



### **President's Letter**

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees!

My name is Abduselam Awol and I will be one of your chairs this year. I'm a sophomore Biochemistry and Neuroscience double major here at Earlham College. I was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and grew up in Iran, Kuwait, South Africa and Jerusalem also visiting over 50 other countries and can say that I've had a fairly extensive exposure to the world and a fraction of the cultures it hosts. I have been attending MUN conferences since the beginning of high school and find it to be a great platform to expose the youth to the various challenges the world is facing and provide a platform through which we can explore solutions and develop the analytical and intellectual prowess of future leaders to build a better tomorrow. This is my first time chairing the ECMUN and am delighted to be chairing the UNHCR this year. I also am eager to see how this committee addresses the current Refugee Crisis.

My name is Liam Ferguson and I, together with Abdul, will be serving as your Chair during ECMUN 2016. I am a sophomore at Earlham College and am currently undeclared. I spent a year before coming to college traveling around the world, visiting 17 countries in 13 months. The year gave me firsthand experience on the variety of cultures around the world but further instilled the notion I was taught as a child that there are no real differences among humans except the ones we make ourselves. I would like to pursue those ideals and help bring the world together as a unified people, and I think MUN is a perfect platform to learn how to put those ideals into practice. This is my first time being involved in Model United Nations and am excited to see how my peers interpret and react to real world problems.

We are both looking forward to the ECMUN conference as you all are and can't wait to be able to lead you through this incredible experience. We also believe that the topics we'll be covering are one of the most pressing matters today as refugees are increasingly making up a larger part of the world population and mechanisms and sustainable solutions must be devised to ensure their safety, security, ability to prosper and at the very least have their basic needs fulfilled. We live in an age in which several generations of displaced and stateless refugees by the millions are pigeonholed into refugee camps stuck in time, suspended in an unsafe and an even less secure and more dangerous future. Thus, we'd like to stress the significance of our topics and encourage to conduct thorough research to facilitate a great MUN experience. We are looking forward to working with you and encourage you to reach out to us if you have any queries. Good Luck and see you soon!

Regards,

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### **Committee Background**

The UNHCR was created in 1950 post World War II to help the countless Europeans who were lost their homes and were displaced and was supposed to be a temporary committee which would do its work within a 3-year timeframe and then disintegrate but it still remains intact 66 years later and is confronted with more responsibilities as ever with the development of the Refugee Crisis. In 1954, the UNHCR was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its outstanding work in Europe and just when it seemed like the UNHCR's work had to an end, the Hungarian Revolution occurred in 1956 and resulted in 200,000 Hungarians fleeing to Austria. As the years went by, the significance of the UNHCR increased with the decolonization of Africa in the 1960s that created several refugee crises and the UNHCR developed a broader and more worldwide focus. The budget of the UNHCR has also grown from the initial 300,000USD to the current 7,000,000,000 USD due to the growing number of refugees. Today, the UNHCR is instrumental in helping refugees in Africa, Asia and especially the millions of stateless (predominantly Palestinian) refugees across the Middle East.

## Topic I: Exploring Alternatives to Refugee Camps

### Overview

The realities of conflict and persecution ensures displacement eternally. The UNHCR has found that the population of displaced peoples is higher than it has ever been and will continue to rise as resource become less accessible inciting conflict. Climate change alone threatens to displace more than 200 million people in the next 30 years. Of the current 65 million forcibly displaced people around the world, a little more than 20 million are currently refugees. Of those 20 million, about a quarter of them live in a camp setting. Living conditions in most camps are not optimal for long-term accommodations. They lack infrastructure, are overcrowded and are usually located in developing countries that lack the resources to sustain such a rapid rise in population.

