



GA2: Social and Humanitarian Committee

Student Officer: Asya Tanyılmaz

Issue: The situation of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to bilateral disputes

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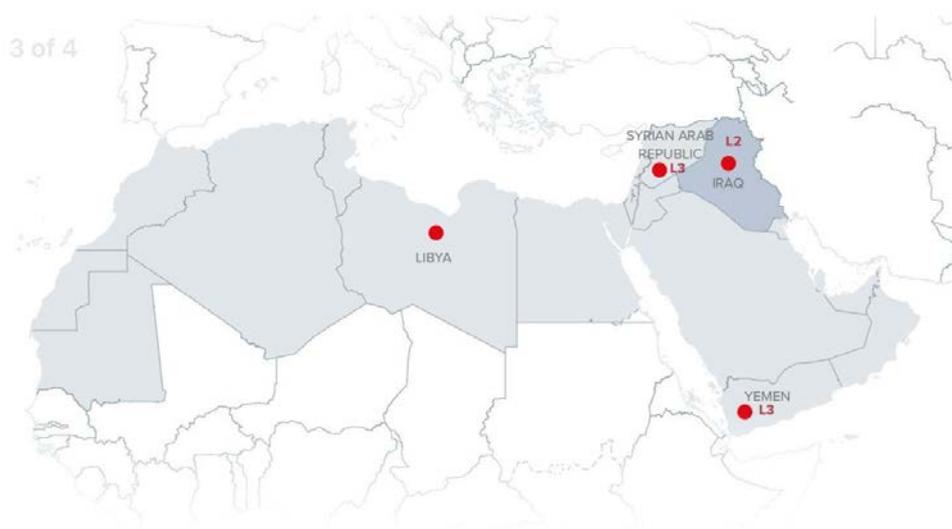
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I. Introduction

“It was an experience like hell. We were calling for help, nobody answered.” says Emmanuelle, a Nigerian asylum-seeker. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for the Refugees (UNHCR), one in every 88 people on earth has been forced to flee their home (UNHCR, 2021). Both refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP) are people who have been forced to leave their homes. While refugees had to flee outside of their country and cross international borders, IDPs had to relocate within the borders of their country. The number of IDPs is estimated to be significantly higher than the number of refugees. The presence of refugees and IDPs often leads to assumptions about the spread and intensity of armed conflict in the region. Even though international humanitarian and human rights law protects civilian refugees and IDPs, they are being subjected to a number of human rights violations all around the world. They are forced to be economically, socially, mentally, and politically vulnerable. One of the main aims of peace processes is to facilitate their return home. It must be kept in mind that the refugee and IDP crisis impacts not only the refugees and IDPs directly but also the communities that they leave behind, as well as the host communities.



Picture 1: The map of the situation of refugees and IDPs in MENA region



The situation of refugees and internally displaced persons is significant across the world. However, it is particularly significant in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) (see picture 1 above). According to UNHCR, 69% of those displaced across borders come from just five countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Myanmar. There are many issues that need immediate solutions. These include lack of adequate access to health care, shelter, food, employment, electricity, and clean water and sanitation, as well as the loss of their communities and homes (Crawford and et al., 2021). For instance, IDPs frequently dwell in bombed-out houses with no water, electricity, sewage, or garbage disposal. Health systems were already fragile and medical resources were already scarce in conflict-affected areas when COVID-19 started. Preventive measures in locations where many refugees lived in densely populated camps or poorer urban areas, were incredibly hard to implement. Funding shortages due to the COVID-19 pandemic became another obstacle in the way.

The UNHCR and The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) are the main bodies charged with providing direct assistance to refugees. In this chair report, you will find a detailed explanation of the situation of refugees and IDPs due to bilateral disputes, with a special focus on the MENA region.

