



PAMUN XVI RESEARCH REPORT — Redefining the role of neighbouring countries in refugee crises

Introduction of Topic

“I have lost everything: my home, my flesh, my identity. My kids sleep on the floor”

- Zainaba, widowed mother of four displaced in Bangui

It is often difficult for those fortunate enough to live away from countries in war to fully comprehend the turmoil a single refugee has to endure. Leaving family, culture, home and safety; being uncertain of the future of yourself and your family; fearing the next day. The inhumane travel they have to face from fleeing their homes to entering an alien country is one of the main reasons organisations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have been set up. Created in 1950, during the aftermath of the Second World War, the UNHCR was tasked to aid the millions who had fled Europe. The organisation has been involved with a multitude of tragedies and crises such as that of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 and the delocalisation of Africa in the 1960's. Among the UNHCR's many roles, it aims to protect and support refugees, provide education and public health, assist in voluntary return of refugees back to their home country, integration and resettlement into a new country. For their work, they have received two Nobel Peace Prizes in 1954 and 1981.

The primary cause for the rapid influx of refugees have been the civil wars taking place in countries. Consequently, countries near to those in conflict have faced sharp peaks in the amount of asylum seekers seeking entrance. For example, according to the statistics of the UNHCR, Turkey now hosts over 2.5 million refugees, Pakistan holds in 1.6 million and Lebanon hosts 1.1 million. However, such countries do face inevitable economic and social issues such as the psychological effects on the host community and the economic strain placed upon governments to provide and ensure the humane treatment of these refugees. Thus, the question which arises is “*what should the role of such countries be?*” as they balance their own stability with the human rights of those forcefully displaced. This report will not focus on specifically on one particular crisis, but rather the 5 main crises which the UNHCR is involved in, namely: the Central African Republic emergency, the European emergency, the Iraqi

emergency, the South Sudan emergency and the Syrian emergency. This report will trace the origin of the conflicts, the effects on the countries themselves, and of course, the role of the neighbouring countries.

Definition of Key Terms

Refugee

The definition of a refugee has been thoroughly debated, however, the simplest and most apt definition has been provided by Amnesty International: “a person who has fled their country in order to escape human rights abuse.” The UNHCR has similarly defined a refugee to be “people fleeing from conflict or persecution.” A refugee is someone who is seeking asylum, or leaving their homeland due to war/conflict and are looking to migrate to a new country, and have the proper documentation to do so.

Asylum and Asylum Seekers

Asylum is defined to be the protection granted by a state to someone who has left their home country. It is safety granted by a host country as a refugee enters its borders. According to the UNHCR, an asylum seeker is “someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed. The difference between a refugee and an asylum seeker is proper documentation. Refugees, by definition, have approval to join a new country and asylum seekers do not.

Neighbouring Country

When the term “neighbouring country” is used, it refers to the countries which are in close proximity to those in conflict, and consequently, receive a large number of refugees. Examples include Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Greece, Pakistan, Islamic Republic of Iran and Ethiopia.

Background Information

As mentioned above, this report will focus on the 5 main crises which the UNHCR is dealing with. To understand the conflict, the roots of these conflicts must be traced. This is illustrated below.

Syria

For 5 years now, the Syrian civil war has resulted in deep global impact. The conflict is multi-sided, amongst the Syrian Government, the Democratic Forces in Syria, Salafi jihadist groups, Syrian rebel forces and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). In early 2011, pro-democracy protests swept the streets as rebels demanded the resignation of President Assad. However, as forceful military action aimed to crush the voices of those seeking democracy, the conflict grew and hundreds began to take part. What began as a conflict between those for and against President Assad descended to become a multi-dimensioned conflict between Sunni and Shia's, as well as the brutally inhumane involvement of ISIS. All parties involved are said to be guilty of gruesome war crimes including torture, enforced disappearance, murder and rape. ISIS has been accused by the UN of campaigning terror, as footage is released of public executions. There is no doubt that today the entire conflict is humanitarian. Since 2011, 4.5 million refugees have fled Syria, while 6.5 million are internally displaced. Syrians encompass approximately 40% of all the refugees and migrants in Europe, with just under 150,000 of them having asked for asylum in the continent. Syria has been one of—if not the largest—contributor of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers not only in Europe, but also throughout the Middle East.