### Historical Background:

The aftermath of the first World War brought the first big wave of displaced people to the attention of the global community. The global community gradually established guidelines, laws and conventions protecting the human rights of refugees and establishing rules that ensure fair treatment. The process was started in 1921 by the League of Nations. In 1951, a diplomatic conference in Geneva established a statute spelling out who is considered a refugee and how they should be treated. The 1951 Convention, later amended by the 1967 Protocol explains that states are expected to protect the basic rights of its citizens. If they fail to do so, for political or discriminatory reasons, its citizen's human rights are being violated. Some violations are so serious that citizens are forced to leave their homes and seek asylum in another country. The 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol ensure that when a states citizen is being persecuted, the global community will step in to make sure they are safe and protected. The easiest and most common solution to protecting displaced people is putting them in resettlement camps. When countries first started giving asylum to refugees, they didn't come in such large numbers. The camps are problematic now due to the sheer mass of displaced personnel. Essential resources are disproportionate to the number of refugees and most are living life idly, with no idea whether they will return home or start a new life elsewhere.

The political unrest is most prevalent in countries that were previously colonized. During those periods of expansion, Western powers formed many multiethnic states with no regard of the preexisting cultural boundaries and the populations within them. Although many separate ethnic populations saw themselves as different than other populations within their newly formed states, they were forced to unify under a single national identity, not unusually through acts of violence. It was also not uncommon for Western powers to show favorability to specific ethnic or religious groups, which provoked ethnic rivalries. Half a century after colonies were returned to their indigenous populations, conflict is still prevalent in heavily colonized regions. Central & West Africa, the Middle East, Central & South America and parts of South & Southeast Asia still struggle to eradicate conflicts that originated from their colonizers.

Although all the conflicts are different, the reasons for conflict range on a very small spectrum. The parties involved almost always are either fighting for a governing influence or for a valuable resource. Resource-related conflicts tend to be across state lines, whereas power-related conflicts in recent history have mostly been internal.

**Current situation:**

We are currently living in an era with an unprecedented rate of displaced people across the world. Right now, over 65 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes at a rate of 24 people every minute, a 300% increase of the 2005 rate. With no end in sight to the Syrian civil war and the natural occurrence of conflict, it is not unrealistic to state that there will always be refugees. Refugee camps serve as a great short-term solution for displacement conditions where an immediate response is usually necessary, but it is not a solution that can sustain a population for an extended period of time. Although most refugees live in non-camp settings, there are still around 5 million refugees living in camps.

Although the situation is bleak for refugees, there is a lot of resistance from the rest of the world on how much of a responsibility other states should have concerning the refugee crisis. Xenophobic sentiment has risen into the political sphere in developed countries as people react to the mass migration of Syrian refugees. The five countries that currently hold the highest refugee populations (Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran & Ethiopia) are all considered developing countries.

In order to keep displaced people away from resettlement camps, the UNHCR works with over 900 partners including NGOs, governments and other UN agencies to resettle, educate and integrate refugees within new communities. The UNHCR seeks to transform broken lives by working in agreement to their mission statement. "During times of displacement, we [UNHCR] provide critical emergency assistance in the form of clean water, sanitation and healthcare, as well as shelter, blankets, household goods and sometimes food. We also arrange transport and assistance packages for people who return home, and income-generating projects for those who resettle."

**Questions to consider:**

1. What are the most effective ways to peacefully integrate refugee populations into new communities?
2. What can the developed world do to increase involvement in the resettlement of displaced populations?
3. Considering how many country's boundaries were made without the consent of the local people, could a reorganization of some national borders reduce conflict?

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4. How viable of an option is it to convert refugee camps comprised of tents into long-term resettlement communities with permanent buildings?