II. Involved Countries and Organizations

The UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)

Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was established in 1949. Since then, it has provided education, health care, social services, and emergency assistance to four generations of Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. In 2003, there were over 4 million Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's care. However, UNRWA's responsibility was limited to providing services and administering its installations. The Agency did not and does not own, administer or police the camps, as this is the responsibility of the host authorities. As UNRWA continues to contribute to the welfare of Palestinian refugees, UNHCR's mandate was subsequently expanded to include all other refugees worldwide as the number of refugees increased.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a sub-body of the United Nations, which protects refugees worldwide and facilitates their return home or resettlement. UNHCR is responsible for tracking the number of people forced to flee and they use data and statistics to inform and optimize their work, as well as the work of their partners to better protect, assist and provide solutions. The aspects UNHCR works on are much more than these. For example, UNHCR has developed a global network of suppliers, specialist agencies and partners. Projects can include sending emergency crews to the scene of



a crisis, providing food, water, shelter, and medical supplies as needed, and setting up airlifts for a large refugee exodus or small boats for a smaller escaping population. Also, UNHCR assists refugees by encouraging their economic integration, defending their right to employment, and assisting their enrollment in social protection programs run by the government. They assist refugees in gaining employment in their host communities, enabling them to take advantage of economic opportunities. These programmes are expected to enhance the efforts to promote peaceful coexistence and achieve tangible results for both displaced populations and host communities.

UNHCR is being funded by voluntary contributions, with 85 per cent from governments and the European Union, and is one of the most important organizations involved.

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Within the UN system, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is in charge of policy development and humanitarian coordination, as well as "ensuring that all humanitarian issues, including those that fall between gaps in existing agency mandates, such as protection and assistance for internally displaced persons, are addressed." In addition, OCHA campaigns for humanitarian issues in the UN Security Council and coordinates humanitarian emergency responses.

Syrian Arab Republic (Syria)

The Syrian Crisis entered its tenth year and remains the world's largest displacement crisis and one of the worst humanitarian crises. More than 13 million people have either fled the country or been internally displaced. Internal humanitarian needs in Syria are increasing. More than 6.9 million people remain internally displaced, and 14.6 million people require humanitarian and other sorts of assistance. Turkey hosts the world's biggest refugee population, including over 3.7 million Syrians, while Lebanon and Jordan have the highest number of refugees per capita globally. According to the UN, at least 350,209 civilians and combatants were killed between March 2011 and March 2021 due to the war, although it has warned that this figure is an "undercount of the actual number." Inflation, food insecurity, water scarcity and armed conflicts continue to challenge the situation in Syria.

Iraq

The lack of stability in Iraq, both politically and conflict-wise, resulted in the country facing political and security challenges. The Iraqi Civil War started in 2003 and ended in 2011. A variety of Iraqi and international forces were armed against Islamic State (ISIS). Iraq once had among the region's best health care systems, however, according to the Iraqi Medical Association, approximately half of Iraq's registered



doctors fled the country in the years immediately following the invasion. The current patient-doctor ratio puts Iraq significantly behind neighboring countries (Berman et al., 2021).

The conflict caused millions of families to flee their country. Its long-term effects are still felt in the region. The economic crisis in Iraq was worsened by the health and socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19. In 2020, there was a recorded number of 1.2 million IDPs in Iraq (UNICEF, May 2022).

Yemen

The crisis in Yemen has been going on for eight years and is still the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Horrific human rights violations continue to take place. Two-thirds of the 40 million people living in Yemen are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance (OCHA, Apr 2022). The war in Yemen is between the internationally recognized government, which is backed by a Saudi-led military coalition, and the Ansar Allah armed movement, also known as Houthis. Nearly six million Yemenis have been forced to flee their homes since the beginning of the crisis, including 4.3 million IDPs inside Yemen (UNHCR, Jul 2022).

UN-backed peace negotiations have been slow and made limited progress. The 2018 Stockholm Agreement was a step forward, but there hasn't been great success in implementing the accord's provisions. The UN Security Council's Resolution 2216¹ was another peace attempt that was backed by the UN.

Displaced people in Yemen are facing increasingly harsh conditions, including the lack of water, healthcare and sanitation services, the risk of widespread famine, violence, collapsing services, and protracted displacement. UNHCR promises to focus on delivering emergency humanitarian aid to IDPs, IDP returnees and affected host communities while continuing to improve the protection space for refugees and asylum-seekers.