Iraq

For almost 3 years now, the Iraqi civil war has been an ongoing armed conflict. It primarily involves the Islamic State, as they aim to take over parts of Western Iraq and some major parts of Northern Iraq. The conflict has resulted in the resignation of the Prime Minister, as well as airstrikes carried out by countries such as the United States, Syria and Iran. Countries such as the Russian Federation have also provided military aid.

The conflict began with what is known as “The Battle of Fallujah” as ISIL took over and captured the city from the Government of Iraq. However, in February 2016, in what is known as “The Siege of Fallujah” the Iraqi government took the city back. The war still continues between ISIL and its supporters, and the Iraqi Government.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic has been enduring an ongoing civil war for almost 4 years now. The conflict began when a rebel alliance, known as the Seleka, accused President Francois Bozize of violating agreements made in a peace treaty in 2007. Chaos soon descended, as in March 2013, Seleka rebels seized control of the capitol, and President Bozize was forced to flee. Later that year, the President of the rebel alliance, Michel Djotodia was appointed President and dissolved the Parliament. The Seleka are almost an entirely Muslim party, and when President Djotodia rose to power, the anti-

balaka – an entirely Christian party – formed, where some members began forcibly converting Muslims to Christians. The conflict quickly became a religious war. Soon after, Djotodia was replaced by Christian leader, Catherine Samba-Panza, who is accused of ethnic cleansing, as Muslims have allegedly been forced to flee. The conflict had marginally died down in the beginning of 2016, as peaceful elections took place, but it heated up once again in June 2016, as the Seleka and anti-balaka alliances clashed in the north-western regions. 30,000 people were affected and 6,000 women and children were forced to flee and take refuge in other countries. In addition, as a result of the violent protests and outbursts, thousands have been killed, over 400,000 civilians are taking refuge in neighbouring countries and another 400,000 are internally displaced. Thousands of others were forced to hide in forests with nothing to eat nor drink.

The UN Security Council has continuously been deploying peacekeeping troops since 2013, while the French Government has also been sending troops to take charge of airports.

South Sudan

Though the South Sudanese civil war ended in August 2015, the refugees in neighbouring countries still remain. Originally, the conflict began when President Salva Kiir accused Mr Riek Machar (ex Vice President) of attempting a coup d'etat against the government. Soon after, rebel forces seize control over towns, kill thousands and several are forced to flee. Multiple ceasefires are signed but quickly unravel as violence continues. The civil war became one of pure chaos, and Security Council envoy, Toby Lanzer described the conflict to the “worst in the world” at the time, as over 5 million civilians had been displaced and were in urgent need of humanitarian aid. However, after intervention by the UN Security Council and Ugandan troops, peace talks were held and a treaty was signed in 2015 by President Salva Kiir, stating that rebel leader, Riek Machar will return as Vice President. Riek Machar was sacked in July 2016 due to internal cooperation issues, after the civil war officially ended in August 2015 as a peace treaty was signed in Ethiopia.

However, a humanitarian crisis is ongoing, with a weak economy, resulting in severe food insecurity and hunger, a chronic spreading of diseases, sexual and gender based violence. Over 830,000 people have fled to the neighbouring countries of Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda. Consequently, 6.1 million people are in requirement of humanitarian aid in the country and in neighbouring countries where they seek refuge.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon

The nations sharing borders with the countries of origin have played a major role in the European Refugee Crisis. Considering their geographical proximity to these conflict driven lands, many of the refugees and migrants attempting to escape immediately chose these nations as their first destinations. These nations are primarily relevant to the Syrian refugees, who make up for a large amount of peoples coming into Europe, as they are Syria's neighbors. It was estimated by the UNHCR that just slightly less than 4 million Syrians took refuge in these nations since 2011, with nearly 1.9 million Syrians going to Turkey, 1.1 million going to Lebanon, and around 600,000 going to Jordan. These waves of refugees and migrants have had negative impacts on these neighboring countries as well, causing economic hardship and a shortage of supplies. Their geographical proximity has also caused for these nations, primarily Turkey, to become what are known as countries of passage. Essentially meaning that migrants and refugees have been using these countries as routes to move on to the next nation, to ultimately reach their destination.

