

UN Women

Improving women's security in refugee camps



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Introducing Your Chairs

Hey everybody, I'm Mirthe, I'm 15 and I follow the bilingual program at Kandinsky College. I will be the deputy chair of UN Women, and I am very excited, but also a little nervous, since this is my first time chairing. I have attended 5 MUNs before, 2 of those are SkyMUN, where I was in the Organising Committee. I hope we have some enthusiastic debate, but I'm also hoping to meet new people and to have a lot of fun with you guys!
See you at the conference!



Hi everyone, my name is Hana, I'm a 17 year old high school student from Bratislava, Slovakia and I will be chairing the UN Women committee this year. I've attended four MUNs so far as a delegate and this one is going to be my fourth time chairing. I look forward to this conference and am truly excited about meeting all of you. I hope to have fruitful debates on interesting topics, but also plan to have lots of fun and for all of us to enjoy this conference
See you soon:)



An Introduction To The Topic

To flee from your own country because it is not safe anymore is a scary and dangerous journey. Some people don't survive, and if they do they will carry a trauma with them for the rest of their lives. Not only are they left with a trauma, but they had to leave behind loved ones, their homes, and their stuff.

After all that they come in a refugee camp, only to discover they are not safe at all. These camps also lack almost all the basic human needs. The camps have a lots of violence, little security or armed forces, lack of food, water, shelter, and sanity, sexual violence, assault, and human trafficking.

Definition of Key Terms

Refugee

A person who was forced to leave their country because of persecution, war, or natural disasters.

Displaced person

A person who was forced to leave their country because of persecution or war.

Persecution

Hostility and ill-treatment, especially on the basis of ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation or political beliefs.

NGO

Non-Governmental Organisation, an organisation not linked to a government.

Asylum

Protection granted to a refugee by a state.

Stateless

A person not recognized as a citizen of any country.

A General Overview of the Issue

Not all refugees live in a refugee camp. About one fifth of the refugees lives in a camp. This sums up to about 6.6 million refugees. Let's get a bit of an understanding of such a camp first.

These camps host displaced people. This means people that are forced to leave their homes due to wars or persecution. There might also be a few environmental or economic migrants, but mostly refugees. They are run by governments, the UN, international organisations, or non-governmental organisations.



It is like a city, however it is far from luxury. There are schools, hospitals or care units if you are lucky and food distribution centres. However there is not enough. Small tents are housing far too many people. The camps are very overcrowded. Showers are cold, dirty, unsafe, shared with about 50 people per shower, and unseparated. Food and water is scarce, electricity is bad. There is no access to menstrual hygiene products, or even to clean underwear. And there is no privacy, resulting in more sexual assault in places like showers, women not being able to take off their hijab.

Women live in a constant state of terror and fear for rape, sexual assault, or other forms of violence. They can't go anywhere alone, the bathrooms, the water tap, school, work are all places where it is unsafe. This results in women staying home, only leaving their tents when absolutely necessary. Girls can't go to school, which has tremendous effect on their futures.

When girls or women have been a victim of sexual assault they are often left traumatized, but they might also be pregnant. Also, young girls and women might be forced into prostitution, in order to support their family. They are left with trauma, and often unwanted pregnancies. These pregnancies brings them at risk, since there is little to no medical help/birth control available in a camp.

Around 2 million children were born into the refugee life. In 2018-2022. In Kutupalong, the largest refugee camp in the world located in Bangladesh, housing over 800,000 people, 40,000 to 50,000 children are born every year. All without proper health care. A lot of these childbirths could be prevented if there was proper birth control, and no sexual assault in the camp.

UNFPA, United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency, is one of the organisations working on this issue, however there are lots of other organisations, helping through funding, research, or providing resources.

Protection marriage is when unaccompanied girls and women marry, to be

protected from sexual assault, and other dangers during fleeing This doesn't completely work since there might be sexual or physical abuse within the marriage. Sometimes girls that live in a country at risk or in a war very young in order to be protected when fleeing.

Historical Background

It is hard to say when the very first refugee camp was established, since some of the oldest camps might have developed into villages or cities. However one of the oldest dates back to 1947. It is called Cooper's Camp, located in West Bengal, India. It was established to house Hindi refugees fleeing from Muslim East Bengal (now Bangladesh).

