



UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Made by: the EXECUTIVE BOARD

JECRC MUN, 2024.

Greetings!

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you all to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) of the JECRC MUN 2024. This year's staff includes:

Salmeen Hussain, Chairperson, An MBBS Student, with a keen interest in national and international politics & relations with a passionate experience of 12 years in PDs, MUNs and other Debating formats;

Radha Priyanka, Vice-chairperson, a 19 year old, natively from Hyderabad pursuing her Law at Amity University, Jaipur; For the past five years, Radha has been diving headfirst into the exciting world of MUNs, participating in around 50 conferences;

The agenda under discussion for this year in the UNHCR is:

“Addressing Discrimination Against Refugees and Ensuring the Protection of Their Rights, with Special Emphasis on the Syrian Refugee Crisis”

This background guide will have a small description about the committee's mandates, governance, structure followed by a detailed overview of the above agenda for this committee.

All the participants, who would henceforth be called '*delegates*' must be well versed with their country's International relations, diplomatic ties and statements & policies regarding the agenda. It is important that delegates research well and are conscious of their portfolio's alliances, interests, and histories at all times during the conference.

UN reports and papers are usually accepted as valid reports, and news reports and articles published in international news portals, but thoroughly verified, can be considered authentic. English is the only

language allowed for any official debate or communication in the committee. Any delegate who wishes to use any other language needs to send a letter for the same to the chairperson's email at least 3 days before the committee sessions commence.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to conduct additional research, explore your Portfolio's and their government's policies in-depth, and examine the policies of other Portfolios, countries and alliances to improve your ability to negotiate and reach consensus. We sincerely believe that a good and interesting MUN conference goes a long way in developing a holistic and all-round personality. A good preparation for the conference certainly goes a long way in a delegate's life, and only further develops their understanding of different issues with wider perspectives.

We, the Executive Board of UNHCR, JECRC MUN 24', look forward to meeting you and having an amazing conference with you. We are always open for discussions and queries, and would strongly recommend delegates to ask any doubts and queries at any time, we would be delighted to solve them. The contacts of the UNHCR EB have been provided at the end of this background guide for your references.

Regards.

Salmeen Hussain, Chairperson, UNHCR.

COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the global organization included in the system of the United Nations (UN) that aims to save lives, protect rights, and build a better and more sustainable future for refugees, people who were forced to flee their home due to conflict or persecution.

UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, was established in 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to help millions of Europeans who fled from their homes as a consequence of World War II. As the refugee crisis became exaggerated throughout the 20th century, UNGA passed a resolution making the body permanent in 2003.

While the UNHCR considers the movement of migrants, it is important to distinguish it from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). At the end of 2021, 1 of 88 people worldwide, 89.3 million individuals, were forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, or events seriously disturbing public order. The number has doubled since 2012, becoming more than 1% of the world's population. It includes 27.1 million refugees, 53.2 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), 4.6 million asylum-seekers, and 5.7 million refugees returned. UNHCR is also mandated to protect and assist those who are stateless, most of whom are not forcibly displaced.

Governance, Mandate, Membership and Structure.

The primary source of UNHCR's mandate is the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, adopted by the UNGA in 1950 with the passing of resolution 428 (V). The Statute is complemented by subsequent treaties including, most importantly, the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, as well as regional refugee instruments. UNHCR reports annually to the UNGA and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In 2003, the UNGA extended UNHCR's mandate "until the refugee problem is solved." The High Commissioner presents the Refugee Agency's biennial programs and budget, which are approved by UNHCR's Executive Committee (ExCom). The UNHCR ExCom is the governing body responsible for providing guidance and making decisions on matters related to the agency's operations and policies. The Inspector General's Office (IGO) serves as a vital component of UNHCR's independent oversight system. Aligned with UNHCR's Policy on Independent Oversight, this system aims to provide unbiased assurance to the executive management and governance bodies of UNHCR regarding adherence to policies and procedures.

UNHCR collaborates with many partners, ranging from governments to non-governmental entities, such as the private sector and civil society. Most importantly, the UN bodies that the UNHCR works with are the IOM, the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). UNHCR is present in 137 Member States, with 90% of its work done in the field and 10% based at Geneva Headquarters or in Global Services Centers in Budapest, Copenhagen, and Amman. Only 3% of UNHCR's budget comes from the

UN – the remaining 97% comes from voluntary contributions from governments, corporations, and individual donors.

Delegates can visit the following links if they feel the need to research further about UNHCR as an organisation:

1. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr>
2. <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do>
3. <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/526a22cb6.pdf>
4. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention>

“Addressing Discrimination Against Refugees and Ensuring the Protection of Their Rights, with Special Emphasis on the Syrian Refugee Crisis”

The UN Refugee Agency defines a refugee as someone who:

"[O]wing to 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, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return."

Displacement cycle — discrimination at every stage

Racial discrimination and related intolerance can affect refugees at every stage of the displacement cycle, including:

- as a cause of displacement from their countries of origin
- in transit countries
- in host countries
- in cases where refugees seek voluntary repatriation and reintegration in their home countries or third countries

Some groups of refugees may face barriers to local integration (including naturalisation) because they are perceived as 'foreign' or 'other.'

Compounded discrimination

Racism experienced by refugees, as well as the internally displaced, may build on pre-existent forms of racism to exclude individuals who are perceived not to belong to the local community based on language, physical features, name etc. Such forms of racism go beyond situations of individual incidents of racism. Additionally, racism affecting foreigners in general may also affect refugees and asylum-seekers.

In many countries, race or national descent are invoked as grounds to deny or withdraw citizenship, leaving individuals stateless and stripped of the enjoyment of their human rights.

Discrimination on the ground of race often intersects with discrimination based on sex when laws and policies deny women the right to transmit their nationality onto their children.

