

<b>Forum:</b>	Social Humanitarian & Cultural Committee
<b>Issue:</b>	International efforts towards the aiding and reunifying refugee families
<b>Student Officer:</b>	Melina Kassari
<b>Position:</b>	Co-Chair

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## PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Melina Kassari and I 'm attending the 11<sup>th</sup> grade in the German School of Athens. It is my great honor to serve as the Co-Chair of the Social Humanitarian and Cultural Committee in the 8<sup>th</sup> Platon School Model United Nations. Throughout my MUN experience I have had the opportunity to participate in 11 conferences including two PS-MUN conferences. I am therefore now in the position to assure you that each and every second you can gain something different from MUN and I urge you to make the most out of every conference.

I am especially looking forward to this year's conference, since the Social Cultural and Humanitarian Committee is one of the most interesting ones, because of the simple fact that it covers a very large spectrum of aspects that our modern society faces. The issues we have to deal with in our committee are of utmost importance, since they are three of the most pressing issues of today's global community. As countries and societies develop, the need to take action and find long-lasting solutions to each and every problem, grows bigger. Especially the topics of our committee directly affect both individuals and communities, thus making the need for solutions more urgent.

This study guide will help you gain insight in every aspect of the problem. My job as your Co-Chair is to aid you in understanding the topic to the ultimate extent and I hope this study guide proves helpful. However, it should not be your only source of information and I strongly urge you to conduct your own more detailed research according to your country's policies.

Should you come up with any questions concerning the topic or need any help with your preparation do not hesitate to contact me at [melina.kassari@gmail.com](mailto:melina.kassari@gmail.com) anytime since I am here to help you not only during the conference but also during your preparation at home. I'm looking forward to meeting you all in the conference and I hope we will have an unforgettable experience with great collaboration and most importantly fruitful debates.

Kind regards,

Melina Kassari

## INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

“Every minute, 24 people around the world are forced to flee their homes. That’s 34,000 people a day who leave everything behind in the hope of finding safety and a better tomorrow.”<sup>1</sup>

People throughout history have been forced to flee their homes, their cities or even their countries altogether. This phenomenon occurs due to numerous reasons such as war, famine, military regimes or even religious beliefs. In recent years, the number of refugees throughout the world has increased significantly. The three main geographical areas, where there is a substantial mass of refugees, upon which the UN has turned its focus, are:

- Middle East: Refugees fleeing mainly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan to Europe
- Central America: The Venezuela/Colombia migrant crisis
- Asia, Myanmar: Rohingya refugee crisis

More specifically, as far as the Middle East crisis is concerned, USA’s invasions in Iraq, as well as the Syrian civil war, have led to massive waves of people seeking better life conditions in European countries. Unfortunately, they have to enter Europe through small and economically developing countries, like Greece and Turkey, which lack the necessary infrastructure and facilities in order to accept an ever-increasing number of refugees. As a result, instead of reaching the countries of their final destination, like Germany and Sweden, refugees are forced to remain stranded in countries like Greece with no visible and viable solution for their further personal advancement and well-being altogether.

Moving on to the opposite side of the Atlantic and more specifically to the Central America crisis, the focus is turned to the Venezuelan-Colombian migrant crisis, which had its origins since the 1970s. However, the diplomatic and humanitarian crisis reached its peak in mid-2015, under the Maduro government, when the Venezuelan borders were closed and thousands of Colombians who were inhabiting in Venezuela were deported, following the shooting of three Venezuelan soldiers. A few years before 2015, tens of thousands, possibly up to 200,000 Colombians had left Venezuela<sup>2</sup>. Repatriation assistance and family reunification efforts of Colombian-Venezuelans had also reached a record number in the first quarter of 2015. At the same time, many of the Colombian refugees that had fled to Venezuela were allowed to move back to Colombia.