Greece

Greece has proven to have a very different reaction in light of the European Refugee Crisis. Based on its proximity to the Mediterranean Sea, waves of migrants and refugees have been landing onto the nation's shores. Due to already weakened economic systems as a consequence of the Financial Crisis of 2008, Greece has been left with a massive burden, where nearly no other country has helped. Economic hardship makes it difficult for it to provide aid to the refugees and migrants who are to stay within their borders. This not only puts a massive burden on the country but also results in overcrowded, unsanitary, and poor conditions for migrants and refugees.

Italy

Similar to Greece, Italy receives a multitude of refugees as they arrive from the Mediterranean Sea. In 2016, Italy has faced a higher than usual influx of migrants. On 31st May 2016, a series of boats and ships arrived at the coast of the country, containing over 880 refugees mainly from Syria and Libya. Three shipwrecks were also recorded, where several had died along their way to Italy. Still recovering from their financial crisis, Italy must deal with more and more refugees as they arrive, regardless of the lack of aid the country receives. In July 2016, Italy was named the "frontline" of the European refugee crisis.

Hungary

Hungary has proven itself to be quite unhelpful towards not only fellow EU nations but also refugees and migrants. By creating a barb-wired fence along its border with Serbia, Hungary has prevented and dissuaded the arrival of these people within its borders.

Germany

Germany on the other hand has set the example for providing proper aid to migrants. They have promised to not only take in 800,000 migrants and refugees into their borders, more than the entire European Union took in 2014 (approximately 600,000), but Chancellor Angela Merkel has also promised the discontinuation of the Dublin Regulation, thus granting asylum to any migrant or refugee that manages to reach German soil. Germany has set an example for other European nations and has followed in the footsteps of countries like Sweden, which have performed similar reforms. Germany has been able to acquire several supporters, including countries like France, and has shown its interest in conserving the Schengen Zone, rather than abolishing it as advocated by some countries.

Cameroon

Cameroon is currently hosting over 330,000 refugees, most of whom come from the Central African Republic. However, the country in itself is facing a humanitarian crisis, where 1.5 million civilians and refugees are food insecure. In June 2014, a UNHCR report claimed that only US\$4.2 million had been received of the US\$22.6 million required. The country is currently in a dire state with a weak economy and the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

Chad

The UNHCR estimates that over 260,000 refugees in Chad have come from the ongoing Darfur crisis, while 5000 are in the country because of the violence in the Central African Republic. These refugees entered the country's borders with stories of brutal murders, kidnappings, looting and torching of homes. All these new arrivals require food, shelter, clean water, education and other facilities. However, the country struggles to keep up with the entry of these refugees. In Chad, United Nations agencies and partners together with the Chadian *Commission Nationale d'Accueil et de Réinsertion des Réfugiés et de Rapatriés* (CNARR) are now catering for the needs of deeply traumatized persons, mainly women, children and the elderly, stranded near Mbitoye town in southern Chad where they found refuge in the villages of Mini and Sourouh.

Sudan

The conflict in South Sudan sent over 230,000 refugees to Sudan. The country itself is facing its own crisis in Darfur, making it greatly challenging to be responsible for the refugees coming in from the South.

Uganda

Uganda currently holds 500,000 refugees in the country as people flee human rights abuses mostly from South Sudan. It is widely recognized as having progressive and forward-thinking refugee and asylum policies. Upon receiving refugee status, refugees are provided with small areas of land in villages integrated within the local host community; a pioneering approach that enhances social cohesion and allows both refugees and host communities to live together peacefully.¹ This is the highest number of refugees the country has held.

Main Issues

The UNHCR is currently involved in 5 major emergencies: The Central African Republic (CAR) emergency, the European Emergency, the Iraq emergency, the South Sudan emergency and the Syrian emergency. These are briefly discussed below –

Central African Republic

In December 2012, civil war broke out in CAR causing there to be violent outbursts where militants burnt villages and murdered civilians. Consequently, hundreds of thousands of citizens had to flee the country and seek refuge in the neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo. According the UNHCR statistics, these countries hold 473,407 refugees. The situation had seemed to reach a level of stability in early 2016, yet another chaotic outbreak began in June 2016 between rebel groups and the government. Consequently, 6000

¹ "Uganda Hosts Record 500,000 Refugees and Asylum-seekers." *UNHCR News*. UN, n.d. Web. 22 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2015/12/567414b26/uganda-hosts-record-500000-refugees-asylum-seekers.html>>.

women, children and elderly had to seek refuge in Cameroon and Chad. The raids of Boko Haram have also caused even more civilians to enter Cameroon, as well as Chad and Niger.

