

Forum:	Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee
Issue:	Humanitarian relief and protection of migrants and internally displaced persons
Student Officer:	Athena Dendri
Position:	Co-chair

Personal Introduction

Dear delegates,

My name is Athena Dendri and I am honoured to serve as a co-chair in this year's Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee of the 6th PS-MUN. I have participated in four conferences as a delegate and ambassador, in four different committees, and this will be my first time chairing.

The main reason why the Humanitarian Committee was one of my top choices when I applied for a Student Officer position is because it concerns and promotes the human rights that the United Nations has fought to protect. Personally, I believe in equality, freedom and solidarity and that every person is born with basic royalties that nobody can deny.

This year as a chair, my main objective is to help you form effective alliances and hence realistic resolutions. This is why I am writing this study guide; to help you get a better and more enhanced understanding of this topic. However, that does not mean that you should only get information from here and rely solely on this study guide. Should you want to investigate deeper your country's policy, I encourage you to research more and explore other references as well. I strongly urge you not to hesitate and contact me (at athina.dendri@gmail.com) if you need any help with the topic.

Looking forward to the conference,

Best regards,

Athena Dendri

Introducing Topic

In armed conflicts, either between different countries or civil wars, or even in times of peace, it is of the utmost importance to show nothing less than respect for human rights and the protective rules of the international—or national, in the case of civil conflicts—humanitarian law. Every citizen’s rights need to be protected, regardless of whether they are displaced or not.

However, the most vulnerable persons during these conflicts are undoubtedly migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Every citizen has the right to liberty and security during difficult periods, but at the same time, IDPs and migrants have both physical and administrative obstacles to face that do not apply to non-displaced citizens. For instance, an internally displaced person is in need of shelter, food, water and basic healthcare, which makes them dependent, but also has barriers to accessing economic activities, education and employment in the areas of their displacement. At the same time, the right to political participation and activities is beyond the reach of these persons, especially in the situations when they cannot exercise their right to vote on the grounds that the place of origin is not safe to return to.

All these technical complexities only tend to increase the vulnerability of migrants and IDPs who, amongst all their other problems, have to face the loss of their homes, lands, safe lives, family members and friends simultaneously. Hence, the longer the duration of their displacement, the greater the risk of, inter alia, their exposition to diseases, economic exploitation, sexual manipulation, kidnapping, forced labor and debt servitude, as criminals take advantage of migratory flows. It is important to underline that there are approximately 232 million migrants and IDPs worldwide nowadays and therefore, this huge and ever increasing number of people needs to be protected and be given specific humanitarian aid, in order for them to live in safety and security.

Definition of Key Terms

- **Humanitarian relief**

Providing the necessary assistance quickly and efficiently in emergency, natural disaster, mitigation, migration and life threatening situations. Most of the times, it includes helping resolve the problems of the refugees, healing the sick, offering shelter to and feeding men, women and children and protecting the young.¹

- **Migrants**

Persons who live outside the territory of the State of which they are citizens, and therefore in the territory of another State. These persons do not enjoy the general

¹ <http://www.un.org/en/sections/what-we-do/deliver-humanitarian-aid/index.html>

legal recognition of rights which is inherent in the granting by the host State of the status of refugee, as defined by UNESCO.² Migrants are characterized based on the reason for their migrating and therefore can be referred to as economic, political or religious migrants.

- **Asylum-seekers**

Individuals who are seeking and are in pursuit of international protection. Sometimes, they are recognised as refugees, however these two terms do not mean the same.³

- **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)**

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to leave their homes or place of residence but remain within the borders of their countries. The most frequent reason why this happens is in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border, as stated by the United Nations.⁴

- **Protected Areas**

Areas designated by the UN with the cooperation of the Member States to be demilitarised to protect civilians and migrants and facilitate the conditions for a negotiated resolution to the conflict.

- **Area of Displacement**

The region where a person moves to after being persecuted from their last place of residence. It is also the area where people start a new life by participating in the social and political life and joining the regional workforce.

