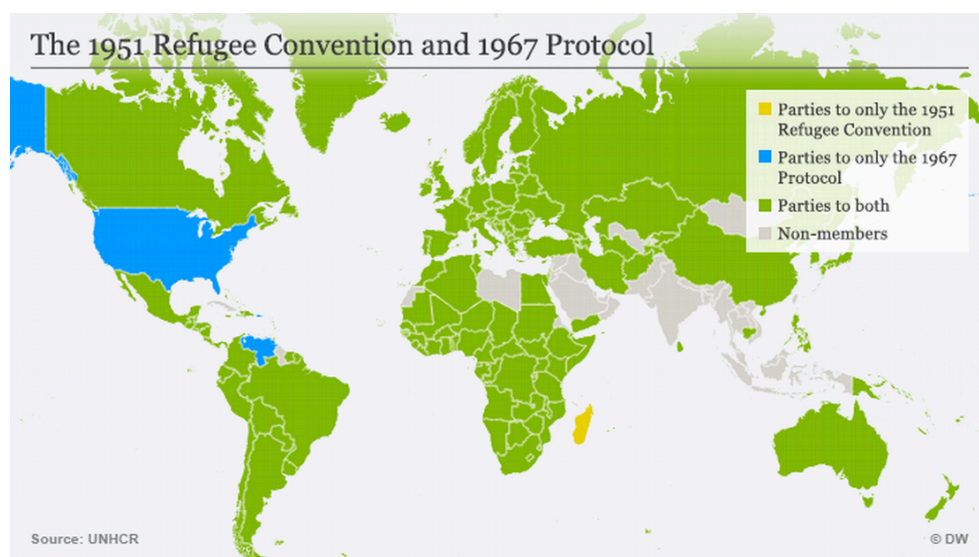
This section is dedicated to providing significant, relevant data and information that delegates can and should utilize in their research to help them better understand the question of global refugee responsibilities and asylum policies.



Source A: The image above is a map of the world presenting the countries and regions that host the most refugees as of October 2023. A country with a large blue circle over it represents a country with a large refugee population, and countries with smaller circles represent countries hosting fewer refugees. The map also presents the regions hosting the most refugees, namely East Africa and the Middle East. Additionally, uneven burden sharing can be seen in the map as certain countries have significantly larger refugee populations in comparison to others ("UNHCR Figures at a Glance").

<https://datanalytics.worldbank.org/dwrap/>

Source B: The Dataset of World Refugee and Asylum Policies (DWRAP) is a tool that can be used to analyze any UN member nation's refugee and asylum policy based on the protections, services, and liberties given to refugees in a host country, and how that has changed between 1951 to 2022. DWRAP also provides the DWRAP index number, ranging from 0 to 1, which determines how liberal a country's policies may be, with 0 representing very conservative and 1 representing very liberal. Using the dataset's website, both scatter plots and line charts can be made to compare a country's DWRAP index with the number of refugees that a country hosts. The resource also lists any country's past legislation relating to refugees and asylum seekers ("DWRAP").



Source C: The above map presents the countries that have ratified, and are therefore legally obligated under the 1951 Refugee Convention, as well as the 1967 Protocol. The countries colored green represent countries that are parties to both the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Convention, which represent the majority of UN nations. The US and Venezuela (colored blue) both ratified the 1967 protocol exclusively, well Madagascar (colored yellow) only ratified the 1951 convention. However, the map also demonstrates that certain regions, such as the Arabian Peninsula and much of the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia, are not parties to the convention. Utilizing this map can help to determine a country's legal refugee obligations, as well as help to assess solutions to a regional refugee crises based on the legal obligations a country has to take in refugees and asylum seekers (Muller).

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