Refugees (under UNHCR's mandate)

21.3M

Palestine refugees (under UNRWA's mandate)

5.8M

Internally displaced people*

53.2M

Asylum seekers

4.6M

Venezuelans displaced abroad**

4.4M

16 June 2022

* Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

** This number excludes Venezuelan asylum seekers and refugees.

UN Action

1. Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all UN Member States.

Reducing inequality is the tenth of the 17 goals, with the promise of safe migration included in SDG Target 10.7. Reducing inequality and ensuring no one is left behind are integral to Agenda 2030.

2. The Global Compact

States have committed and assumed obligations to address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, returnees and stateless persons. The Global Compact on Refugees places ending discrimination of any kind

based on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability, age, or other status at the centre of action to prevent displacement and to ensure peaceful coexistence between refugee and host communities.

The UN Refugee agency (UNHCR) has issued **guidance on addressing racism and xenophobia**, providing practical examples and best practices for its operations around the world.

UNHCR's efforts to address and respond to racism and racial discrimination focus on the following priorities:

- the human rights of refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, returnees and stateless persons must be ensured without discrimination.
- strong laws and policies to combat racism, xenophobia, hate crimes and hate speech are essential.
- access to justice and effective remedies for victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, hate crimes or hate speech and holding those responsible to account.
- inclusion of persons under its mandate in all exercises and platforms monitoring and collecting disaggregated data documenting racial discrimination, racism, xenophobia, hate crimes and hate speech.
- education on the rights of persons under its mandate and messages encouraging inclusion, diversity, empathy and tolerance.

- Everyone can play a role to prevent and stop racism and xenophobia that affect refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, returnees and stateless persons.

The UNHCR's need-based selection criteria for resettlement.

UNHCR follows a need based criteria when dealing with cases of resettlement. It follows basic principles of alleviating need when looking for cases of resettlement. The following is an abstract of the same from their official website:

*When assessing the applicability of a resettlement submission category in an individual case, case workers should be guided by an **age, gender and diversity (AGD) approach** and be sensitive to the ways in which the protection environment in a country of asylum may expose certain individuals or groups to protection risks based on [intersecting diversity factors](#).*

The resettlement submission categories are:

LEGAL AND/OR PHYSICAL PROTECTION NEEDS of the refugee in the country of asylum (including, but not limited to, threat of refoulement).

WOMEN AND GIRLS AT RISK who are survivors, or are at risk, of gender-based violence.

CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS AT RISK, where resettlement has been assessed or determined to be in their best interests.

SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE AND/OR TORTURE, where return or the conditions of asylum could result in further traumatization and/or heightened risk, and/or where appropriate treatment is not available.

MEDICAL NEEDS, in particular life-saving treatment that is unavailable in the country of asylum.

RESTORING FAMILY UNITY, when resettlement is the only means to restore family unity of refugees who have been separated.

LACK OF FORESEEABLE ALTERNATIVE DURABLE SOLUTIONS, mainly relevant as a secondary submission category to highlight the lack of prospects for (i) return and (ii) legal and socioeconomic integration in the country of asylum. **All resettlement cases should be submitted using two submission categories**, as required in proGres. Applying two submission categories promotes integrity and helps demonstrate the justification for prioritizing a given individual or family for resettlement among a large number of other refugees with resettlement needs.

Think, for instance, of a refugee with a debilitating disease that is expensive to treat and impossible to cure. She might be among the neediest, but benefit little from selection. She will also consume resources that could have gone to alleviating the needs of others. Selecting her will do little to reduce need overall. There are then three factors relevant to need: (1) the extent of a person's need, (2) the extent to which her need can be alleviated, and (3) the cost of alleviation. One way to cover them all is to accord weighted, but not absolute, priority to the worst off. This is the principle we should not adopt, but that's for the committee to argue.

On the whole, the UNHCR's selection criteria seem designed to track (1) with little attention given to (2) or (3). The categories on the UNHCR list are refugees with significant needs. There is no category for 'people who would most benefit from resettlement' or 'the cheapest to help'. The only instance where anything else is taken into account is in relation to medical needs. Sick refugees are assessed for their prospects for improvement as well as the severity of their condition.[25](#)

A second issue is how the needy are identified. Some of the UNHCR's categories are defined solely by their needs, but in other cases, proxies are used. There is, for instance, a category for 'women and girls at risk' rather than simply 'people at risk'. One can see how proxies could prove attractive. If we know that many women and girls suffer hidden forms of abuse, we might decide to use gender as a proxy for need. After all, a person's gender is, in most cases, evident. Hidden abuse is not. Nevertheless, the use of proxies does raise concerns. We should always worry whether a more direct measure would prove more accurate. We should also worry if their use reinforces certain stereotypes or expresses disrespect in some other way.

There are then various details to be hashed out when we select on need. Nevertheless, on a spectrum of different ways to select refugees, the UNHCR case remains at the justified end.

Delegates can also look at the following examples, and a thousand others, when researching for this conference:

- Canada's ability to establish principle.
- Australian cherry picking of Christian and other non-Muslim Middle Eastern refugees.
- The persecution requirement.
- Mobility bias.

Syria Refugee Crisis

After over a decade of conflict, [Syria](#) remains the world's largest refugee crisis. Since 2011, more than 14 million Syrians have been forced to flee

their homes in search of safety. More than 7.2 million Syrians remain internally displaced in their own country where 70 percent of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance and 90 percent live below the poverty line. Approximately 5.5 million Syrian refugees live in the five countries neighboring Syria—Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Germany is the largest non-neighboring host country with more than 850,000 Syrian refugees.

Delegates can also visit the following link to further research about the agenda:

<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/>

This BG is only a guide to research on the agenda. All the delegates are requested to not stick to just this BG and conduct independent research as well.

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