

**Forum:** General Assembly

**Issue:** Fostering international cooperation for the protection of child refugees

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## Introduction

The refugee crisis is one of the most pressing issues due to its severe impacts on refugees and asylum seekers. As the attention towards refugee issues become ubiquitous around the globe; International organizations and host countries have made attempts to eliminate this pressing issue through actions such as donations, investments, and cooperation with each other. Despite the attempts to ameliorate the issues, there is still an increase in victims of religious, racial, and political conflicts who are forced to flee the country. In 2022, over 89.3 million people worldwide are forced to escape their homes, and the number has grown by almost 37,000 each year. This number includes 36.5 million children below 18 years old. Being densely populated in refugee shelters, refugees are severely affected in various facets.

On the path of seeking asylums, asylum seekers are at risk of many threats. Escaping from homes, refugees inevitably encounter unemployment problems concurrent with financial burdens, lack of food, and scarce access to medicine. Despite the aid refugees receive from organizations and countries, international financial support is insufficient for humanitarian crises. For instance, there are 6.9 million refugees displaced within Syria, and nearly 70 percent of this population are women and children. Refugee women and girls face catastrophic tragedies, gender discrimination, psychosocial traumas, sexual harassment, and risks of human trafficking, however, international financial support is insufficient for humanitarian crises; the considerable number of casualties is not limited to Syria yet seen among all to refugees.

Due to the physical and psychological vulnerabilities of child refugees, they tend to be under more severe threats, such as exploitation, lack of education, and violence. In the era of civil and international war, child refugees are exposed to violent assaults and lack fundamental education; in the pandemic era, the condensed population of refugees makes children more susceptible to the COVID-19 virus. The refugee crisis has multidimensional effects not only on refugees but also on neighbouring countries, especially during the pandemic, making it difficult for domestic governments and institutions to

tackle the issue on their own. Fostering cooperation among nations, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations is a mandatory step to protect child refugees.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Refugee

A refugee is a person who is seeking a shelter fleeing from violence, persecution, or war due to religious, racial, or political conflicts. Refugees are defined and protected by the international law and legalized to seek asylum. Not every asylum seeker will eventually be recognized as a refugee, although every refugee is considered an asylum seeker.

### Asylum

Asylum is a legal protection granted by a state or a foreign embassy for refugees. Asylum seekers mainly consist of refugees who need protection from foreign countries, escaping from violence, persecution, and abuse of human rights.

### Host country

Nations that have responsibility for all the people in their jurisdiction or territory before, during, and after an emergency regardless of immigration status. Once refugees access crucial information, resources, and assistance, they often encounter impediments due to the lack of proficiency in the local language, knowledge, policies, and regulations. Eventually, these will influence their status leading to marginalization and exploitation. Civil protection, emergency management, and disaster risk management are significant implications as works of host countries. Comprehensive, impartial, and inclusive plans such as awareness campaigns, emergency communications, and recovery aids that cover diverse nationalities, languages, and cultures as reflections of the presence of foreign refugees are also needed for the benefits of refugees.

## Background Information

### Causes of refugee crisis

#### *Government Corruption*

Although corruption alone isn't an immediate reason as to why refugees flee their countries, research shows it is often a chief contributor to the violence and instability that forces people to

prolong their physical and psychological safety. Widespread corruption undermines the legitimacy and stability of a government if it fails to satisfy the requirements of its people. Research also shows that government corruptions may lead to armed conflicts or even combats and a diminished domestic or international peace.

### *Economic Crisis*

Originated from a decrease in real income per capita and an increase in the unemployment rate, economic corruption is considered a situation when a nation's economy goes through sudden wane in its total output or actual gross domestic product (GDP). Now that parents or guardians cannot deal with financial burdens, they may seek stable occupations in neighbouring countries, and become asylum seekers. From 2008 to 2009, the mass Zimbabwean refugee population moved to neighbouring countries because of its economic crisis, and most of the refugees were out of the protection of UNHCR.

### *COVID-19*

Originated from Wuhan, China, the first case of severe respiratory disease called COVID-19 was discovered. Due to its dramatic skyrocket of infection rate and fatality around the globe, the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020, had declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. Causing economic and health crisis, the pandemic forced citizens from developing countries to flee their home countries to seek for better health care services and occupations in developed countries.

