

# Special Conference 2 on Promoting Inclusive Societies

Implementing measures to improve the  
integration of refugees into host communities

REFUGEES

WELCOME

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## Introduction

The world is currently witnessing the worst refugee crisis since World War II. This crisis is obviously a major challenge for the countries in which these refugees are fleeing to, as they have to assume the responsibility of integrating these refugees into their community. This integration is a long process in which the refugees need financial support, education, work opportunities and often mental health support since they have most been through traumatic experiences.

Nevertheless, many host countries, especially European ones, have not all reacted positively. The crisis has brought chaos to these countries, and has prompted many debates on whether refugees should be integrated into their community and therefore given the same rights as civilians, if they should accept more, or stop accepting more refugees altogether due to many alleged disadvantages. Furthermore, many believe that some of the latest terrorist attacks that have taken place in Europe have been because of terrorists that take advantage of the refugee crisis and disguise themselves as one to enter the EU, which just adds up to the reasons to not accept any more and be cautious about the ones that are already in the country.

As a consequence, many host countries are becoming more paranoid about these refugees, and based on fear and prejudice, they refuse to integrate these refugees to their communities in order to assure the safety of their civilians. This obviously has negative repercussions on refugees who have fled a war-zone and want to start anew with their life in a country that's supposed to be peaceful, inclusive, and full of opportunities. What they encounter in reality, however, are countries that are afraid of them and refuse to accept and protect them.

This therefore shows it is imperative to work towards becoming a more inclusive society by leaving our prejudices and fears aside and implementing measures to improve the integration of these refugees into their host communities so they can start over with their life and be included.



## Definition of Key Terms

### Refugee

Someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence and whose claim for asylum has been approved. The UN, however, considers an asylum seeker and refugee the same. For example, during the Rwandan genocide in 1994 there were 550 000 Tutsi refugees who were fleeing their country. The Tutsi monarchy was overthrown during the genocide, hence threatening any Tutsi person's life because of the uprising.

### Asylum seeker

Someone who is escaping from conflict and therefore seeking protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention on the Status of Refugees.

### Migrant

Any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from their residence. A migrant is a broad term, but an economic migration, for example, is one who travels across borders or within their State in order to improve their standard of living.

### Migration

The movement of people, either in a group or alone, across international borders or within a State. There are different types of migration. Forced or involuntary migration is when people are forced to migrate by the government or an authority for a reason. Impelled migration is when a population is not forced to migrate but they do so because of a large push factor, like a war.

### Host country

A country to which an immigrant has come. For example, 3000 refugees from Myanmar (the source country) during the 2015 Rohingya Refugee Crisis migrated to the Philippines (the host country).

### Asylum

Protection or shelter granted by a country or embassy to refugees from another country. The type of asylum provided to refugees who are escaping arrest or prosecution are called to be given political asylum.



## Internally displaced person (IDP)

IDPs have not crossed a border to find safety and as opposed to refugees, they are on the run at home and therefore remain under the protection of their government. The situation of an IDP makes them extremely vulnerable, particularly when their nation's government is unstable. At the end of 2014, 38 million people had been internally displaced globally.

## General Overview

There are currently 21.3 million refugees in the world fleeing from conflicts, mostly from the Middle east and sub-Saharan African countries, who are seeking protection and shelter in nearby countries. According to the UNHCR, 53 percent of all the refugees come from Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia. More specifically, there are 4.9 million Syrian refugees, 2.7 million Afghan refugees, and 1.1 million Somali refugees. Refugees are mostly being hosted in the Middle East and North Africa, as these regions are the closest countries where they can flee to, but a large number of refugees are being hosted as well in Europe.

## The origin and history of the issue

The mass movement of people has been evident throughout all the stages of human history. As war has been in existence since the beginning of recorded history, so have refugees who seek safety and asylum in other countries. As not all the conflicts of the entire world can be discussed, the history of the most recent and significant refugee crisis' shall be evaluated.

