

Special Conference 1

Enhancing international responses to ongoing humanitarian crises

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THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF THE HAGUE

Alexandra Imes

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Student Officer:	Alexandra Imes
Position:	President of the Special Conference

Introduction

The international community is faced with the growing concern of an increasingly complex landscape of humanitarian crisis. These crises demand enhanced and effective solutions. Millions of people suffer from the consequences of conflict, extreme climate situations, disease outbreaks, global economic issues, and mass displacement. 2024 saw nearly 300 million people (1 in 27 individuals) expected to require humanitarian assistance The sheer scale of displacement demonstrates the dire need for the enhancement of international response to these crises. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 122 million children, women, and men are reported displaced globally due to crises. This number represents 1.5% of humanity forced from their homes by violence, conflict, or persecution.

Humanitarian emergencies are categorized into triggers such as natural disasters, man- made conflicts, or a combination of complex factors. These emergencies pose critical threats to the health, safety, and general wellbeing of large populations. These challenges are often compounded by external factors such as under-development, poverty, and climate change. A region's ability to respond to a crisis effectively is often contingent on their socioeconomic status. International aid organizations such as the Red Cross and UN agencies, provide essential support to struggling populations. However, these organizations are often hindered by the increasing demand, political and military constraints, along with significant security risks for humanitarian workers. The struggle humanitarian aid is presented with demonstrates the necessity of a solution to contain systematic political and structural change in order to enhance the response to humanitarian crises.

Definition of Key Terms

Humanitarian Crisis

A Humanitarian emergency/crisis is defined as “an event/series of events that represents a critical threat to the safety, health, and security of a community or large group,” (The Humanitarian Coalition) usually spanning over a large area. These crises arise when events impact vulnerable populations that are unable to cope with the negative consequences independently.

Natural Disasters

Natural disasters include events such as earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, avalanches, drought, storms, cyclones, and epidemics or plagues. They can cause widespread damage and cause a humanitarian crisis.

Complex Emergencies

Complex emergencies refer to a combination of natural and man-made elements, these emergencies involve multiple factors that eventually lead to a crisis. Examples of complex emergencies include food insecurity, armed conflicts, and displaced populations. These can lead to direct violence, loss of life, widespread displacement, and damage to economies.

Humanitarian Intervention

Humanitarian intervention refers to the use of military forces to help deliver humanitarian aid, protect humanitarian aid operations, protect and defend the victims of violence, and in some instances, defeat the perpetrators of violence. The priority in any humanitarian response is to “save lives and reduce suffering through meeting humanitarian needs.” (The Humanitarian Coalition)

Displacement

Displacement occurs when people are forced to leave their homes. This included “multiple displacement,” where individuals are repeatedly forced to flee. Current severe cases of displacement are seen in Gaza, Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Myanmar. Displacement has economic and security implications for the region's surrounding conflict areas.

Refugees

Individuals who have fled their country of origin to escape violence, warfare, and a lack of food, medicine, and essential services.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

IDPs are individuals who have been forced to flee their homes, yet remain within their countries borders.

Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

R2P is a principle of international law that outlines the responsibility of states to protect innocent lives and the duties inherent in sovereignty. It emphasizes that states have a duty to safeguard their own civilians, and if they fail to uphold this duty, other governments, with UN authorization, have the right to act using military force as a last resort.

General Overview

Many regions are currently experiencing humanitarian crises. Each of these crises is characterized by their unique challenges, they demand urgent and individual responses. In 2025, the humanitarian aid need is enormous, with an estimated 305 million people worldwide requiring urgent assistance. Despite this need, UN funding can only cover roughly 60% of those in need, leaving over 100 million people without support.

Key Contemporary Humanitarian Crises Introduction

Gaza faces a terrible crisis, with over two million residents experiencing shortages of food, water, and healthcare due to a prolonged blockade and military interventions. **Somalia** is experiencing one of the world's worst hunger crises as a result of a four decades long drought. Afghanistan is battling its worst drought in over 30 years. **The Democratic republic of Congo (DRC)** is in the middle of an ongoing political conflict with 25 million affected and seven million displaced. **Yemen** faces an ongoing conflict after nine years of violent confrontation, with over 18 million people requiring assistance. **Syria** has had over a decade of conflict, with half its population being forced from their homes. In **South Suda**n, economic decline, civil war, and floods have caused mass hunger. **Burkina Faso** is experiencing massive displacement. **Haiti's** residents are subjected to armed violence that has cut off communities from essential service. **Myanmar** is experiencing a complex civil war that

escalated after a 2021 military coup. The full scale war in **Ukraine** had internally displaced 3.7 million people and sent 6.9 fleeing to neighboring countries. With over 61 state based armed conflicts in 2024, it is difficult to consolidate conflicts into a “key” list. These were selected for their high death toll, intensity, or amount of time in conflict. This does not disregard conflicts not included within this list, as many other humanitarian crises continue to demand urgent attention.