Looking now at the major issue of the Rohingya people, they are often described as "the world's most persecuted minority". They are an ethnic group, the majority of whom are Muslim, who have lived for centuries in, the predominantly Buddhist, Myanmar. Currently, there are about 1.1 million Rohingya who live in Myanmar.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> According to the CARE organization: <http://www.care.org/emergencies/global-refugee-crisis>

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venezuela%E2%80%93Colombia\\_migrant\\_crisis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venezuela%E2%80%93Colombia_migrant_crisis)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/rohingya-muslims-170831065142812.html>

Since the late 1970s, discriminatory policies and ongoing violence and persecution forced hundreds of thousands of Rohingya to flee to neighbouring countries. Most have crossed by land into Bangladesh, while others have gone by sea to Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. In 2017, more violence, including, reported rape and murders, led to a massive migration of Rohingya people.

Examining all three cases described above, it can be easily understood that this large number of refugees, seeking a new safe life in their destination countries, cannot be easily integrated into society. Moreover, one must never forget that more than half of refugees are children and what makes the issue even worse is that a percentage of them are travelling unaccompanied. There are also numerous problems which refugees have to face after they arrive to their destination countries. These problems can be categorized as ones that have to do with health and sanitation, financial problems, as well as, physical and psychological ones. More specifically, refugees are often affected by infectious and chronic diseases and have a poor nutrition and sanitation and a lack of adequate medical care and even immunizations. Furthermore, they are those who are most at risk for human trafficking and exploitation, both of which are reasons for separating families. In addition, they also face psychological problems, such as trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder, discrimination, racism, distance and lack of communication with the rest of their families.

In the fortunate but rare case where refugees reach the country of their final destination, this is when the problem of family reunification most often emerges. This process is a very difficult task. Although there are some countries that take action towards reuniting refugee families, if this is projected in a global perspective and in terms of cooperation between countries, the international efforts, in general, towards the aiding and reunifying refugee families are limited.



## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Refugee:

A refugee is someone who has been forced to leave his or her country of origin and nationality owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion and is unable or owing to such fear is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.<sup>4</sup>

### Migrant:

A person who moves from one place to another, especially in order to find work or better living conditions<sup>5</sup>. (Oxford Dictionaries). A migrant must not be confused with a refugee since the migrant leaves his country *voluntarily* for different reasons and has the right to return anytime. However a refugee has fled his country for fear of being persecuted and can only return back when his safety is guaranteed.

### Asylum:

The protection granted by a state to someone who has left their home country as a political refugee.<sup>6</sup> (Oxford dictionaries)

### Asylum seeker:

A person who has left their home country as a political refugee and is seeking asylum in a foreign country.<sup>7</sup> (Oxford Dictionaries)

### Internally displaced people (IDPs):

An internally displaced person is someone who is forced or obliged to flee his or her home or place of habitual residence in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of violence or violations of human rights but who remains within his or her country's borders. They are often referred to as refugees, although they do not fall within the legal definitions of a refugee.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> According to the UN 1951 Refugee Convention and CARE organization:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Refugee#Legal\\_definitions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Refugee#Legal_definitions)

<http://www.care.org/emergencies/global-refugee-crisis>

<sup>5</sup> Oxford Dictionaries: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/migrant>

<sup>6</sup> Oxford Dictionaries: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/asylum>

<sup>7</sup> Oxford Dictionaries: [https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/asylum\\_seeker](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/asylum_seeker)

<sup>8</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internally\\_displaced\\_person](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internally_displaced_person),  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IDPersons/Pages/Issues.aspx>

### Family reunification:

Family reunification is a recognized reason for immigration in many countries because of the presence of one or more family members in a certain country, therefore, enables the rest of the divided family or only specific members of the family to immigrate to that country as well. It is an entry channel enabling those who already reside legally in a member state (referred to as sponsors) to be joined by their family members. Family reunification helps to create socio-cultural stability, facilitating the integration, thus promoting economic and social cohesion.<sup>9</sup>



**Figure:** Sometimes it may take months and even years for families to reunite resulting in family members feeling disengaged from each other.