### *Statistics*

- Based on the estimation of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 36.5 million (41%) of the 89.3 million forcibly displaced people are children below 18 years of age.
- According to the UNHCR, nearly 2 million Syrian refugee children aged 11 or under having little or no memory of home.
- UNICEF estimates that more than 2.5 million children have been internally displaced within Ukraine.
- Across 97 countries, 21,000 of global 30 million refugees have infected for COVID-19 virus

### *Consequences of refugee crisis*

### *Increased Crime Rate*

Convention No. 182 provides legal protection for children from exploitation, including slavery, trafficking, forced labor, armed conflicts, pornographies, and prostitution. However, due to the physical and mental vulnerability of child refugees and the lack of protections on the way to refuge shelters, many crimes are done as violations of international laws.

### *Poor Health*

Densely populated urban camps with inadequate health infrastructure, making social distancing difficult, are regular refuge shelters. The pandemic has put further stress on refugees, and they have limited access to public health services and hygiene items such as face masks, protective gear, clean water, and soap. Moreover, refugees, especially children, are more vulnerable to COVID-19. Refugee populations often lack the funds to obtain adequate treatment if infected with the virus.

### *Lacking Foods*

Under life-threatening situations, child refugees have little or no possessions; they cannot carry large amounts of food to the refuge shelters. Even though they arrive at the refuges, on account of shortages of supplies, they hardly can access enough amounts of food sources for their growth. Not limited to the number of foods for the youths, the quality of nutrition is lacking due to the refugee crisis. A balanced meal includes carbohydrates, fats, and vitamins. However vital these nutritious elements are to the growth of the child refugees, international cooperative organizations are facing difficulties with producing cheap and healthy food sources for the youths.

## **Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

### **Jordan**

Jordan accommodates 670,000 refugees and asylum seekers from Syria registered in UNHCR. UNHCR and Jordan work closely with the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions to inform Syrian refugees and asylum seekers about the benefits available. Previously, Syrian refugees in Jordan mainly focused on certain occupations such as agriculture, construction, and manufacturing. However, some were legally allowed to work in other fields, including as healthcare professionals, to fight against the global pandemic; since July 2021, the Jordan government has permitted Syrian refugees to the sectors were open to non-Jordanians. In other words, Syrian refugees in Jordan could work in services

and sales, crafts, skilled agricultural, forestry, fishery workers, plant and machine workers, and industries; such policies supported Syrian refugees to have minimum economic power for survival. Thanks to the reinforced economy basis, more legal employment opportunities for the adolescents were provided, and better parenting environments for the youth were provided as well.

## Poland

Poland, including citizens and authorities, has welcomed refugees and asylum seekers from Ukraine with generous liberality. Poland provided locales for UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNHCR to build 12 Blue Dot Safe Spaces for immediate psychosocial treatments and information access on refugee rights and services. Such institutions provided crucial protection aids for refugees, including introductions to professional services and legal counselling. The aids were beneficial for the refugees, but it is increasingly challenging for local services as the number of refugees increases. Considering that, UNICEF supports Poland in all degrees to expand refuge shelters to deal with the drastic inflow of new child refugees by providing access to education and local curricula.

## Turkey

As a member of the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol, the Republic of Turkey provided efficient and long-lasting solutions for refugees and asylum seekers who fled their home country due to conflicts outside Europe. Turkey has gone through legislative and institutional ameliorations for more foundations of refugee protection and asylum systems based on international criteria. In April 2013, the Parliament approved the Law of Foreigners and International Protection as the first asylum law of Turkey and forced it on April 11th, 2014. The law became the backbone of the global asylum systems and established the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) as the central institution to manage new policies for all refugee influx to Turkey. Turkey also undertook the Temporary Protection Regulation on October 22nd, 2014, as an establishment of rights and responsibilities along with processes for granting temporary protection in Turkey. As a result, Turkey hosts the most refugees, 3.8 million.

## The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

As the international humanitarian system, the UNHCR recognizes that the protection of the youths must be the top priority in an emergency such as a national crisis, a crucial feature that fluctuates the flow of refugees and asylum seekers. Associating with local and international organizations, NGOs, and domestic authorities, the UNHCR is deeply involved in and committed to ensuring the protection of

children, adolescents, and youths from abuse, neglect, violence, and exploitation, the possible suffering originating from the process of fleeing, by upholding the rights through the provision of psychological support and properly aimed programs to reach the ultimate goal of shielding the child refugees.