Due to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, this country has been one of the largest refugee producers in the past few decades. In 2016, the UNHCR reported that 13% of the Afghan population lived outside of their home State and that there were 2.6 million Afghan refugees registered in over 70 countries. A report published by the United Nations claims that 1000 Afghans cross borders as refugees every day. It is difficult, however, to predict the exact numbers as many people flee illegally. Most of these refugees have sought asylum in two neighbouring nations: Iran and Pakistan.

Even countries thousands of kilometers away from where the conflict takes place have received many migrating refugees in the past decade. Since 2000, the United States of America has had over 600 000 refugees settle into their nation. Most of them have come from the former Soviet Union, Vietnam and Somalia. This example shows that every country



should have plans to integrate refugees because due to globalization, it has become possible for people to flee from one continent to another.

The most widely debated and media covered refugee crisis today is the European migrant crisis, where a proportion of the migrants include refugees fleeing from conflict. In 2015 alone, 1 million migrants entered European borders (*Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe Explained in Seven Charts*). Nations in Europe have different approaches to this situation, as some accept these people and provide asylum whilst some do not do so. One of the drivers of this mass migration is the Syrian civil war that began in 2011, as well as the conflict in Afghanistan and Somalia. The Syrian civil war is known to be one of the uprisings categorized under the broader term, the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring is a series of anti-government uprisings, protests and armed rebellions that spread across the Middle East starting from 2011.

## Refugees' challenges to integrate

To begin with, the refugees have to go through long asylum procedures which may be one of the main reasons why it is difficult for them to integrate to the country in all aspects later on. The extended protocol leaves refugees in a social status that is harmful to them, as in during the time they wait for their asylum application to be approved they have no rights, they are not allowed to leave their detention camps which often have poor living conditions, and they may face violence and discrimination from the authorities in the camps. These unhealthy living conditions may also damage their mental health, as they can become insensitive, lose confidence and happiness, they may develop a mental illness, and when the procedure is finally finished their social and working skills might be affected.

Once refugees are given the official refugee status according to the Refugee Convention of 1951 or according to other regional refugee policies such as the European Convention on Human Rights, they are finally granted certain rights. Nevertheless, many countries neglect these rights, most commonly by not granting refugees the right to work and by not providing them with basic needs, or sometimes they are not able to fulfil them. As a consequence, most refugees face many problems that interfere with their integration into the community.

First of all, the traumatic experiences refugees have been through in their country, especially witnessing violence or being a victim of violent acts such as rape, the rough journey they endured to arrive to the host country where they often lose or get separated from family members, and the dehumanizing living conditions they are forced to live in during



the asylum procedure are most likely damaging to their mental health, as it has been stated before. It is common for refugees to therefore develop mental illnesses such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, panic attacks, somatization and adjustment disorder. These mental health issues are not always addressed by the host country, which hinders the refugees' integration to society, or might ultimately lead them to suicide.

Moreover, refugees come from countries which are at war, and when they encounter a country where there is no conflict, where the practices, beliefs and language is different, they may experience a cultural shock. There are no programs for refugees that teach them about the country where they are hosted and its language, therefore refugees have to assume themselves the responsibility of adapting to society and learning the language, which are not easy tasks. To add up to this, there's no doubt that refugees arrive to the host countries with absolutely nothing. They have no belongings and no money, which poses a major problem for them. If they do not adapt to the new community and can therefore not find a job, they might end up marginalizing themselves from society and end up homeless. On the contrary, if they were assisted in their adaptation, both culturally and economically, it would be easier for them to acquire the country's nationality in order to have full rights.

## The current situation

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (the UNHCR) currently estimates there to be 21.3 million refugees worldwide and half are under the age of 18. The 1951 Refugee Convention that defines a refugee, sets the rights of someone seeking asylum and setting responsibilities to countries to grant asylum has been signed by 144 countries, with Denmark being the first to ratify it in 1952.

The countries who currently have the most refugees within their borders are Turkey, Pakistan and Lebanon (see Appendix I). Regarding Europe, migrants continue to swarm in and The Independent suggests that over 60% of them are migrating for economic purposes. Because of this, certain countries in Europe have returned temporary border control (like Macedonia) and some have requested to keep their borders closed for two years. This situation is complex, as it is not necessarily the question of integrating only refugees but choosing whether to accept other kinds of migrants as well.