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION

In dealing with the refugee crisis, it is very important to consider the historical background of the countries and the nations involved, as well as, the history of refugees throughout the ages. The current refugee crisis provides us with an opportunity to examine the broader historical context of the issue.

From a historical perspective, the Syrian refugee crisis is one of the largest population displacements of modern times. Nevertheless, one should keep in mind that Syria offered asylum to 100,000 Palestinians displaced by the formation of the state of Israel in 1948<sup>10</sup>. After the First World War, Syria also hosted around 200,000 Armenian refugees<sup>10</sup> who managed to escape from the threat of extermination in Turkey. Syria had also provided sanctuary to thousands of Muslims who had been forced out of Tsarist Russia during the Caucasus takeover.

Furthermore, paying enough attention to Syria should not keep one from being concerned about other global refugee crises, such as crises in Sudan, Chad, and other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. History should also remind us that Syrian refugees are not the first. We should remember the Vietnamese refugees in the late 1970s following the withdrawal of American troops and the reunification of Vietnam under communist rule. At that time, 600,000 Vietnamese refugees were enabled to make a decent and fulfilling life for themselves in other countries that were prepared to admit them.<sup>10</sup>

Other historic examples worth mentioning are the 20,000 refugees of the Spanish Civil War in 1936-39 who travelled across the Atlantic in order to find sanctuary in

<sup>9</sup> According to the European Commission: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration/family-reunification\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration/family-reunification_en)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.worldfinancialreview.com/?p=4737>

Mexico and hundreds of Baltic refugees who fled their countries in order to escape the communist takeover of their counties after the Second World War.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, not all journeys have a positive outcome. Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany were returned back when they attempted to reach North America. This reminds us that the provision of aid and asylum to refugees is always at the discretion of the governments of the destination countries.

The discussion of refugees' rights emerged after both world wars on discussions about how to address the crises of population displacement that resulted from prolonged warfare. Being recognized as refugees, they could not be returned to their country of origin against their will. They were given travel documents, but this did not give them an absolute right to settle in a country of their choice.

After the Second World War, the newly-founded United Nations again debated the issue. The most significant outcome was the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, according to which the definition of a refugee was adopted. But again, discretion was the main issue: signatory states reserved, and continue to reserve, the right to determine whether the claim of persecution was credible or not. Furthermore, the signatories decided after much debate to limit the scope of the Convention chronologically and geographically: it applied only to refugees in Europe who were affected by events prior to 1951.<sup>11</sup>

Historians have discussed the origins and operation of this 'international refugee regime', with its core emphasis on protection. It's worth remembering "protection" in the light of the refugee crisis and massive influx of refugees and migrants that tried to enter Europe in 2015. Sometimes states pay more attention to the safety and protection of their citizens, thus neglecting the protection of refugees, who need it the most, being in a more vulnerable situation. Such tension regularly featured in twentieth-century refugee crises, and opting to prioritize state protection clearly had the potential to leave vulnerable people stranded. History also points to a default position on the part of governments in what used to be called the 'first world' to draw firm yet problematic distinctions between those who are 'genuine' refugees and those who have no claim to asylum. Finally, we should all bear in mind that when talking about refugees, we are talking about existing human beings, who suffer and not a faceless category.

After examining all aforementioned happenings, one could admit that no major international efforts have been made towards the aiding, neither the reunification of refugee families. Even though there are attempts from international organizations in cooperation with host countries, to develop welcoming procedures, at the end of the day, the procedures followed for the aiding and the reunification of refugee families, come down to each country's legislative framework and policies.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.worldfinancialreview.com/?p=4737>

## COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN THE ISSUE

### Syria

Since 2011 the civil conflict in Syria has been the biggest cause of migration, having displaced almost 12 million Syrians; 5.1 million have fled the country as refugees and 6.3 million are internally displaced, with the majority of refugees however remaining within the Middle East.<sup>12</sup> According to the UNHCR, the large number of refugees existing nowadays depends largely on the situation in Syria because of its political, religious and financial instability, as well as the constant terrorist activity in the