Historical Information

Migration and displacement of people both within and outside the borders of a country is not a new issue. People always tended to change their place of residence and migrate because of changes that occurred in the society, politics or the economy.

- **Industrial Revolution**

During the 19th century, one of the most significant revolutions in the human history occurred. The Industrial Revolution led to much technological and scientific advancement, but also increased the world's population. The improved living

² http://www.unesco.org/most/migration/glossary_migrants.htm

³ http://www.unesco.org/most/migration/glossary_migrants.htm

^{4,5} <http://www.who.int/hac/about/reliefweb-aug2008.pdf>

conditions resulted in augmenting England’s population, from 10 million to 40 million in the 1800s, whereas in the previous century it was steady at the number of 6 million people.

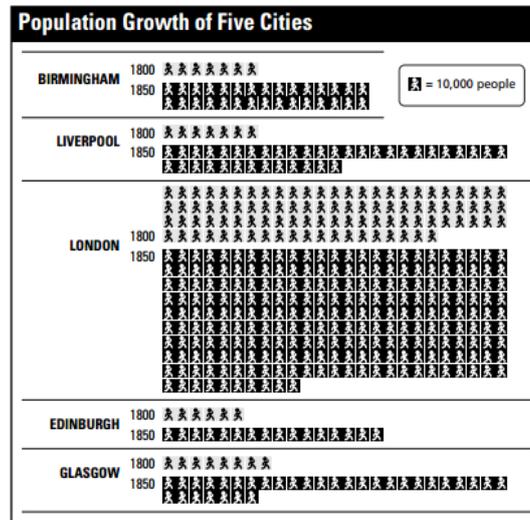


Figure 1: Population Growth in 5 cities of the UK⁶

The factory system that first occurred during this period contributed to the growth of urban areas⁷, as large numbers and hordes of workers migrated into the cities in pursuit of working positions in the factories. Before the Industrial Revolution, most Europeans lived in villages and small towns in rural areas, and not in the big city centers.

By the beginning of the 20th century, this change had spread throughout most of Europe. This population migration and internal displacement from rural to urban settings is a defining feature of the Industrial Revolution as factory work made it necessary for many workers to be in one place and new goods brought the need for new market centers. However, this displacement was not without consequences. As seen in the diagram below, the gathering of many people in urban cities, as well as their poor living conditions and low wages led to the spreading of contagious diseases.

^{7,7}<http://www.csun.edu/~sr6161/world/unit%203/Unit%203%20Detail%203%20Review.pdf>

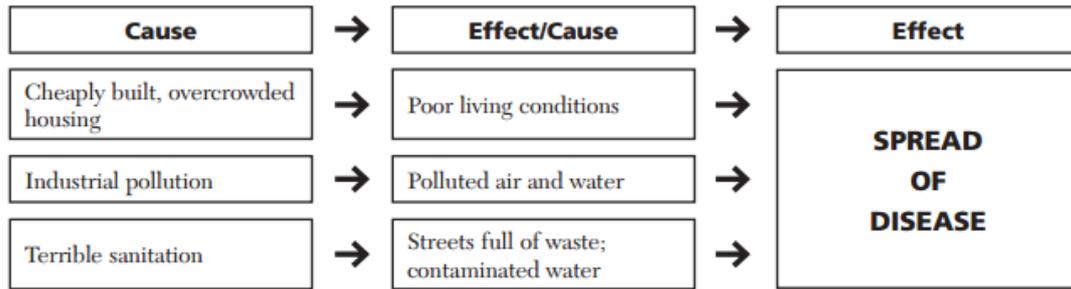


Figure 2: The causes of the spreading of diseases⁷

- World War I (1914-1918)

The First World War was one of the deadliest pages of humanity. Except for the death of millions of people, either warriors and militaries or just bystanders, this upheaval