Currently, the typical means of integration of refugees is setting them into camps. Refugees are often housed in infrastructure which is vulnerable to bad weather such as storms. With IKEA as a partner, the UNHCR Refugee Housing Unit is designing safer and more durable refugee camps which includes installing solar panels and building with sturdier



materials. So far the UNHCR Refugee Housing Unit has installed this innovative housing in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Iraq, Greece and Macedonia. Though this is a good temporary solution, placing refugees into a camp prevents them from integrated into their local community. Countries like Uganda, Mexico and Belize provide local integration opportunities which are more sustainable in the long run if the area is secure and stable.

With every passing year, refugee integration is becoming more crucial. In the future, people will not only be escaping from war but will also be migrating from countries, (particularly coastal regions) suffering from the dangerous consequences of climate change. This makes it important for every State to keep plans for integration at hand and applicable to any refugee crisis.

## Major Parties Involved

### United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The UN's Refugee Agency, the UNHCR is the biggest international organization committed to all of the issues regarding refugees. The UNHCR saves refugees, protects their rights and assures them a better future. In the case of integrating them into their host communities, they ensure this by advocating for their rights, encouraging governments to change policies and restrictions regarding their rights, providing them with shelters, health services, and an education (see Appendix II).

### Turkey

Turkey is the country that hosts the most refugees in the world, with over 2.8 million refugees of which 2.7 million come from Syria. Most refugees have more or less integrated in the country, as 90 per cent of them have settled all across Turkey, predominantly in poor areas and regions close to Syria. The Turkish governments has tried its best to integrate the refugees by granting them unlimited free health care, work authorizations, an access to education and utilities. However, according to the International Crisis Group, there are around 400 000 refugee children that have not joined the educational system, and merely 10 227 Syrian refugees that have obtained work permits as of 24 November 2016.

### Pakistan

In Pakistan, there are over 1.6 million refugees, the vast majority coming from Afghanistan (approximately 1.3 million). There used to be much more refugees because of the Soviet War in Afghanistan, but by 2002 most had been repatriated by the UNHCR. The



integration of these refugees has been one of the most successful, although far from perfect, as Afghan and Pakistanis share strong ethnic and linguistic links which made it easier for the Afghan refugees to adapt to Pakistani's society. Nevertheless, after the 2014 Peshawar school massacre conducted by affiliated members of Pakistan's Tehrik-i-Taliban, the Pakistani government began deporting many refugees, and they restricted the rights of those who stayed, especially denying accommodation and employment. As Pakistan is not a party of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, there are no legal repercussions on the government for these actions. Furthermore, in December 2015, the government announced that all Afghan refugees had six months to leave or else they would be forced out. This deadline was changed twice, the last one fixed for 31 March 2017.

## Lebanon

In this country, there are over 1 million refugees, most of them from Syria. Lebanon is not a member of the 1951 Refugee Convention either, therefore Syrian refugees in this country are not granted the right to work and they have no legal status. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult for Syrian to avoid being deported as they have to renew very often their residency to stay (every 6 months), but they face many obligations in order to do this which they cannot meet. As for Palestinian refugees, they have relatively more freedoms than Syrian refugees, but they remain socially, economically and politically marginalized due to legal restrictions, especially in the employment sector.

## European Union (EU)

The EU is one of the most affected regions regarding the refugee crisis. As a result, it had to assume the responsibility of integrating refugees into its communities, but the response of its members has been chaotic and divided. For instance, Germany has accepted the most asylum requests with an acceptance rate of 68 percent, and therefore it's the country in the EU that has the most refugees with over 478 600. On the other hand, countries like Italy and the UK have accepted only approximately 33 percent of asylum applications, and France may be the one who accepted the least amount of asylum requests with less than 30 percent in 2016. Furthermore, the EU has focused more in strengthening its borders and therefore avoiding the entrance of more refugees, than improving the poor conditions in which the refugees inside the EU are detained and integrating them. Nevertheless, the EU has made some efforts to improve the integration of refugees with the Asylum Procedures Directive (2013/32/EU) which came into effect in July 2015, and with the help of some EU agencies like the European Asylum Support Office.



## Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of Event
2015	1 million migrants entered Europe
December 2010	The Arab Spring officially began
1991	The Somali civil war began
December 1979	The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan
1964	The Colombian armed conflict took shape and it is still ongoing. This conflict has generated over 360 000 refugees and Colombia is the nation with the most IDPs.
1951	The key legal document of the UNHCR, the Refugee Convention, is signed
December 1950	The UNHCR is founded
WWII	WWII saw one of the world's largest refugee crises. Europe alone created 60 million refugees.

## UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 19 December 2016 **(A/RES/71/173)**
- Report of the Secretary-General, 23 August 2016 **(A/71/354)**
- Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 17 December 2015 **(A/RES/70/134)**



- Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 31 January 1967
- Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention), 28 July 1951
- The creation of the UNHCR, 14 December 1950

## Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The creation of the UNHCR in 1950 was the first step to address refugee problems because of the massive refugee influx after the Second World War, and has been the most important organization helping refugees since. Thanks to the UNHCR, over 50 million refugees have been able to begin a new chapter in their lives. Nonetheless, the UNHCR has not developed much its protocol of integrating refugees into their host communities, as the ultimate and most favourable way a refugee can integrate into their host country which is by acquiring the citizenship, has only been granted to 1.1 million refugees in the past decade.

Furthermore, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol (see Appendix III) have been other major steps to tackle refugee issues by granting refugees various rights that must be respected by signatory parties, but two of the countries that currently have the most refugees (Pakistan and Lebanon) are not parties, meaning that the refugees' rights in those countries cannot be addressed. Concerning UN resolutions, there have been a lot of resolutions regarding refugees, especially addressing their pre-flight. There have, however, not been resolutions focused on the integration of refugees once they are in their host countries. The two most recent resolutions addressing refugees in Africa (A/RES/71/173 and A/RES/70/134) express various ways on how to assist them on their pre-flight, however, they only present a few clauses regarding their integration once in their host country. Moreover, the most recent report of the Secretary-General on assisting refugees in Africa (A/71/354) presents only a small section about local integration which analyzes a few cases of integration of refugees in Africa, which shows the lack of the UN and its members to address integration.

Finally, some regions affected by the refugee crisis like the EU have adopted regional procedures, with the example of the Asylum Procedures Directive, to handle the refugees' integration in a better manner. Nevertheless, the various management strategies of EU countries with this situation is still disorganized and many strategies violate the human rights of the refugees.



## Possible Solutions

Regarding integrating refugees into host communities, there are many options and solutions which countries can implement. Firstly, it is highly important that these refugees enter the workforce once they have been integrated in order to keep the impacts of frictional unemployment to a minimum. Once refugees have been sent to a country, governments should divide and place them into regions of the State which match the refugee's skills and qualifications. A refugee with work experience with manual labour in agriculture, for example, should be settled into an area where there is a high demand for employees who work in this field. Countries should remind employers that in order for a refugee to be successfully employed, their former work experience should be considered.

Secondly, the refugees' mental and physical health issues should be dealt with immediately once asylum has been provided. This is because 50-60% of refugees suffer from post-traumatic disorder and 6-40% have depression (*Mental Health*). The refugees should therefore be tested to see whether they have any of the previously mentioned issues and if that is the case, they should be treated accordingly. If this is not prioritised, then the refugee will be incapable of integrating into their host country as they are less able to learn the language and find a job.

Once the health of the refugees has been dealt with, they should be educated. Language in particular is essential to see effective integration into host communities, as language allows them to communicate with the population. It also offers psychological support as it enables the refugee to talk about their experience to teachers or volunteers, helping them overcome their past traumas. Refugees who speak the local tongue are more likely to be accepted by the people living within the host country, allowing for a less segregated society.



## Appendices

### Appendix I



*The World's Top 10 Refugee Host Countries (in 2015).* Digital image. Amnesty International. N.p., 12 Oct. 2015. Web. 30 May 2017.

<<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/10/global-refugee-crisis-by-the-numbers/>>.

### Appendix II

Refugees' integration on UNHCR's official website: <http://www.unhcr.org/local-integration-49c3646c101.html>

### Appendix III

Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees:  
<http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>

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