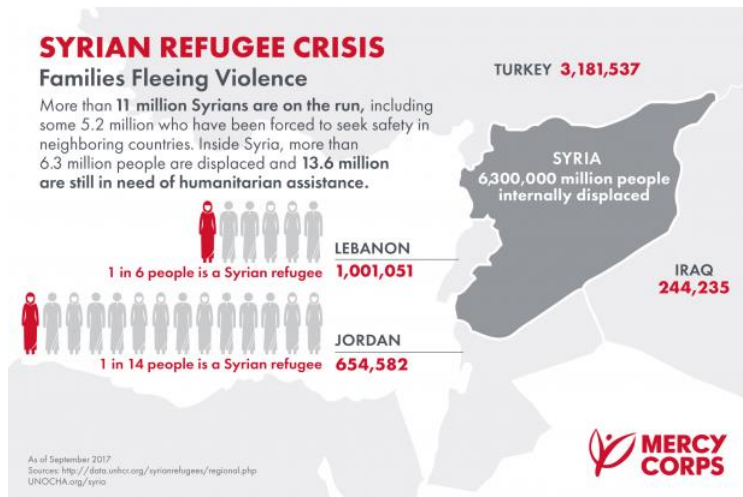


Figure 1:  
<https://www.mercycorps.org/art>

Statistics about the Syrian crisis

region. In 2015, Syrian refugees were the largest group with a number of 4.9 million. Various nations have made pledges to the UNHCR in 2016, so as to resettle approximately 170.000 refugees. In the first half of 2017, despite the fact that many Syrians had been unable to leave the country due to more restrictive border control by neighboring countries, almost 250.000 more refugees have been registered and 1 million asylum seekers in Europe. Currently there are 13.2 million people in Syria in urgent need of humanitarian aid with organizations such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC) providing support in the fields of safety, health and economic wellbeing.

### Iraq

After the U.S. invasion in Iraq in 2003 and the civil war, which continues till today, the number of refugees fleeing Iraq due to war or persecution has increased significantly. There are around 4.4 IDPs and 2 million Iraqi refugees with the majority of them living in neighboring countries, mostly in Lebanon, Egypt but also in Syria even though the situation there resembles the one in Iraq. Concerning Iraqi families, some of them have managed to flee together to Syria. However, due to sudden deaths, split up families or security reasons, many family members have left Iraq on their own. The UNHCR in partnership with other organizations conducts a number of educational, psychological and social support programs in addition to offering food,

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/syrian-refugee-crisis-facts>

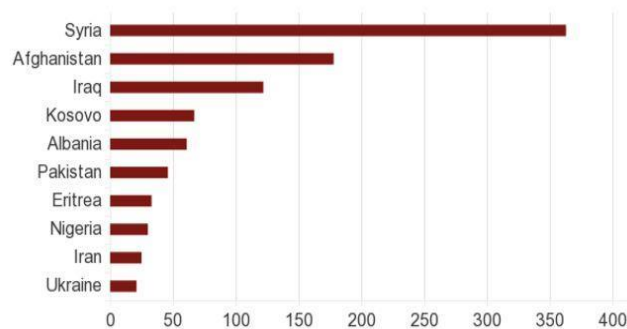
household goods and providing protection and life-saving aid including direct cash assistance to some refugees. Iraq also hosts almost 242.000 Syrian refugees.

### Afghanistan

Although before the Syrian Civil War, Afghanistan was the primary source of refugees, it is now considered the second largest group of refugees after the Syrian refugees. Because of major wars, persecution and internal insecurity, around 2.6 Afghan refugees have been counted with the majority of them fleeing to Iran and Pakistan<sup>13</sup>. In 2003, an agreement between Afghanistan, Pakistan and the UNHCR was signed and efforts were made to repatriate Afghan refugees from Pakistan. In 2015, the UNHCR and many organizations, such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC) have helped around 4 million people providing them with reconstruction and education projects and emergency relief.