Libya

For months, government forces backed by the UN have fought for control of Libya against rebel commander Khalifa Haftar. United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) states that: "The United Nations in Libya is working collaboratively to engage with both in-country national partners and international counterparts to support real transformative progress aiming at: inclusive politics and a participatory post-conflict transitional process which engages all parts of Libyan society including women, youth and marginalized groups; good governance anchored in security and the Rule of Law; a diversified economy and inclusive human development process; the delivery of lifesaving humanitarian assistance in response to the current crisis." After two civil wars, finally on 23 October 2020, the parties of the conflict reached a

¹ S/RES/2216 (2015) [https://www.undocs.org/S/RES/2216%20\(2015\)](https://www.undocs.org/S/RES/2216%20(2015)).



“permanent ceasefire agreement in all areas of Libya”. The United Nations is still working on strengthening its engagement in the country.

The efforts to end conflict and dispute in Libya are simply not enough for the people. It is likely that people in need of protection will continue to face difficulties in accessing humanitarian assistance. The number of IDPs continues to rise and further internal displacement is expected. In Libya, UNHCR continues evacuations to Niger and Rwanda for the most vulnerable.

III. Focused Overview of the Issue

People who have been displaced, whether within their own country's boundaries or internationally, frequently have to leave behind everything but a handful of their worldly possessions. In most cases, their search for safety takes them long kilometers, frequently on foot. Flight is difficult because families may lose touch with one another, sick and elderly relatives may need to be left behind, and refugees in flight may be subject to violent attack and exploitation. The trauma of being uprooted from one's home and isolated from family members adds to the horrific experiences that many people have before and during their flight. Lack of language skills and unfamiliarity with new surroundings, combined with dread and concern about happenings back home, add to the difficulties. IDPs, refugees and asylum-seekers, particularly in urban areas are the most vulnerable and in need of humanitarian assistance. A large proportion of government-funded humanitarian aid is composed of contributions to UNHCR and other UN or regional bodies (e.g. the European Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO)).

1. What are the reasons behind refugees fleeing their countries?

According to UNHCR, a refugee is someone who fears persecution because of their ethnicity, religion, nationality, political beliefs or involvement in a specific social group. Most likely, they are unable or afraid to return home. The major causes of refugees fleeing their homes are war and ethnic, tribal, and religious violence. Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Myanmar are the top five countries from which refugees originate.

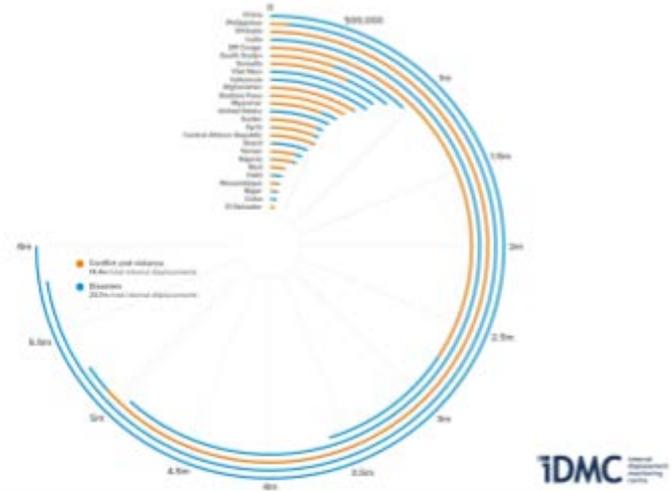
The Syrian Civil War, economic collapse in Venezuela, political uncertainty and conflict in Afghanistan, civil war leading to poverty and hunger in South Sudan, and the Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar have led to millions of people being displaced. For example, the Rohingya Crisis has resulted in the Myanmar government refusing to recognize Rohingya Muslims (a minority group) as citizens. Over 700,000 people have fled to Bangladesh to avoid persecution, and are currently staying in the world's largest refugee camp: Cox's Bazar. The United Nations International Court of Justice has urged for an end to the brutality