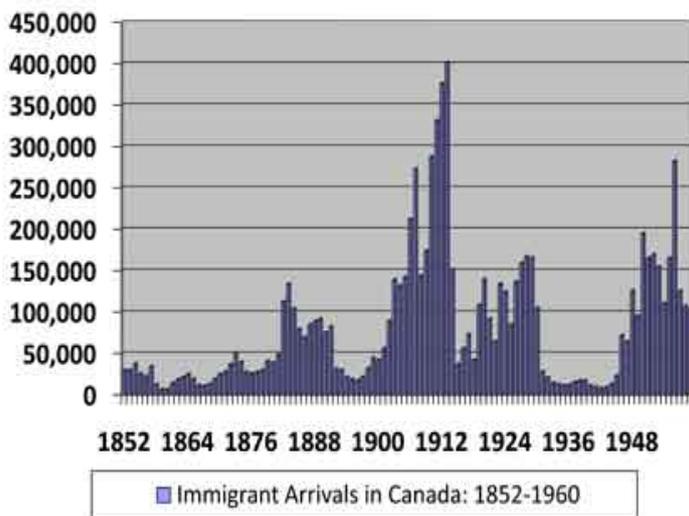


Figure 3: The migratory flows to Canada during World War I.⁸

had terrible consequences on the lives of the European civilians who survived the war but were made migrants. As it is known, Germany’s occupation of many European countries, such as Poland, Belgium and Lithuania, provoked a mass movement of migrants and a humanitarian catastrophe. Meanwhile, in the Ottoman Empire, all

Armenians were expelled from living in the areas in which they used to live because of the state’s use of force against its own people and the organised deportation.

However, the USA and Canada were the destination of many displaced persons as well. In Canada, between 1912 and 1916, approximately 2.85 million newcomers arrived on Canadian soil, out of which 1.8 million had English roots and 450 thousand were migrants, as shown in the graph⁸. According to the Department of Homeland Security, the United States of America admitted during World War I over 14.5 million migrants and roughly a half-million blacks migrated to northern cities between 1915 and 1920. This report raised concerns over the cause of such a radical movement, but also made people want to make better the conditions in which migrants and IDPs lived.

⁸ <http://www.british-immigrants-in-montreal.com/canadian-immigration-early-1900s.html>

- [World War II \(1939-1945\)](#)

When World War I ended in 1918, it was considered the war to end all wars. The Second World War also originated a great number of migratory flows. The reason behind this migration movement was a national security rather than an economic issue. With World War II, the world is turned upside down once more, causing people to migrate with the hope of a better and safer future.

It is important to note that the main migratory flows were from Europe to the United States, leading to the admission of almost 1.3 million immigrants in North America and 2 million in Australia. The wave of post war migration began with Displaced Persons who were seeking employment and better living conditions. They found work in factories and others did the hard and dirty jobs in heavy industry, whereas skilled migrants found it hard to find work to suit their training and qualifications and had to accept whatever work was available. It was during this period that there were raised humanitarian questions regarding the protection of children threatened by conflicts and the eventual resettlement of migrants and other persons displaced by the war.

- [European Migrant Crisis \(2015-today\)](#)

In 2015, Europe had and still has to face a very hard situation which is no other than the Migrant Crisis. The fleeing of war and persecution in Syria has been by far the biggest driver of the migration, followed by the ongoing violence in Afghanistan and poverty conditions in Kosovo. These migrants, out of which 60% are men, as reported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the rest armless women and children, are migrating for a better life, free of conflicts and weapons. According to Eurostat, the EU Statistics Organisation, more than 920,000 migrants are estimated to have arrived by sea alone so far this year but exact numbers are unclear as some may have passed through borders undetected. Kos, Chios, Lesbos and Samos are the main Greek islands where thousands of migrants arrive every day - often in flimsy rubber dinghies or small wooden boats.