**Top 10 origins of people applying for asylum in the EU**

First-time applications in 2015, in thousands



Source: Eurostat

**Figure 2:**

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world>

### Turkey

Turkey, mainly due to its geographical position, is nowadays the largest host country of registered refugees with over 3.4 million refugees from 85 different countries<sup>14</sup> including Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq and Syria with the majority of them being from the latter. Since 2011, Turkey has provided shelter to more than 2 million refugees with their main problem being the difficult integration into local communities. Many organizations in partnership with the Turkish government have provided aid to Syrian refugees as far as the education and the legal assistance is concerned. The European Commission has helped those who are in urgent need of immediate aid, health assistance and access to education. Generally, the UN and the EU are providing Turkey with significant funds to provide refugees with sufficient support. Efforts for family reunification have also been made. Since July 2016, the

<sup>13</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghan\\_refugees#Host\\_countries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghan_refugees#Host_countries)

<sup>14</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/turkey\\_syrian\\_crisis\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/turkey_syrian_crisis_en.pdf),  
<https://www.nrc.no/countries/europe/turkey/>



International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Turkey has helped over 15,000 Syrians to reunite with their families in Germany.<sup>15</sup>

### Greece

Greece is facing an unprecedented influx of refugees nowadays. It is the first EU country of arrival, meaning that it is the country refugees choose to start their journey from with the aim of reaching Northern European countries, such as Germany and Sweden. Children consist 40% of the refugees arriving in Greece, with over 1.500 of them being unaccompanied.<sup>16</sup> Most of the refugees come from Turkey and firstly arrive in islands, where they have to face harsh and unsanitary conditions, because of the lack of resources and facilities to accommodate and provide adequate healthcare. The situation got even worse when many EU countries sealed their borders leading to tens of thousands of people to become stranded in Greece. Taking into account the already difficult economic situation, one can imagine how urgent the need for humanitarian aid is. The EU and member states decided to relocate 160.000 asylum seekers including 106.000 from Greece and Italy, however only 29.000 have been moved<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, 20 different EU countries have offered cash assistance and more than 200.000 relief items, such as tents and hygiene kits. One of the biggest problems they have to deal with, is the slow reunification system. Refugees may have to wait 3 to 6 months before leaving Greece and this is mainly the result of many countries wanting more information concerning applicants in order to approve their applications.

### Germany

Germany is considered the main destination country for refugees, especially the ones escaping wars in the Middle East. This is mainly because of its thriving economy and because of the fact that it does not accept poverty as a reason for seeking asylum. In 2015, Germany was the country with the highest number of asylum applications with more than 476.000 and 38.500 more asylum seekers had been estimated in 2016.<sup>18</sup> However, the situation has improved a lot since the beginning of the refugees' influx and the asylum procedures have become faster. Moreover, in 2017 the number of unaccompanied minors reached 8.107 in contrast to 35.939 in 2016. Germany is in need of assistance as far as the fields of accommodation, unaccompanied minors, integration and healthcare are concerned. The German government, apart from the action it takes to help refugees integrate into society, is thinking of providing them with financial incentives. As far as the family reunification

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.iom.int/news/iom-turkey-helps-over-15000-syrians-apply-family-reunification-germany>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.houghtonstar.com/2016/04/14/migrant-crisis-at-greece-border/>,  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/29/surge-in-migration-to-greece-fuels-misery-in-refugee-camps>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/29/surge-in-migration-to-greece-fuels-misery-in-refugee-camps>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>

process is concerned, it is slow and the government is planning to ban family reunification, mainly because of the lack of adequate accommodation facilities for the thousands that would arrive in Germany in case of family reunification.