**Bibliography and sources to consider:**

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Global forced displacement hits record high

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## Topic II: Long-term Solutions to Stateless Refugees

### Overview:

Statelessness is defined as is one who is not considered a national by any state under the operation of its law. The definitions of statelessness and refugee are often misunderstood. The stateless can be considered a refugee simultaneously, but if a refugee legally relocates internally or externally, they are not considered to be stateless. Today, there are over 10 million people that aren't acknowledged by any state as one of their own. These people are essentially living in states illegally, so their rights within the states are limited. They are often are denied the most basic rights such as seeing a doctor, opening a bank account, getting an education, getting a job and even getting married. Statelessness usually occurs when a separate ethnic or cultural groups controls the government of the land that is home to a smaller or less powerful ethnic or cultural group. The smaller groups are then abstained from governmental procedures and decisions further institutionalizing the repression. UNHCR recognizes the seriousness of this issue and in 2014 created a 10-point plan to end statelessness by 2024.

### Historical Background:

The 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons marked the first time the global community came together to address the problem of statelessness. The parties in attendance at the convention defined what it means to be stateless, how countries should treat them if the stateless come seeking asylum and the rights of the stateless. When the convention assembled, the main concern was finding a solution to the rampant refugee-based statelessness post-World War II, so most of the language in the convention text is refugee-centric. While a large portion of statelessness throughout history is conceived through coercion, people can be deemed stateless by a government for being part an unfavored ethnic or religious group, which tends to be the case recently. The UN recognized the difference in the convention text and the reality of statelessness and gradually shifted attention to non-refugee stateless persons as a distinct population of persons of concern through a series of General Assembly Resolutions and Conclusions.

A major factor concerning statelessness is how nationalistic a country is. If an independent group within a highly nationalistic country exists, they are most likely to be detested by the ruling party. That is the case with Kurds in Turkey, Iraq and Iran, Palestinians in Israel and the hundreds of ethnic groups opposing the ruling Burmese population in Myanmar.

Another key factor to the high population of stateless people originates from discriminatory, inefficient and poorly written nationality laws. There are an assortment of laws across the globe that are completely irrational, considering the detrimental consequences. 27 countries have laws that don't allow women to pass on their nationality to their children. There are some countries that rescind citizenship simply for having lived outside of the country for too long. Fixing the legislation in those countries is key to reduce statelessness.

### **Current Situation:**

The most recent UNHCR report estimating the total number of stateless persons had the number at around 10 million, but the committee only receives reliable data from 75 countries, which means over half of the world's states aren't properly represented in this estimate. The highest estimates of the global stateless population reach up to 15 million. Over 95% of that population are reported to be within the borders of 20 countries with the highly heterogeneous countries Myanmar, Ivory Coast and Thailand comprising the top three. The modern problem of statelessness stems from difference, rather than the post-war statelessness that occurs through displacement.

The UNHCR is 8 years away from their goal to end statelessness. They have slowly narrowed the margin of stateless people one case at a time in non-major conflict areas. The re-legislation of discriminatory and nonsensical nationality laws to ensure large stateless populations with citizenship may not be the most difficult task, but if the discriminatory sentiments remain despite the new legislation, the partition will be entirely superficial. In the 10-point plan released by the UNHCR to end statelessness, the first action is to resolve existing major situations of statelessness. The language in the plan indicates that in order to do this, the UNHCR will facilitate the implementation of new legislation in major areas, but with decade old conflicts such as the Karen and Burmese, Palestinians and Israeli or the stateless Kurds, the committee may find that the divisive sentiment precedes legislation.

### **Questions to consider:**

1. Would the creation of new states in areas of major conflict be more feasible than forcing coexistence between the conflicting parties?
2. Should statelessness based off discrimination be examined in a different scope than statelessness based off of poorly written legislation?
3. Many problems of statelessness stem from problems of discrimination, whether it be gender, religiously or ethnically charged. Should a holistic approach be taken and solve prejudicial sentiment that will in part solve the issue of statelessness?

