

Forum: Special Conference on Migration: A Movement for Change

Issue: The issue of mass migration and xenophobic violence

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My name is Aurelia Kotsiris and I will be serving as your Co-Chair in the upcoming PSMUN. I have been doing MUN conferences since 2013. During this time I have had the experience of being a delegate five times and I have been a chair twice before

INTRODUCING TOPIC

The civil war in Syria has brought out one of the worst humanitarian crisis the world may have ever seen. All families inside Syria are struggling to survive and need urgent aid by stable countries – it has been estimated that it will take approximately \$8.4 billion to meet the urgent needs of the Syrians. As the families in Syria have been forced to flee out of their country, they are facing a whole set of new challenges in the countries they have chosen to migrate it. These include, a need for shelter, financial difficulties, disrupted education, distance from relatives and xenophobic violence.



This global problem of xenophobic violence will only escalate if not urgently dealt with. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has stressed, “Refugees who flee intolerance at home are increasingly finding more intolerance in the countries where they seek protection.” The community in the developed countries find it easy to blame “foreigners” for political, economic and social problems hence, making them easy targets. The amount of xenophobic violence may vary from country to country depending the country’s own religious beliefs, and economic status. This xenophobic violence has forced immigrants into social exclusion from fear of being attacked.

KEY TERMS

Xenophobia = Dislike of or prejudice against people from other countries.

Prejudice = Dislike, hostility, or unjust behavior deriving from preconceived or unfounded opinions.

Discrimination = The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex.

Racism = Prejudice or discrimination against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior

Violence = Behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone

Mass migration = Migration of large groups of people from one geographical area to another. In this case the situation in Syria.

All taken from Oxford dictionary

COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN THE ISSUE

UNHCR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

The aim of this agency is to provide aid and protect refugees worldwide. It also provides governments with way to deal with the refugees in their countries. This organization has set out various projects to address xenophobic violence in areas where it is in need. It has engaged its efforts to combat xenophobia in order to internationally protect all refugees, this has mainly been achieved by assisting governments are trying to find long term and short term solutions for them

International Organisation for Migration

This organization was established in 1951. It's the leading organization for migration. It declares that "the organization is dedicated to the principle of humane and orderly migrations" it works closely with governments and other non-governmental organizations in order to ensure its aims, it also provides humanitarian assistance to all those in need. It is key for all governments to work closely with this organization in order to help deal with and prevent xenophobic violence.

Greece

Greece's location in the Mediterranean has made itself central for the migrants to move to Europe. Although Greece has classified itself as highly hospitable and has

seen over 250 000 people arrive on its shores, particularly the island of Lesbos, this year. However, even back in 2009, there has been a notable rise of xenophobic attacks through the past years, it has also been said “People coming from war zones are scared to go out at night in Athens for fear of being attacked” by Judith Sunderland, a researcher at the Human Rights Watch, between August 2009 and May 2007 alone there were 51 serious attacks against migrants. Despite this being a major issue there has been little done to stop it. As a result of this since 1012 Greek authorities adopted a new antiracism law and the creation of special counter-racism police units. In the more recent events, Syrians are given permission to stay in Greece for six months in order to give them enough time to apply to Germany’s refugee status, it is also said that Greek officials have prioritized Syrians over the people from Iraq and Afghanistan this has created some ethnic tension between the groups and has consequently resulted in the migrants pretending to be Syrians for the better treatment – enhancing security flaws within Greece. Greek islands can be said to be the most hospitable to the refugees, local organizations, individuals and shop owners have all done different measures to ensure all refugees are provided with food, a sufficient water supply, shelter and blankets. It has also been spotted that shop owners are writing signs in Arabic saying that all refugees are welcome in their shop. Contrasting with Greece’s past there has been very little xenophobic violence in Greece. However, Greece’s debt crisis has bought about debates about the issue of accepting such large amounts of refugees. It has been said from the government that “it cannot handle the pressure from thousands of refugees” the fear of this may eventually lead to xenophobic. Overall, Greece should be looked as an example about good hospitality and its limited xenophobia.

Hungary

Hungary is an EU country and has been noted to done the least in helping the refugees. In June of 2015 the Hungarian government constructed a four metre tall fence in order to seal its southern border with Serbia. This was because the government felt as though they couldn’t handle the influx of the refugees; the EU and NGOs warned Hungary to find other ways. The migrants would then go around Hungary through Serbia however, on September the Hungarian police decided to block the route from Serbia with heavily armed soldiers and helicopters, leaving the refugees helpless. They were in such a desperate state to cross the borders the refugees ending up breaking down the fence twice in one day, the governments respond to this was with tear gas and water cannons – a brutal way to treat unarmed refugees who just escaped a warzone area. By September 2016, Hungary had detained 519 people and even pressed criminal charges against 46 for trespassing. Soon afterwards, Hungary started building another fence with its border on Croatia making the refugees to take a harder and longer route through Slovenia instead.