### Myanmar

Myanmar is a country that is also facing one of the biggest humanitarian crises nowadays. Due to the civil war and the persecutions, Myanmar people are forced to flee their country to Bangladesh and Thailand, although they also lack the necessary resources. The biggest group is the Rohingya, whose persecutions are now considered as genocide. In November 2017, Myanmar made an agreement with Bangladesh to allow refugees to return to their country, however, with no safe and sustainable return guaranteed. In September 2017, the US provided refugees with food supplies, medical care, sanitation and shelter. Finally, the UNHCR and the government of Thailand are working on family reunification programs to join separated families together in third countries.

### Colombia

Colombia is the country with one of the most forgotten humanitarian crises and with the second largest number of IDPs, more than 7.3 million estimated by the UNHCR<sup>19</sup>. Because of the terrible conditions, the constant fear of killings, the violence and the fact that there are no solutions in sight, Colombian people are forced to flee mainly to Venezuela, US and Ecuador. However, many refugees arriving in Venezuela are unable to seek asylum there due to the ongoing conflict. For the 4.9 million Colombian people that are in dire need of humanitarian aid, the European Commission is sending significant funds for their protection, food, assistance, medical care and sanitation.

### USA

One of the most influential countries in the world, with an immense impact on the current refugee crisis, is the United States of America. The US hosts almost two thirds of the world's refugees and its resettlement program is the largest in the world. President Trump lowered the maximum number of refugees allowed in the US to 50.000 in 2017 and in 2018 the limit is estimated to be around 45.000 refugees,<sup>20</sup> the lowest number in decades. However, all asylum seekers are entitled to public assistance, just like all US citizens including cash and food assistance, medical care and opportunities for jobs and accommodation. President Trump's administration due to security concerns has submitted a plan to pause a program that allows family members join refugees already settled in the United States until they can undergo increased security checks.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/colombia-emerges-decades-war-migration-challenges-mount>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-refugees-exclusive/exclusive-state-department-tells-refugee-agencies-to-downsize-u-s-operations-idUSKBN1EF2S5>

### United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization established in 1950 during the aftermath of World War Two. Its headquarters are in Geneva and it has the obligation to protect the rights and wellbeing of refugees, displaced communities and stateless people and assure humanitarian assistance. The Agency helps to save lives and provide the millions of refugees with a safe and better future, delivering lifesaving assistance like medical care, food and shelter. Moreover, they are responsible for the refugees' safe repatriation, integration into society and resettlement. The UNHCR has won two Nobel Peace Prizes, once in 1954 and again in 1981.

### International Organization for Migration

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is an intergovernmental organization in the field of migration with the obligation to provide advice and services to governments and migrants, including refugees and IDPs. Established in 1951, with headquarters in Geneva, its main aim is to provide humane migration for the benefit of all, and humanitarian assistance to people in need, including resettlement assistance and protection of the human rights. Its four areas of focus are: migration and development, facilitating migration, regulating migration and forced migration.

### CARE

CARE (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere) is a major international non-governmental organization, founded in 1945, dedicated to ending poverty. It is one of the oldest and largest humanitarian organizations delivering relief and producing long term international development projects.

### International Rescue Committee

The International Rescue Committee is a global humanitarian aid organization, which responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises, helping to restore health, safety, education, economic wellbeing and power to regain control of their future to people devastated by conflict and disaster. Founded in 1933, the IRC offers emergency aid and long-term assistance to refugees and those displaced by war, persecution or natural disaster.