## Save the Children

Since founded in 1919, Save the Children has supported millions of refugee children – regardless of ethnicity, religion, and race - by providing lifesaving aids, improving access to health care and education, and protecting children from exploitation. Save the Children covers child refugees from Syria, South Sudan, Burundi, and other countries severely damaged by violence and persecution. They have been working tirelessly since 2012 to reach children affected by the Syrian war. Save the Children provide emergency and lifesaving support combined with early recovery activities to help restore basic services for children and their families.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
March 15th, 2011	Syrian president Bashar al-Assad violently suppressed Arab Spring and declared the Syrian Civil War.
May 30th, 2011	Images of Hamza Ali al-Khatib, a 13-year-old boy from Dar'ā who was tortured to death while in police custody, was revealed to the public, and the images became to symbolize the brutality of the government.
December 12th, 2019	A group of patients in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China begins to experience extraordinary respiratory disease symptoms, fever and shortness of breath.
January 1st, 2020	The World Health Organization International Health Regulation Emergency Committee reconvenes and declares the coronavirus outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.
March 11th, 2020	The WHO declares COVID-19 a pandemic.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 15 December 2015 (**A/RES/70/85**)

- Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, including the right to development, 24 February 2016 (A/HRC/31/NGO/175)
- Security Council, 77th year: 9096th meeting, 19 July 2022 (S/PV.9096)

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

### Humanitarian Aid

Having international partnerships, UNICEF expanded essential lifesaving programs for child refugees from Ukraine. These programs include delivering maternal health kits, baby diapers, institutional and family hygiene kits, disinfectants, and drinking water to public health institutions. UNICEF aids supplies: leisure kits, education kits, and lifesaving kits, through trucking and drinking water with partners to education-requiring children. Also, it aids displaced children with psychological, psychosocial, and physiological treatment in protective institutions by establishing humanitarian donation programs to assist several organizations and facilities.

Cooperating with UNHCR, UNICEF launched the Blue Dot safe spaces, physical protections from assaults during warfare, and centers that share protection and crucial information for youngsters at extreme risk.

### International Sanction

Many nations and organizations not only supported the havens for refugees, but also showed actions to settle refugee-related conflicts. The NATO Allies strongly supported Ukrainian international sovereignty as a member of NATO. The Allies condemned and disallowed the annexation of Crimea as a violation of international law. Moreover, the Allies consider the Russian Invasion of Ukraine a brutal, inhumane, and non-observant assault, condemn it in the strongest terms possible, and state that the invasion of Ukraine gravely undermines global security. As a result of Russia's illegal Crimea annexation, in 2014, NATO Allies decided to cease all support of military and civilians while keeping the communication channels open for political purposes with Russia. After the Russian Invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Allies imposed strict sanctions on Russia to prohibit further war machine supplies. As a result, one of the most striking causes of the child refugee crisis around European nations is slowly on the wane.

## Possible Solutions

## International Exposure to the Refugee Crisis

More exposure of refugee crisis to the public could motivate More Economically Developed Countries' (MEDCs') donations or investments for international organizations which currently provide aid for refugees under the risks of safety or health care services. Despite many institutions, Save the Children, UNHCR, and UNICEF, founded health care and education hubs for child refugees, more investments and donations are required to cover the mass populations of refugees fleeing from diverse conflicting nations. Once citizens from MEDCs are more exposed to or aware of the seriousness of refugee crises, they tend to involve humanitarian donations through international organizations.

Not limited to expecting economic aid from other nations but sharing crucial information with refugees is also anticipated. UNHCR reported that 4.3 million or more stateless people from 96 countries in 2021; that is to say, these people lack information about the process of becoming refugees under the protection of international laws. With the cooperation of international press teams from organizations, they can provide critical information to more people, specifically displaced children during asylum seeking.

## Founding More Organizations

Due to the unstable safety of child refugees, they are under extreme psychological or physiological threats. For instance, violent combats as direct consequences, and sexual harassment as secondary consequences, leave horrifying mental trauma to the children. Because of their immature and vulnerable mental health, it is important to be treated when they are younger. In this sense, more foundations of organizations provide psychological and physiological treatment to the refugees.

## Further Sanction

Innumerable populations of child refugees are under threat before and after the arrival of havens due to endless civil conflicts in Syria and Russian invasions in Ukraine. Not limited to the NATO Allies, other nations should be deeply concerned about the current refugee crises from warfare and show political and economic sanctions to reduce global conflicts as soon as possible. With international sanctions on conflict-provoking nations, the nations would face a burden to continue the warfare. In this vein, international sanctions can directly or indirectly reduce serious combats, which provoke and exacerbate refugee crises.

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## Appendix or Appendices

- I. Further readings on the human rights protection of migrants in vulnerable situations: <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/43381/child-protection>.