Germany

Germany has voluntarily accepted between 800,000 – 1 million refugees. This is highest numbers of refugees accepted in the European Union. Germany had promised to “provide them [the refugees] with housing, schooling for their children, and an abundance of jobs.” For the refugees who are accepted, they are given a 3 year permit to stay in Germany, after those years if the situation in their country has improved they will be able to apply for a permanent residential permit. The German teachers are now providing German courses in order to allow the refugees to not be so isolated in their society. They are also planning to add more teachers to the schools who are specialized in teaching children that have had “trauma experience’s” The use of making their public education system more suitable for the refugees has also been researched it will prevent racism at a young age. This all has made Germany a favorable destination ever since Lebanon closed its borders. Although a vast number of Germans are in favour of the refugees there has been a rise in an “anti-immigration party”, the refugees are now starting to face discrimination in the job market as there is the notion of “taking their jobs”, and violent attacks on the streets as a resentment for them is now particularly starting to grow. There has been a report that an estimated 222 houses belonging to refugees have now being burnt down, injuring 104 refugees. Through June to September there was an estimated average of 3 xenophobic attacks a day towards the refugee facilities.

Egypt

Egypt to the refugees may seem like an ideal place to migrate to. However, recent reports have stated otherwise. As soon as refugees arrive in Cairo and other parts of Egypt they experience tremendous living conditions which practically force them into migrating in Europe. It has been noted in various cases that Syrian children are not able to go to school due to frequent bullying of their foreign accents and families are scared to leave their poor quality houses in fear of being attacked. The Egyptian Foundation of Refugee Rights is a non-governmental organization that is trying to ensure that the Syrian feel as welcomed as possible. They believe main reason for the Syrians fear in Egypt is that local citizens do not understand the need for them to migrate to other countries resulting in xenophobic attacks. However, the Egyptian government is desperately trying to change those negative attitudes.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION

1945	The Second World War led to 60 million Europeans being forced to migrate out of their countries. This was the first ever refugee crisis to take place. The UN adopted UNHCR.
1976	Race Relation Act in the UK provided an aim to work towards abolishing discrimination, promote equal opportunity and proper relations between minority groups.
1997	The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) was established by the EU. It stated to record the growing amount of racial discrimination and violence towards immigrants and to research on the most effective ways to eliminate xenophobia
2009	UNHCR make Guidance notes - "Combating Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance through a Strategic Approach." This outlines for UNHCR offices around the world as well as for governmental authorities to tackle racism, xenophobia, and hate.
2011	UNHCR points out that there is "a noticeable rise in xenophobia and other forms of discrimination against asylum seekers and refugees"
2015	The migration crisis began when the sudden rising number of refugees started making their way to Europe.
2015	The constant uprising of xenophobic attacks in many stable countries bought about a higher and urgent need to tackle the issue.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Although this issue may be hard to tackle in the short term there certainly are many actions each nation should cohere to in order to unite and solve this issue:

- Firstly, a legislation should be adopted making it illegal to attack, act racist or discriminate any migrants. Then to adopt of strength already existing rules of law that recognize and protect the rights of migrants.
- Another way is to get experts in the subject to provide advice in ways to deal with racism, discrimination and xenophobia. All nations should also focus on the conduction of regular training of staff to document and respond to any xenophobic violence.
- Developing a mechanism that would monitor and record public incidents of xenophobic violence may also be helpful as it will encourage improved reporting by states and can give more accuracy in tackling the issue where seriously in need.
- The attitude towards migrants can also be solved especially through educational programs as racism can rise from a young age, schools should train all teachers to avoid any form of discrimination and be more diverse in their teaching and hence increase awareness of different ethnic cultures; schools should teach young children to be more open minded against all other races.
- Public campaigns and the media may also be helpful in promoting this issue and limiting all stereotypes.
- There should also be a strong collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as international cooperation should be encouraged.
- Finally, it is also important that all refugee victims of such violence all feel protected by providing medical services to them and encouraging them to report all hare crimes as it may prevent states from adopting efficient policies, this may be achieved by the creation of a national point of contact.

Already adopted UN resolutions:

- 1) World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance

Adoption: 31 August until 8 September 2011

- 2) Global efforts for the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Adoption: 2001, Durban Conference meeting

The Declaration then reaffirmed the outcomes in the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in 2009

- 3) Inadmissibility of certain practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance
Adoption: 18 December 2009

Multimedia Resources

- Combating xenophobic violence

https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/UNHCR_Blueprint.pdf

- Europe and the Refugee Crisis

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/11/16/europes-refugee-crisis/agenda-action>

- Report on International Migration, Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia

<http://www.unesco.org/most/migration/imrdx.pdf>

- Germany's involvement in the issue

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e48e5f6.html>

<http://www.ibtimes.com/whats-life-syrian-refugees-germany-2083610>

<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/12/7/germany-sees-rise-in-crimes-against-refugees.html>

- Greece's involvement in the issue

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/21/chaos-greek-islands-three-tier-refugee-registration-system-syria-lesbos>

- Timeline

http://syrianrefugees.eu/?page_id=163

- Introduction to the topic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvOnXh3NN9w>

- UN resolutions relating to the topic

<http://www.un.org/WCAR/durban.pdf>

<http://www.un.org/en/ga/64/resolutions.shtml>