However, countries such as Cameroon and Chad are considered to be “developing countries” by the United Nations, and consequently, do not have the economic stability to handle such a large group of refugees. In addition, such countries do not just receive refugees from CAR, but from other countries in conflict. The refugees which do arrive are already in a state of malnourishment, as well as having diseases such as malaria and respiratory infections. Most of these are children, who also require proper vaccinations and treatment.

European Union and Syria

The European refugee crisis is one which requires almost no introduction. In light of recent events within several nations in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, Europe has witnessed an influx of migrants and refugees trying to cross its borders. This has left the continent in a state of great emergency, with one of its largest issues to date since the Financial Crisis of 2008. Whether trying to evade political and social issues, war, or religious persecution, these migrants and refugees are forcefully leaving their countries in hope for a new and better life. It was recorded by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), that approximately 350,000 refugees and migrants crossed Europe’s borders from January to August of this year. This however is considered to be a conservative estimate as other sources have calculated that up to 500,000 migrants and refugees have crossed these borders; comparatively larger than to the 280,000 in all of 2014. Of course this number only includes documented migrants and refugees and does not account for those who are smuggled into the E.U. Regardless, this helps us visualize the exponentially growing waves of people coming into the continent, of whom nearly 62% percent come from either Syria, Afghanistan, or Eritrea.

The same source also claimed that Europe was the most dangerous location on the planet for illegal or undocumented immigration. Europe was accredited with this “status” due to the alarming rates of deaths experienced by migrants and refugees trying to make their way into Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. Europe leads above all others with a death toll adding up to nearly 3,000 dead migrants and refugees; the often poor travelling conditions of migrants explains the considerably large death toll. The European Union both as a group and its individual countries have lacked the ability to provide ample support for these people. With large amounts of fear of Islamic terrorism and egoism implanted into the continent, many leaders and governments have been reluctant to provide much help

to the migrants. Additionally, with an ever-growing rise of right wing nationalist extremist groups, and xenophobia within the aging European peoples, the road to progress has been delayed, and it is still unclear if progress will be made anytime soon.

In 2016, the United Nations released statistics which cited that there are 13.5 million Syrian refugees requiring humanitarian aid as they enter the borders of new countries. Not to forget that the war in Syria is not in a state of end, and waves of refugees continue to dare to cross to neighbouring countries. Turkey is the largest host country, currently hosting over 2.7 million refugees. Other countries are Lebanon, Jordan and countries within the EU.

40% of refugees in Turkey live in the government run camps within the country. The country has spent over 8 billion US dollars in order to aid these refugees. The amount of refugees results in an inevitable amount of strain for the Turkish government. In January 2016, Amnesty International reported that Turkish guards forcibly are sending Syrian refugees away, as well as shooting and beating them.

Iraq

Millions of Iraqi civilians have been forced to flee their home country and abandon their lives as a consequence of persistent and brutal violence of the Islamic State. According to the UNHCR, by the end of 2016, 11 million Iraqi civilians were in need of aid, as they come from a country with mass executions, rape and gruesome outbursts. Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan are the four largest receivers of refugees from Iraq.

Iraqi citizens in Jordan make up 4-5% of the country's population, with 200,000 refugees. There are also many others who do not have the proper documentation to enter the country, but have entered regardless, and others whose permits have expired, yet they continue to stay within the country. About 70% of Iraqis are of working age, but only 30% of men and 14% of women are a part of the workforce. Many of the Iraqis working in Jordan are over-qualified for the job they are doing, and they are often taken advantage of, working for longer hours and receiving lower pay. However, several Iraqis are often denied the chance to work, and thus, they have to rely on transfers from other countries. Furthermore, several systems in the country are inadequate for support, including the watering system, health facilities and education. UNICEF and the UNHCR have teamed up and have agreed to give Jordan 80 million dollars to ensure that Iraqi children receive public education. However, one of the main issues continues to be that most Iraqis remain hidden in the country in fear of deportation.