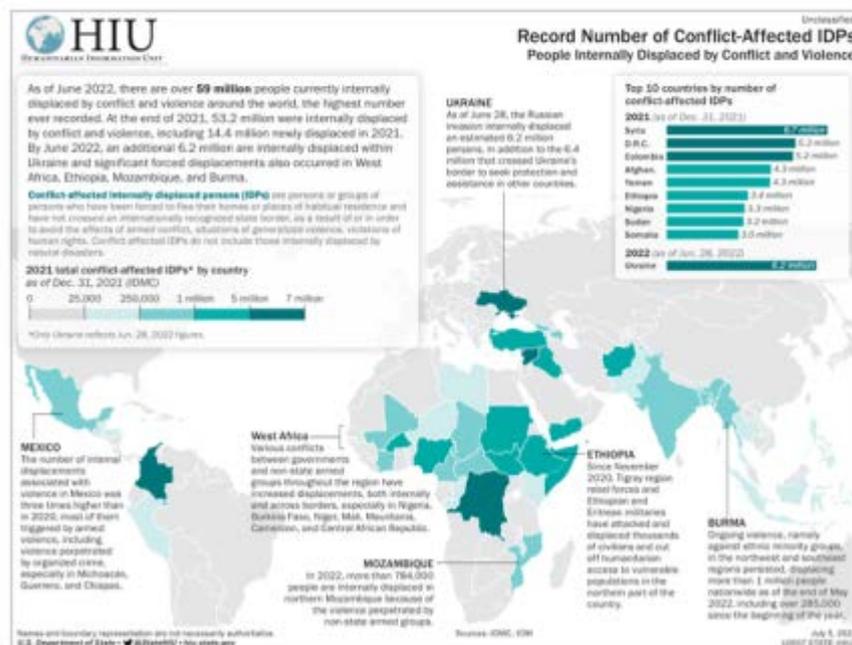
against the Rohingya and for the government to recognize them as citizens in 2020 (Nelson, *The Borgen Project*).

2. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

The Middle East and North Africa region is still dealing with some of the world's most severe and enduring humanitarian crises, with complicated factors such as continued hostility and a lack of political solutions. The MENA region continues to be at the epicenter of global displacement challenges. According to UNHCR Global Appeal 2020-2021, there are approximately 11.7 million IDPs in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen, and more than 2.7 million refugees across the whole region. For the region to be able to move forward, immediate political action and sustainable solutions are necessary.



Picture 2: Twenty five countries and territories with most internal displacements in 2021



Picture 3: Report of HIU regarding the situation of conflict-affected IDPs around the world



3. COVID-19

COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the situation of refugees and IDPs terribly. With the COVID-19 pandemic, humanitarian needs increased significantly for refugees and host communities as well as IDPs. Their lack of access to adequate public healthcare services was one of the issues that challenged them the most. In Lebanon, for instance, Syrian and Palestinian refugees were unable to access health services without presenting identification documents, which is frequently problematic given that the majority of refugees there are undocumented.

Overcrowded refugee and IDP camps struggled desperately. Funding shortages did not make it possible to improve the situation. For example, last year, less than half of the funding required for the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis was received. In 2020, a joint UNHCR-World Bank study in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq found that the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 drove 4.4 million people in host communities and 1.1 million refugees or IDPs into poverty. Movement restrictions, some related to COVID-19, hindered humanitarian access.

Also, there is currently a mental health crisis among refugees. This is most accurately exemplified with South Sudanese refugees in Uganda. Cases of death by suicide has been rapidly increasing among refugees originating from South Sudan in Uganda, as COVID-19 has exacerbated their health over the two-year period that it has prevailed. It is stated that if Uganda receives more funding, it will be able to improve the mental health of refugees by providing more assistance. Uganda's proactive refugee policy can possibly assist South Sudanese refugees in starting a new life (Nelson, *The Borgen Project*), if it is conducted as promised.

4. Refugee/IDP Camps

In the camps or organized settlements where refugees and IDPs are living, conditions can be damaging to their physical, psychological and social health. Overcrowded conditions often lead to health problems and a lack of privacy. Host governments have responsibilities. These include registration and physical protection of refugees and protection of their rights to livelihood and security. Registration of refugees and IDPs is particularly important for them to receive humanitarian assistance and aid from organizations such as UNHCR.