In 1947 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. In Article 14 it states: "everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." This means countries can't deny you an asylum if you are being persecuted. However, countries are trying to do this since they think they are 'full'. These countries close their borders to migrants and refugees, denying them access to their country, violating Article 14.

The UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) was established in 1950. They are dedicated to protecting people who are forced to flee their homes, and people that are left stateless, or denied nationality. The goal of their actions is to safe-guard fundamental human lives, give live-saving assistance, and ensure that refugees have a good future ahead of them.

At the time the UNHCR was a temporary organisation of 3 years focused on the 1 million European displaced people after the second world war. However, when in 1956 the Hungarian uprising forced a lot of Hungarians to flee their homes, it marks the start of the UNHCR's international refugee mission. Only in 2003 the time limit was officially extended to 'when the refugee problem is solved.' Prior to this, the mandate had been formally renewed every few years.

The Refugee Convention in 1951 and the Protocol in 1967 are the basis for refugees' rights. In these documents the term 'refugee' is defined, refugee rights are outlined, and there are international standards set on the treatment and protection of refugees.

Major Parties Involved

Türkiye, Pakistan, Germany

These 3 countries host the most refugees worldwide. These countries together host 7.4 million refugees. That is almost one fifth of all refugees worldwide.

Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine

These are the 3 countries where the most refugees come from. They flee these countries because of a war or another humanitarian crisis. These 3 countries are responsible for over 60% of all the refugees in 2023.

Sudan

Sudan used to host a lot of refugees, however because of the outbreaks in violence in Sudan, there has been a lot of displaced people within Sudan. Refugees that were already there had to flee, but also inhabitants of Sudan had to flee within the country.

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

Since established in 1950, the UNHCR is dedicated to protecting people who are forced to flee their homes, and people that are left stateless, or denied nationality. The goal of their actions is to safe-guard fundamental human lives, give live-saving assistance, and ensure that refugees have a good future ahead of them.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The Nansen passport from 1922 gave refugees international protection and allowed half a million people to settle into a new country. The Nansen passport was the first identification paper recognized all over the world.

The Refugee Convention, adopted in 1951, is a document in which the term 'refugee' is defined, refugee rights are outlined, and there are international standards set on the treatment and protection of refugees. However it is only for refugees that fled before 1951. The Protocol, adopted in 1967, is an amendment to this document, so that it counts for all refugees.

A lot of UN organisations, international organisations, NGOs, and governments are working together on solving this issue.

Possible Solutions For The Issue

As previously mentioned, bathrooms are terrible, they aren't private enough, a hotspot for rape and other types of sexual assault, shared by many people, unhygienic, cold, and unseparated. Girls and women sometimes don't eat or drink enough in order to prevent having to go to the bathroom too often. If we were to provide decent, private bathrooms, giving women a safe space to shower and go to the toilet, safety would increase.

Girls and women have to stay home for the duration of their period because they do not have access to menstrual products. That is why menstrual product should be provided. Reusable menstrual products will not pollute the environment or cause trash in the camp, and women will also be able to wash, and then reuse it.

Birth control, like the contraceptive pill, should be provided. But there should also be a safe space for women to go into labor, like a hospital, where women can receive help if anything goes wrong during birth, like an emergency C-section.

Refugees are also very capable. Most of them have gone to school when they were younger, have a skill, and had a job. Women need a safe and honest way to earn money. If they can earn enough money, they can buy food and sustain their family, so their children can go to school. Women and girls shouldn't be forced into prostitution because that is the only way to earn money. The organisation or government should provide jobs, that are safe, and have a fair payrate. If they have a safe way to earn money they can increase their self-reliance.

Distributing whistles is a fairly simple and easy way to combat violence against women. This way, when they encounter any danger, they can blow the whistle, so



other people can help.

The UNHCR guidelines on a safe refugee camps should be followed when building the camps, and existing camps should be improved in order to meet these standards.

Timeline Of Key Events

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| 1947 | The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the General Assembly. |
| 1950 | The UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) was established. |
| 1951 | The Refugee Convention |
| 1967 | The Protocol |
| 2003 | UNHCR officially extended their mandate to 'when the refugee problem is solved.' |

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