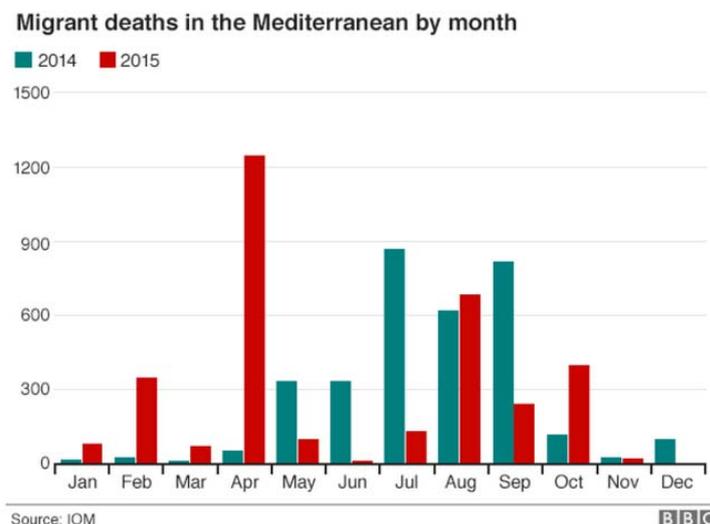


Figure 4: A Graph showing the amount of migrant deaths by month⁹

These people, who are seeking for asylum in the safer Western world, are willing to take any chance if it is to have a better future. Hence, they tend to become victims of smugglers and traffickers who take advantage of their vulnerability and charge them to get them to Greece most often in small dinghies, which sometimes sink because they carry handfuls of people. As shown in the graph above, provided by BBC, the number of deaths in the Mediterranean has augmented and is so high, comparing to the 2014 respective months⁹.

However, life is not easy for those who survive the battle with the sea and make it to Europe. There are still many perils to face, such as the difficulty of finding shelter, basic medical aid, warm clothes and food. Although there are many volunteers and NGOs willing to provide their help and equipment to make migrants feel welcome, the lack in certain necessities, like camps and admission centres is a significant obstacle.

Countries and Organisations involved in the issue

Syria

The ongoing multisided civil war taking place in Syria, which started in 2011, is still present and at its peak in 2015. The wide use of thermo baric and chemical weapons and cluster and suicide bombs resulted in a great number of fatalities, the spreading of diseases and the increase of the people fleeing their homes – most of the times to Europe. As of March 2015, according to Al-Jazeera, it is estimated that 10.9 million Syrians, or almost half the population, have been displaced and approximately 4 million have become migrants. Although doctors and international public health agencies reported in 2013 that the contagious disease Poliomyelitis was prone to disappear, of the utmost importance are its appearance and its vast number of victims, most of whom are Syrian people. Critics of the government complain that the spread of the disease is due to cutting off vaccination, sanitation and safe-water services to "areas considered politically unsympathetic".

⁹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>

January - October 2015, first-time applications

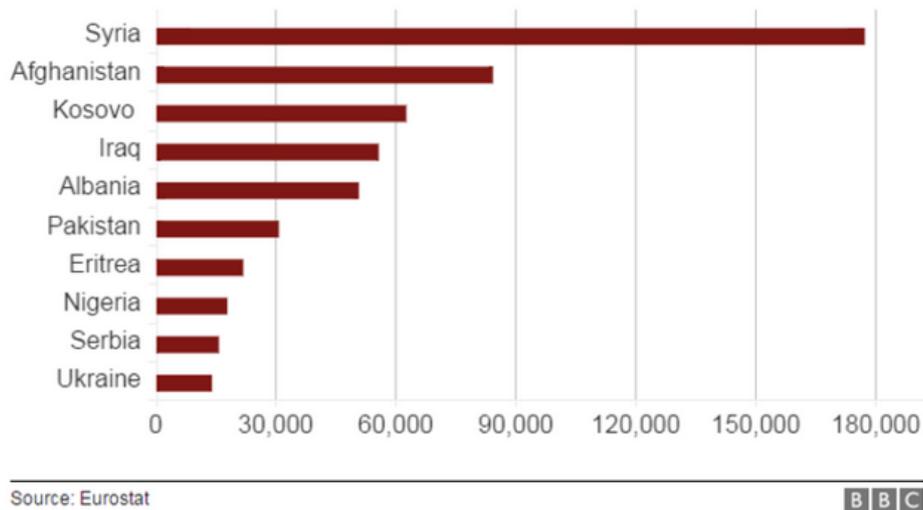


Figure 5: A graph showing the top 10 origins of people applying for asylum to the European Union¹⁰