Historical Context

The modern humanitarian movement began in the mid-19th century, it was centered around religious and charitable responses to famine and disaster. This humanitarian era saw the emergence of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the adoption of the first Geneva Convention (1864), which established legal norms protecting the wounded in war. Over the years, humanitarianism evolved through initiatives such as Save the Children (1919), the founding of UN bodies, and refugee mandates post World War II, and the expansion of NGOs and international frameworks during the post Cold War period, shaping the humanitarian environment recognized today.

Aims of Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian assistance is fundamentally aimed at saving lives and alleviating suffering by addressing fundamental needs such as shelter, food, water, and healthcare. International aid organizations such as the International committee of the Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), provide support and relief efforts, working to address fundamental needs for affected populations. It is important to note that some humanitarian aid organizations such as MSF will not accept government funding or UN collaboration in order to remain impartial and independent. This can create tension with military forces, which typically take sides in conflicts. Humanitarian assistance is deployed in various crises, including those caused by conflicts, economic shocks, mass displacements, and disease outbreaks.Dispite the efforts of international aid organizations the needs for humanitarian aid in many regions are too vast to be managed by these agencies alone, especially without changes that resolve ongoing conflicts. Humanitarian efforts should be accompanied by political support in order t o move from crisis management to conflict resolution in all these areas experiencing extreme conditions.

Major Parties Involved

United States (US)

Historically the US is the largest humanitarian donor, current policy shifts strongly influence global trade as the US is a globally recognized as a global power. US aid historically delivered large scale aid, however policy changes including defunding/withdrawing from some organizations, such as the World Health Organization. This funding reduction created a high demand for need and affected the ability for the US to respond.

Somalia

Somalia faces one of the UN's most Urgent Crises, with approximately 6.9 million people needing aid in 2025 due to factors such as conflict, drought, and floods. As a UN member, Somalia works with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), and World Health Organization (WHO), on relief initiatives, however access has been hindered due to widespread insecurity.

Syria

After over a decade of war, Syria has approximately 16.7 million in need. The UN leads cross-border and in-country aid, but security council vetoes and government restriction limit the ability for Syria to receive aid.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The Democratic Republic of Congo's overlapping conflicts have left approximately 25 million people in need. The UN supports and coordinates the world's largest aid operation in the DRC through The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) and humanitarian agencies. However, operations have been restricted by armed violence.

Ukraine

Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine displaced over 10 million people. The UN delivers aid and protection in both government and Russian controlled areas, but access is difficult to provide due to frequent denial in occupied zones.

Russia

Russia is a major power and influence in the humanitarian landscape, notably in Ukraine where they are involved in a war. In addition, their involvement in Syria showcases their position as an influential and involved global power. Russia has made multiple UN Security Council vetoes on crisis related resolutions and protection mandates.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees plays a significant role on internal displacement and return solutions in some contexts. UNHCR tracks global displacement and leads protection, shelter, and registration services. Operations are foundational for establishing protection for refugees and aiding hosting states.

International Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Organizations such as The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Doctors Without Borders (MSF), Save the Children, Etc, are on the ground delivering essential relief and support, applying pressure on governments for action, and often prioritizing impartiality through a lack of acceptance of government funds.

African Union (AU)

The African Union implements regional peace and security actors, deploys and authorizes missions in African conflicts such as the ones in Somalia, Sudan, and Sahel. AU has created joint United Nations initiatives for some projects and missions. The AU influences space for aid delivery, financing protection corridors, stabilization, and space for aid delivery.

European Union (EU)

The European Union (EU) , also known as the European Commission, is an Inter-Governmental-Organization that is among the world's top humanitarian donors, that also shapes global policy through advocacy, access, and protection. In 2025 the EU's humanitarian budget was roughly €1.9 billion, and it was distributed across Africa, Ukraine, The Middle East and North Africa (MENA), etc. This humanitarian work is done through the EU's European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), whose funding protects and saves lives in areas facing humanitarian crises.

Timeline of Key Events

Conflicts are more nuanced and complex than the timeline represents, this is a baseline for creating solutions to supporting victims of conflicts through humanitarian aid. Be aware that with over 61 state based armed conflicts in 2024, it is difficult to consolidate conflicts into a "key" list. These were selected for their high death toll, intensity, or amount of time in conflict. This does not disregard conflicts not included within this list. All conflicts listed have continued to the present day as of this report's writing.