5. Safe Return Home

It is true that many refugees successfully settle and thrive in their new environments. However, ensuring the safe return of refugees and IDPs must be the key goal. This topic might be one of the most difficult aspects of the issue. In fact, Palestinian refugees have been unable to return home for four



generations. A range of factors, including COVID-19, hampered returns, with some 38,600 Syrian refugees returning in 2020. Of course, almost none of these returns can be considered “safe”. UNHCR works in a variety of ways to facilitate the return of refugees. This includes advocating for the preservation and development of skills, methods and resources that will aid displaced people upon their return; facilitating the exercise of a free and informed decision by, among other things, gathering and distributing to refugees current information about their nation and region of origin, planning "go-and-see" visits, and offering counseling; encouraging return transportation. UNHCR’s assistance doesn’t end even after the return. They keep an eye on the condition of the returnees; make it easier for returning citizens to take part in initiatives that promote peace and reconciliation; support policies that promote access to justice and property, housing, and land restoration in return territories; work together on interventions for livelihoods in areas of return; and finally, they advocate for including returnees in national development planning in the countries where they returned.

For the goal of a “safe return home” to be achieved, there must be a “safe home” that refugees and IDPs can return to. They cannot be forced to return to a country where they are likely to face persecution or torture. Even if they are able to return home, the struggle does not end for them. Being subjected to months of misery, they struggle to find the money to renovate their homes and fields, as well as to find equipment and food. Family reunification is another important issue, particularly for refugee youth. It must also be kept in mind that women and children are at the most risk and need attention.

IV. Key Vocabulary

Refugee: The term “refugee” was first defined by the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The simplest definition of a refugee would be “a person who was forced to leave their home and cross international borders due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, natural disaster or events seriously disturbing public order”.

IDP: The 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement defines internally displaced persons as “ persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border.”. Simply stated, IDPs are refugees who have not crossed international borders. It is important to know the difference between these terms since we will be using them constantly.



Asylum seeker: Another term that can be mixed up is “asylum seeker”. According to UNHCR, an asylum-seeker is someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed.

Bilateral Dispute: By definition, a bilateral dispute means a disagreement having or involving two sides. In this context, we will use this term to describe political disagreements or conflicts between two countries.

Protracted displacement: Protracted refugee situations are those in which at least 25,000 refugees from the same nation have been living in exile for more than five years in a row.

V. Important Events & Chronology

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Event
8 December 1949	Establishment of UNRWA
14 December 1950	Establishment of UNHCR
28 July 1951	Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees
28 September 1954	Convention on the Rights of Stateless Persons
30 August 1961	Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness
10 September 1969	OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa
August 1998	Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement
15 March 2011	Start of Syrian Civil War
15 February 2011- 23 February 2011	Duration of the First Libyan Civil War
December 2013- December 2017	Duration of Iraqi Civil War
16 May 2014- 23 October 2020	Duration of the Second Libyan Civil War
13 December 2018	The Stockholm Agreement was signed in Stockholm, Sweden



VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties

- Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 11 July 2019 (A/HRC/RES/41/15)

<https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2FRES%2F41%2F15&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

Human rights of IDPs is a core point of our topic, thus reading the resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 11 July 2019 (A/HRC/RES/41/15) would be quite beneficial for you as delegates.

- General Assembly Resolution A/RES/76/124

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3952155>

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 10 December 2021 on “ Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations” is quite related to our topic due to the fact that refugees and IDPs significantly require emergency humanitarian assistance. A/RES/76/124:

- 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_CONF.2_108.pdf

The convention carries importance for the global recognition of the rights of refugees. The term “refugee” was first defined with this convention.

- 1954 Convention on the Rights of Stateless Persons

https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/wp-content/uploads/1954-Convention-relating-to-the-Status-of-Stateless-Persons_ENG.pdf#_ga=2.31350143.1118858758.1658341731-614221119.1655034952

This convention is of utmost importance for the historical development of the rights of stateless persons.

- 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness

https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/wp-content/uploads/1961-Convention-on-the-reduction-of-Statelessness_ENG.pdf#_ga=2.31350143.1118858758.1658341731-614221119.1655034952

It is a huge step forward for the issue of statelessness to be resolved.



- 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa
https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36400-treaty-0005 - oau_convention_governing_the_specific_aspects_of_refugee_problems_in_africa_e.pdf

This is a treaty in which specific aspects of the problems refugees face in the African region.