Greece

Greece, a country that is already facing an economic crisis, now has to cope with the unstoppable flow of migrants to its shores. Even though there are many volunteers and organisations willing and present to help, the lack of money and resources led Greece to request from the European Union to provide staff, medical and pharmaceutical supplies, clothes and equipment, so as to accommodate the refugees.

European Union

Most of the countries of the EU, as well as non-EU countries, have signed the Schengen Agreement, according to which there is a territory where the free movement of persons is guaranteed. The states that are signatory to the agreement have abolished all internal borders in lieu of a single external border and every person having a Schengen visa can move freely in the Schengen area. However, the Migrant Crisis is undermining this treaty, as many migrants have been entering the EU illegally. This had as a result the re-imposition of controls in the internal borders of the EU by countries like Germany, Austria, Slovakia, the Netherlands, and caused the 'sealing' of the Hungarian borders.

¹⁰ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>

United States of America

The United States of America have long been the home to millions of migrants, mostly coming from Mexico. The reason behind all this movement is the political unrest in Mexico, as well as the labor demands in the US. Consequently, the country is not new to the phenomenon of migration, however the country's policies have altered, depending on the government each time. Although the US is trying to take a more neutral position, this does not mean that they have not taken some really extreme measures, like the construction of a U.S.-Mexico border fence to decrease



the migratory flows.¹¹

Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)

Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, MSF is providing medical care, shelter, water and sanitation services to all migrants and Internally Displaced Persons and distributing relief items to everyone in need. In addition, the MSF volunteers have been conducting vulnerability screenings to identify the most vulnerable groups like pregnant women, minors, and others to provide medical consultations. According to the volunteers, 'This is all the more urgent as the flow of people arriving will not stop in the winter but living conditions for them will become even harsher'.¹²

¹¹ <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/2/19/u-s-immigration-policiesalittlesomethingforeveryonetohate.html>

¹² <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/our-work/humanitarian-issues/refugees-and-idps>

¹²<http://www.blankets-upon-photo-dactualit%C3%A9/490406524> *Figure 6: A man tries to pass the US-Mexican border to unite with his family*¹¹ -life-



Figure 7: Syrian Migrants in the Greek island of Lesbos on September 28, 2015 ¹²

World Health Organisation (WHO)

The World Health Organisation has been supporting migrants and IDPs ever since its establishment. It has collaborated with other humanitarian partners to improve health situation, by providing safe food and drinking water to everyone, and enhance a healthy environment for migrants. It has also conducted assessment aimed at making better the health conditions and services provided, and created camps for children, women, elderly and people with disabilities among the migrants who are considered to be more at risk in terms of chronic diseases, psychosocial and violence related illnesses.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
1917	The Congress passed the Immigration Act in the United States of America
1942	The Bracero Program in the US and its demand for workers in the agricultural sector resulted in thousands of Mexicans migrating to the US

14 December 1950	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established
1951	The passage of the Migrant Convention
25 May 1963	The establishment of the Organisation of African Unity one of whose main objectives was to ensure the rights of African IDPs
1965	Changes occurred to the U.S. immigration law which ended national-origin quotas and imposed the first numerical limits on Mexico and other Latin American countries, to limit the number of migrants
1974	European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) was established
12-14 July 1989	The exhibition of a report of the round table of solutions to the problem of Migrants and their rights in San Remo, Italy
23 August 1989	The International Protection of Migrants is put into force (SCIP)
2004	The International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI) was established
15 March 2011	The spark of the Syrian Civil War
2013	The resources for immigration enforcement, including Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), have quadrupled and raised \$18 million
June 2015	The construction of a barrier in the Hungarian borders by the government of the country to keep the migrants off from entering Hungary