Date	Description of event
2007	Israeli blockade severely limits access to essential necessities in Gaza.
2011	Since 2011, Syria has experienced a prolonged conflict that has caused mass displacement.
2015	Ongoing since roughly 2015, Yemen has experienced brutal conflict that has led to mass displacement and severe food insecurity.
August 2017	Violence broke out in Myanmar's Rakhine State, forcing nearly one million Rohingya to flee their homes and seek refuge in Bangladesh.
February 2022	Full scale war begins in Ukraine due to Russia's invasion.
2023	Somalia experiences a significant exacerbation of conflict, droughts, floods, and insecurity.
April 2023	Sudan experienced an eruption of fighting between Sudanese armed forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), currently South Sudan is the largest refugee crisis in Africa.
February 2024	Significant escalation of a long-standing conflict and renewed fighting between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and rebel group M23.
Summer of 2024	Increased conflict in Burkina Faso, mass displacement and food security.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- United Nations Security Council Resolution 1744, 20 February 2007 (S/RES/1744) — Authorized the African Union (AU) mission in Somalia in order to take all measures, as appropriate, to carry out support for dialogue.
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 1863, 16 January 2009 (S/RES/1863) — expressed intent to form UN peacekeeping, support The African Mission in Somalia with planning and funding.
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 2773, 21 February 2025 (S/RES/2773) — condemned M23 rebel activity, and called on Rwanda to cease support in the DRC, as well as urging negotiations.
- Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) — adopted by General Assembly 2 April 2013 (A/RES/55/25), entered into force 24 December 2014, which regulates conventional arms trade to reduce illegal flows.
- Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine — UN norm outlining the duty to prevent mass atrocity crimes through peaceful means.
- Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, approximately 6 resolutions have been drafted, with 4 being vetoed. The resolutions contained initiatives such as fostering humanitarian corridors, measures on chemical weapons, cross-border aid, etc.
- Important to note- In the last decade, 8 out of 12 drafted resolutions on Palestine were vetoed. Often from the UN Security council, they aimed to tackle the protection of civilians and increase humanitarian access in Gaza.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

A combination of UN resolutions, international aid missions, and multilateral peace initiatives have been used in the past to address humanitarian crises in conflict-affected nations like Palestine, Somalia, Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen, South Sudan, Myanmar, Burkina Faso, and Ukraine. AMISOM, which was approved by UN Resolution 1744, assisted in lessening Al-Shabaab's influence in Somalia; however, instability persists because of the government's limited capabilities. Repeated vetoes by the UN Security Council, particularly by permanent members with

vested interests, have frequently caused efforts in Syria and Palestine to fail. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) has pursued peacekeeping, and has had some success in the DRC, but violence still exists because of long-standing militia activity. Despite UN efforts and resolutions, state obstruction and ongoing violence have significantly impeded humanitarian access in Yemen and Myanmar. Large-scale foreign assistance in Ukraine has been quickly mobilized, but ceasefire attempts have failed time and time again. The 2018 peace deal brought some improvements to South Sudan, but its implementation is still precarious. All things considered, success has frequently hinged on ongoing political will, coordination, and unfettered humanitarian access—elements that are frequently absent in these environments.

Possible Solutions

If a delegate's aim is to effectively address humanitarian crises in conflict- affected areas, the international community must shift to a proactive and management approach rather than a reactive and potentially harmful response. Offer economic, infrastructure, or debt relief incentives to warring parties in exchange for monitored humanitarian ceasefires. A way to begin the transformation of humanitarian responses globally is to begin optimizing current humanitarian aid organization responses through **the prioritization of the training of humanitarian aid units composed only of professionals from the same or neighboring countries**. This solution increases cultural relevance and reduces discomfort for those experiencing humanitarian aid. It is likely this solution will need to combine international humanitarian aid for it to be viable. Looking outward at more political and hard power solutions, it may be necessary to **create an initiative that blocks proposed sanctions when they block fundamental resources such as food, medicine, or healthcare.** This is in order to prevent crises like those seen in Yemen, where sanctions worsened famine. Sanctions may be used, but it is recommended that “smart sanctions” become the norm, targeting only military suppliers or assets of the perpetrators. In the growing globalization of the world, Artificial Intelligence is becoming an increasingly relevant tool. Using artificial intelligence prediction tools, pre-position aid and supplies in at- risk zones, governments and government bodies can acclimatize to the future of AI, and be provided with quick and reliable insight on crises globally. Areas experiencing violence often have refugees, displaced people, healthcare professionals, and citizens that require intense mental healthcare in order to be effectively treated. Delegates can **establish a UN backed emergency mental healthcare organization in disaster areas,** particularly for children. Through the lens of The Feminist

Peace theory, which states that women are necessary in peacebuilding, with the recognition that violence is not just the absence of war, but the creation of new political and social structures. In the event of launching regionally led peace conferences, it would be beneficial to include not only governments and armed actors, **but women, youth, displaced persons, and communities impacted by the conflict.**

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