The amount of refugees in Syria are said to be well over 1 million. However, in a country with such great political instability, Iraqis are forced into difficult livelihoods with poor health and education

standards. Most tenants do not have a lease in crowded, unsanitary apartments and are exploited by landlords; schools are strained as they try to accommodate for the high influx of Iraqis and thus enrolment is incredibly low as it requires proper documentation which Iraqis often do not have, as well as long commutes which are highly inconvenient. Many household heads of Iraqis in Syria are women as their husbands stay behind in Iraq as a source of income. Consequently, there is no source of income in Syria for the family, and women are often forced into prostitution. Often young girls are forced into the sex trade by their own families as there lacks a better option.

However, the IMF stated that the high influx of refugees may have benefitted the Syrian economy. Iraqis have raised national consumption, invested in Syrian businesses, and stimulated the housing market, while cross border trade has opened up new markets for Syrian industries in Iraq. Syrian GDP has greatly been increasing, but Syrian officials are sceptical over the benefit of the refugees, as they have cost the country over 1 billion US dollars.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Many countries have tried to the best of their capacity to open their borders and aim to accommodate refugees.

The UNHCR has also been working in full capacity to ensure that refugees are given their basic human rights. In Iraq, the UNHCR is on the ground providing essential items such as tents, mattresses, clean clothes, basic food supplies and other such items. In CAR, the UNHCR seeks 345.7 million US dollars for the refugee crisis. In January 2016, UNHCR and 25 partners launched the inter-agency Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP) 2016 for the CAR crisis, asking for \$345,705,556 to cater for the needs of 476,346 refugees hosted in Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Congo. As of 13 June, the RRRP has reached a total funding level of only 21 per cent. The low funding level jeopardizes all humanitarian programs and puts in peril CAR refugees' lives, their wellbeing, the implementation of development projects in the countries who host them and refugees' prospects for a self-reliant future.² With the refugees connected to Syria and in the EU, the UNHCR has provided medicine and clothing to refugees in various camps. They have appealed for 7.7 billion US dollars in order to help refugees. The first aspect of the appeal is the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), led by UNHCR, which calls for USD 4.55 billion to support 4.8 million refugees in

² "Refworld | Inter-Agency Regional Update on the CAR Situation (as of 5 July 2016)." *Refworld*. UN, n.d. Web. 22 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,TCD,,57865b714,0.html>>.

neighbouring countries and four million in the communities hosting them. The second aspect is the 2016 Syria Humanitarian Response Plan which seeks nearly USD 3.2 billion to provide humanitarian support and protection to 13.5 million people inside Syria.

Possible Solutions

When it comes to the role of neighbouring countries, it's important to emphasise the role of balance. The following possible solutions below list some out of the many possible measures which can be taken on by neighbouring countries in order to ensure that refugees, once in their country, are guaranteed their basic human rights.

Funding and Awareness

Of course this is an issue which requires help from the entire international community, and thus spreading awareness must be done through different means. Many non-profit organisations including the UNHCR get a great portion of their funds from donors, and it is essential and all members of society are educated and aware of the current events in the world and their effects.

Common Asylum Policy

Mainly referring to the European and Syrian refugee crisis, a commonly mentioned idea to put an end to this crisis is the creation of a common asylum policy within the E.U. Individual European nations have proven themselves to be increasingly selfish in their ways of dealing with the refugee crisis. It is imperative to relief the burden off of some of the more vulnerable European countries that are plagued by waves and waves of migrants coming onto their shores every day. Countries like Italy or Greece are still not strong enough to withstand such a mass of refugees and migrants coming onto their lands. This has caused for flooded refugee camps, unsanitary conditions, and the poor treatment of refugees. For this reason, it is necessary for the E.U. to come together as a body and share the burden of this issue, and create a common asylum policy.

Tackling the problem from its roots

In order to find a viable solution to put an end to the refugee crises over the world, it is essential to attack the root of the problem which is the conflict in countries of origin. Whether it be the Civil Wars in Syria, Iraq, CAR, or South Sudan, it is essential to find a solution to these problems. It seems quite obvious that by preventing the "push factors" that are making people leave their countries, less people

will consequently migrate to the neighbouring countries. That being said, it is much easier said than done. Which is why this may be a good long term solution, it is essential, considering the state many countries are in now, to find several short term solutions (such as funding and asylum policies) to the issue.

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