### **Bibliography and Recommended Sources:**

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## Topic III: Preventing Violence Against Refugees

### Overview:

Refugees across the globe, are victims of xenophobia, racial discrimination and racist violent attacks and in today's climate of 65.3 million forcibly displaced people, 21.3 million refugees and 10 million stateless people around the world, prevention of violence against refugees and internally displaced peoples is an even more pressing matter than it has been in the past. Of the millions of refugees, 54%(5.2 million refugees) of them are from either Somalia, Afghanistan or Syria and equate to the 5.2 million documented Palestinian refugees worldwide who have been refugees for several decades now. The current refugee crisis was brought to the center of the global media stage by the Syrian civil war and has brought more attention to refugees as they are becoming a larger part of the world population by each passing year.

### Historical Background:

Although the Refugee Crisis is a global problem, violence against refugees is most common in the West and more specifically Western Europe. In fact, history shows that violence against refugees is most pronounced in the West. During 2001 in Glasgow, Scotland, a Kurdish refugee along with a Persian asylum-seeker were victims of a stabbing attack and were seriously injured. An inquiry into racially-motivated attacks by the Scottish Refugee Council later revealed that about 70 attacks on asylum seekers and refugees in a short period of 4 months between August and January of 2001. The alarmingly high rates of xenophobic violence against refugees was largely attributed to the United Kingdom government's controversial and highly questionable method of dispersing refugees in exclusively deprived, if not underdeveloped, parts of the UK while its politicians plagued the media with hateful rhetoric that demonized refugees. The media portrayed refugees as those who would rob the people of the UK of their security and economic stability and this is thought to have fueled a large part of these acts of violence against refugees in the UK as well as Europe in general.

The role of the media in incurring acts of violence against refugees was also demonstrated by South Africa's sudden increase in xenophobia and violence against refugees in the Kwazulu Natal region during 2015. An Aljazeera report states that, "A series of sensational newspaper headlines and the dissemination of false information on social media contributed to the deadly outbreak of xenophobia-related violence last year." The report goes on to say that the trigger for all the violence against refugees was a speech made by the Zulu king which was supposedly interpreted out of context by the media, further accentuating the ability of the media to indoctrinate civilians with false notions that lead to the polarization of society and the various acts of violence against refugees.

**Current Situation:**

Recently, violence against refugees has been on the rise and is expected to keep rising especially with the latest development of the Brexit that seems to be invoking an increase in hateful and xenophobic rhetoric from the media. A 2016 UNICEF report on refugee camps in Northern France, describes how unaccompanied child refugees are the most vulnerable and are subjected to sexual abuse, violence as well as forced labor. The camp was by design supposed to act as a buffer zone through which refugees are screened and gain safe passage to the UK but has morphed into a giant slum in which human traffickers prosper and child refugees are sexually abused and violated in return for passage into the UK as their only other option is to entrust their lives in the French-English immigration system process that is often very lengthy. The French president Francois Hollande has recently promised that he will shut down the camp and relocate its inhabitants across the French republic but the future of the notorious Calais camp cannot be determined and abuse against refugees still continues to flourish.

Earlier this year, the German chancellor, Angela Merkel adapted an “Open-Door” Refugee Policy and violence against refugees is on the rise. About 1000 attacks on refugee shelters and asylum seekers across Germany were reported between January 1st and May 30th of this year alone. These atrocious acts of violence against refugees took various forms but also included grenade attacks, arson attacks and bomb attempts on refugee shelters and continue to intensify.

The UNHCR believes that, “states have primary responsibility for ensuring the physical protection of refugees within their territory. UNHCR's role in providing international protection most often involves ensuring that Governments take the necessary action to protect the refugees within their territory.” The UNHCR is engaged in combating violence against refugees through its preventative guidelines that could aid refugees from being victims of such violence.

**Questions to consider:**

1. How can media be effectively be utilized to prevent violence against refugees?
2. What can the UNHCR do to better prevent violence against refugees?
3. Why does Europe have the highest number of cases of violence against refugees?
4. How does your respective country handle refugees and how can it improve?

**Bibliography and Recommended Sources:**

Figures at a glance.

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