UN Involvement: Reference to UN Resolutions

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families

On 18 December 1990, during the 69th plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly, the A/RES/45/158 resolution was signed. What it mostly stated was that the protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own was a priority, and therefore the member states should cooperate to protect their rights. Its main objective was to decrease the difficulties they may encounter arising from their presence in the State of employment, protect migrants' right to life, shelter and proper living conditions, whereas it supported that no migrant (worker or not) should be subjected to any kind of exploitation, torture or servitude.

Violence against women migrant workers

The resolution A/64/433 of 18 December 2009, was signed by the General Assembly in order to promote gender equality in the market, and especially concerning female migrant workers. By noting with approval the efforts of the Regional Programme on Empowering Women Migrant Workers in Asia of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, it called upon the incorporation of a human rights and gender perspective in legislation and policies on international migration, as well as the funding for the prevention of violence against women migrant workers, by promoting the access of women to meaningful and gender-sensitive information that will inform them about their rights, etc.

Protection of migrants

On 18 December 2014, the General Assembly adopted the A/69/488 Resolution, concerning the protection of migrants. Confirming that migrant smuggling and crimes against migrants, including trafficking in persons, were increasing, due to the massive migratory flows, the UN called via this resolution for the promotion of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, regardless of their migration status, in every activity of the societies. Additionally, it encouraged states to reinforce the existing laws regarding crimes, xenophobic or intolerant acts, manifestations or expressions against migrants, so as to eliminate any act of discrimination or violence against them.

Human rights of internally displaced persons

According to this resolution, signed in 29 June 2012, States have the primary responsibility to provide protection, assistance and aid to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction, as well as to address the root causes of the displacement problem in appropriate cooperation with the international community, since the issue of IDPs is concerning all the countries.

Possible Solutions

The protection of migrants and Internally Displaced Persons was in the past, and still is, one of the most complex issues. In order to minimise the number of perils of migrants and IDPs, nations have both to work individually and cooperate to help resolve the problem, because all countries are affected by migration, either directly or indirectly.

One possible way to protect migrants and IDPs and provide them with humanitarian aid and relief could be the creation of several Protected Areas, across different regions and countries. In these areas, people will have access to medical centres and healthcare and even the poorest of them will be given shelter, clothes, food and clear water, which are necessary to their survival, and they will be accommodated there for a short period until they can leave and live on their own. Those places will be designated by the UN and it will be obligatory that all the nations respect the neutrality of them.

Another way to minimise the casualties of the conflicts is to provide safeguards, and especially in countries like Turkey, Greece and Italy where migrants come from the sea with some wooden little boats. These people will help the migrants get to the shores and then find their way to the medical centres for examinations and to the police stations, where they will be identified and be given the necessary documents—if they are legal. In addition, more research and better data collection are needed in order to establish the extent to which non-citizens face particular vulnerabilities. What could be done is to raise awareness among the citizens about the difficulties of the lives of migrants and Internally Displaced Persons, their likeliness to be exposed to any kind of exploitation or crime, so as to sensibilise the people and maybe make them contribute to their well-being.

Moreover, nations need to develop national laws and policies and modify their already existent legislation to promote the rights of internally displaced persons, including non-citizens, and migrants. However, the most effective solution is the intervention of the UN in the areas of war. For instance, since Syria is the country that 'produces' the most migrants, all Member-States should take action and help end the conflict since it is an issue that concerns the entire globe (though keep in mind that as the Humanitarian Committee, calling for military intervention in Syria or anything along those lines is outside of the committee's jurisdiction – it is possible, however, to call upon the Security Council to consider intervening).

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Timeline of Events

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Possible Solutions

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