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of events
2000	Start of the Civil conflict in Colombia.
2015	End of Civil conflict in Colombia with 5.841.046 internally displaced people (IDP's) <sup>21</sup>
2003	U.S. invasion in Iraq
2015	End of US invasion of Iraq with 4.7 million Iraqis leaving their homes and 2 million the country altogether
2011	Start of the Syrian Civil War that will play a significant role in the refugee's history.
2015	End of Syrian civil war with 12 million displaced people, 4.1 million of them fleeing to other countries. The largest wave of refugees to hit Europe since WW2.
2012	Start of the persecutions in Myanmar
2015	End of suppression in Myanmar with 891.000 refugees because of military regime's persecution of ethnic minorities including the Rohingya.
2013	Start of South Sudanese civil war
2015	South Sudanese civil war with 2.230.000 people displaced. <sup>17</sup>
August 2015	Germany implements open border policy.
September 9, 2015	EU member states agree to take up additional 120.000 refugees after previous decision to accept 32.256 refugees from Greece and Italy.
September 13-14, 2015	5.809 people arrive in Hungary. Germany, Austria, Slovakia introduce border controls. <sup>22</sup>
May 11, 2017	Temporary extension of internal border controls. Austria, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway are allowed to implement border controls at specific parts of their borders for no more than 6 months.
May 27, 2017	G7 summit: call for global response to the refugee crisis and increase in the global assistance to meet the needs of refugees.
November 29, 2017	EU ambassadors negotiate for the qualification of asylum applicants and better living conditions.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/world/historical-migrant-crisis/>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/refugee-crisis-timeline-how-the-crisis-has-grown-10502690.html>

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

In its effort to assist and provide shelter, aid and asylum to refugees, the United Nations have promoted the implementation of numerous measures and resolutions. First of all, the Resolutions [A/RES/50/150](#) and [A/RES/51/73](#) were voted upon on the 9th of February 1996 and 12th of February 1997 by the General Assembly with the title: “Assistance to unaccompanied refugee minors”, calling for the protection of the children’s rights and the coverage of their basic needs. Secondly, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants: [A/RES/71/1](#) was adopted on the 3rd of October 2016 by the General Assembly expressing the commitment of world leaders towards the protection of refugees’ rights. Furthermore, [A/RES/71/354](#) was voted on the 23th of August 2016 with the title: “Assistance to Refugees and displaced persons in Africa”. One year later, on the 22nd of August 2017, [A/RES/72/354](#) was passed with the same title, both coordinated by the UNHCR and focusing on issues relating to refugees. Nevertheless, even with these resolutions in place, and despite the work of UNHCR and other international organizations, both governmental and NGOs, the provision of aid to refugees and the reunification of refugee families, remains a major issue that still has not been completely resolved.

The three main and durable solutions, upon which further development should be anticipated, are:

- **Voluntary repatriation:** As the term signifies, refugees can return to their country of origin, safely and with dignity, while being protected and also avoiding all the risks that made them flee it in the first place.
- **Local integration:** Refugees integrate in the host and destination countries in a legal, economic and social way while being under the protection of their “new” home country.
- **Resettlement:** Mostly referred to as “resettlement to a third state”, meaning that refugees are transferred from their host country to a third state with permanent residence status.

Undoubtedly, it is a need of the refugee to be reunited with their family. Thus, guidelines and procedures could be adopted by states in order to cover such a need, regardless of who the claimant is, i.e. head of the household, elderly member or young and unaccompanied minor. These procedures should be expeditious, taking into account the special needs of women, children and adolescents, refugees with medical needs, and elderly members of the family.

In addition, states could:

- Open up safe routes to sanctuary for refugees, by means of giving visas to them in order to reach safety, as well as, allowing them to reunite with their relatives and family,

- Locate, investigate and prosecute people who exploit refugees and migrants, either by means of trafficking or for the purpose of crossing borders,
- Raise awareness in their citizens in order to combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination, which are the main common problems refugees have to face,
- Invest and develop rescue procedures and operations. This way they help people in distress and facilitate their trips and safer journeys.
- Grant asylum to refugees under a standard framework across countries, which will facilitate the process of family reunification and also increase the number of refugees being given asylum.
- Establish specific funds and raise donations in order to be able to cover refugees' basic human needs, such as shelter, food, water, sanitation and human rights protection.
- Develop infrastructure to welcome refugees as a workforce and introduce children to the local education system.

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## MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES

For facts and figures:

- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/world/historical-migrant-crisis/>
- <http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7>
- <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>
- <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>
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