- 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement
<https://www.unhcr.org/43ce1cff2.pdf>

The principles are especially important for us due to its role as a milestone for the improvement of the situation of IDPs around the world.

- The Stockholm Agreement
https://osesgy.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/stockholm_agreement_-.pdf.

The agreement was agreed upon in Sweden on 13 December 2018 and was the first agreement by the parties to the conflict in Yemen.

These conventions were definitely important progress at that time, however, they failed to be enough for the situation to be fully solved, as conflicts and disputes intensified especially in the MENA region.

VII. Failed Solution Attempts

The enduring conflict is proof of the failure of solution attempts. Although past political attempts on the topic have resulted in progress, they haven't been successful in solving the issue at hand. The first step to solving the issue was to eliminate the reasons behind it, which are basically war, disputes and crises. Attempts to solve the issue weren't successful because they were not easy to implement. For example, the 2018 Stockholm Agreement was an attempt to solve the crisis in Yemen, which is the main cause of a large number of displaced people in Yemen. However, there hasn't been great success in implementing the accord's provision, which included the exchange of more than 15,000 prisoners and the creation of a joint committee to de-escalate violence in one of the cities involved. The issue requires implementable, longer-term solutions as well as sustainable political solutions and political actions.

The protection of IDPs is the responsibility of the government concerned since they are still citizens of their own country. Many countries have resisted moves to introduce specific protection measures for IDP, on the grounds that to do so would infringe on national sovereignty. This situation has prevented some



solution attempts to be successful. Advocating the inclusion of IDPs in national social protection mechanisms must be the goal.

VIII. Possible Solutions

Delegates might consider offering solutions to ensure the full implementation of durable solutions, such as direct resettlement, voluntary repatriation and reunification, as well as humanitarian evacuations for vulnerable people of concern to the Emergency Transit Centers in Romania and Italy, and to the Emergency Transit Mechanisms in Niger and the most recently-opened one in Rwanda.

Finding ways to strengthen emergency humanitarian response mechanisms for refugees and IDPs could be another way to improve the situation. The need for humanitarian assistance includes aspects such as mental health assistance from professionals. In addition, IDPs can choose between three durable solutions: local integration, relocation or voluntary return to their home village. Security in their home village, access to basic services, and economic opportunities are the key aspects of the criteria they consider.

Delegates could consider finding ways to ensure refugees' and IDPs' safe return home and include IDPs in national social protection mechanisms, as well as to strengthen identification and monitoring mechanisms, bearing in mind the importance of registration and documentation as mentioned earlier in this chair report.

Remember, these are just recommendations. Delegates are highly encouraged to come up with their own solutions. These solutions are written to serve you as a guide through your process of resolution writing. We would also like to advise you to write your resolutions with a focus on the MENA region.

IX. Useful Links

- <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/yemen-crisis>.

For further information on how the issues in the Yemeni region emerged and which parties are involved

- <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/whos-who-libyas-war>.

For further information on Libya's War and the parties involved

- <https://borgenproject.org/refugee-crises-of-our-time/>.



Hannah Nelson provides us with further information on the five refugee crises of our time.

- <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/1799>

For further understanding, delegates are highly encouraged to read situation overviews that are present on the official website of UNHCR. As an example, “UNHCR Syria and Iraq Situations: 2022 Response Overview”

- <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/2447>

You can also find country-specific information of countries within the MENA region, once again on the official website of UNHCR. As an example, “UNHCR Middle East and North Africa: Algeria (May 2022)” provides you with a factsheet that offers quite recent information.

- <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/2398>

This is the UNHCR’s 2022-2023 Updated Risk Mitigation Strategy and 2022 Appeal. This document provides comprehensive information about protection, life-saving, and solutions for refugees on risky journeys.

- https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/enforcement-and-protection/dispute-settlement/bilateral-disputes_en

For further understanding regarding bilateral disputes, you can access some dispute settlement procedure examples supported by the EU through this link.

- <https://reliefweb.int/report/algeria/middle-east-and-north-africa-humanitarian-situation-report-1-january-31-december-2021>

This situation report includes a comprehensive summary of the situation in the MENA region.

- https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/gr2020/pdf/Chapter_MENA.pdf

This regional summary also shows a well-rounded overview for further understanding of the situation in the MENA region.

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