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Welcome Letter From The DAIS

Greetings, honorable delegates!

We are Doria and Jin, students from Xiamen International School and Manila Xiamen International School. It is our privilege to extend a heartful welcome to all delegates of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees committee of MUNOX 2024!

From our experiences, MUNOX is a feast of learning where delegates from distinct schools and cultural backgrounds share their unique perceptions, insights, and solutions to different global challenges our world faces today. For us, it is a significant activity that developed our collaboration, social, communication, and leadership skills. We truly hope MUNOX 2024 will be an inspiring experience for all of you, just like how it is for us. We will exert full efforts in making this a memorable MUN conference for all delegates.

As the DAIS, we expect all delegates to read through the Background Guide thoroughly, as it will guide our discussions and is extremely helpful for understanding the topic comprehensively. In addition, we strongly encourage each delegate to conduct further research to learn more about the distinct country positions and underlying. We encourage all delegates to be prepared and active in sharing your insightful ideas during our conference.

As we embark on this journey of diplomacy, keep in mind that MUN also provides opportunities to develop friendships and connections with participants from different schools. The relationships formed, the skills acquired, and the knowledge, motivations, and inspirations gained shall linger with you throughout your academic and professional endeavors.

For any further inquiries, do not hesitate to contact us. We are incredibly excited to hear your voices during the conference.

Good luck!

Best Regards,
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Committee Introduction

The UN Refugee Agency, known as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), is a global organization dedicated to protecting human rights, rescuing lives, and constructing a better future for individuals who were forced to escape their countries due to persecution and conflict.

The Committee strives to strengthen laws, regulations, policies, and practices to ensure that displaced and stateless individuals are treated fairly and have access to rights and services with dignity, such as the right to seek safety, health care, and nationality. The scope of UNHCR's work was expanded starting in 1956 due to displacement brought on by various conflicts, such as the Hungarian Uprising and the decolonization of Africa and Asia. With the passage of the 1967 Protocol to the Refugee Convention, which expanded the scope of refugee support across different times and regions, UNHCR began operating globally, concentrating most of its efforts in developing nations.

The majority of UNHCR's budget comes from voluntary contributions of member states. The agency's work includes providing protection, shelter, healthcare, and emergency relief, assisting in resettlement and repatriation, and advocating for national and multilateral policies on behalf of refugees.

Today, UNHCR works in 136 countries, and for 73 years UNHCR has been safeguarding the rights of refugees and at least 117.3 million people around the world are forcibly displaced. UNHCR provides life-saving assistance with necessities including shelter, food, water, and healthcare for people forced to flee conflict and persecution, many of whom have nobody left to turn to. The UNHCR defends their right to reach safety and helps them find a place to call home for individuals to rebuild their lives. In the long term, UNHCR works with countries to improve and monitor refugee and asylum laws and policies, ensuring human rights are upheld.

Topic Introduction

Refugees refers to people who are forced to flee their home country due to violence, conflicts, or public disorder and are unable to return because of fear of persecution, as defined by the UNHCR. According to the UNHCR, by May 2024, there were more than 120 million people forcibly displaced, 42.4 million refugees, 63.3 million internally displaced people (IDP), and 6.9 million asylum seekers. The Middle East is accountable for more than 16 million refugees in 2024.

The 1951 Refugee Convention outlines the basic rights and standard treatments of refugees, which include the right to housing, education, and work while displaced so they can live a dignified and independent life. Countries that have signed the 1951 Convention are obliged to protect refugees based on the internationally recognized standards in their territories. Protection, as defined by the UNHCR, is a responsibility that entails the restoration of the right to life, the right to avoid torture or discrimination, the right to be respected for dignity, and the right to preserve family. However, refugees in the Middle East do not meet these basic rights. Refugees and migrants remain the most vulnerable group in society, experiencing xenophobia, discrimination, troubles in resettlement, poor living, housing, and health services despite frequently occurring mental and physical health issues.

Most refugees in Middle East Asia originate from conflicts. The Middle East is typically associated with armed conflicts, political turbulence, religious persecution, and poverty, not to mention the natural disasters that further deteriorate the situation. For instance, Yemen currently experiences one of the world's worst humanitarian crises and hunger crises, with more than half of the country's population in need of humanitarian assistance after nine years of civil war. The Syrian War which began in 2011 has caused 14 million people—accounting for around 25% of the total refugee population around the globe—to flee their homes in search of safety both inside and outside its border, making it one of the largest refugee crises in history. In addition to the ongoing conflicts, unpredictable natural disasters, such as floods, earthquakes, and droughts that may occur at any time further exacerbate the dire situation for refugees. For example, the earthquake that occurred in February 2023 that affected southern Türkiye and northern Syria has thrust many into further desperation, hunger, malnutrition, and poverty, despite already

being displaced.

Since the Syrian conflict in 2011, the number of refugees who struggle with access to basic living essentials and critical humanitarian needs has risen unstoppably. But beyond the physical needs of food, healthcare services, proper healthcare services, and shelters, the mental well-being of refugees is another critical concern. Many refugees, especially children, have trauma from witnessing or experiencing domestic violence, and wars and living in an unstable environment. Moreover, the lack of access to education and employment compounds these issues, trapping refugees in a state of hopelessness and their vulnerability to abuses and illegal acts, such as child soldiers, trafficking, and sexual abuse. In light of these overwhelming challenges, the combination of conflicts, displacement, natural disasters, and state of health continues to create an urgent and complex humanitarian crisis in the Middle East, eroding the well-being of individuals, and making it crucial for sustained international efforts to address the issue. Some of the current challenges faced by refugee-hosting nations are the following:

1. Displacement and Living Conditions:

Most displaced refugees flee to neighboring countries, and refugee camps, while some wander and settle in abandoned buildings, tents, urban areas, and on streets. While surviving in the horror of multiple displacements, hunger, diseases, and besiegement follow them. The lack of proper settlement also exposes these refugees to harsh weather and natural disasters. The situation in refugee camps is no better. Diseases, such as cholera, varicella, and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome are common and often spread quickly in overcrowded camps due to the lack of proper hygiene and limited medical supplies available. Conflicts drive people away from their livelihoods and their access to life-saving assistance.

2. Restrictions, Social and Security Concerns:

An accountable number of Middle Eastern refugees migrate to neighboring countries or across the Mediterranean Sea and arrive in Europe to escape from conflicts, violence, and destruction. As the Middle East refugee crisis persists, the host countries of migrated refugees face significant challenges in providing services like health care, settlements employment, and education. A daunting challenge for host countries is to manage the health needs of refugees, who

are a vulnerable group from a health perspective and whose disease spectrum may differ from that of the host population. Refugees also face barriers to accessing and engaging with health services. This impacts their integration into new communities and may increase the prevalence of psychosocial issues. Culturally appropriate health services for refugees are needed in communities.

3. Resettlement and Returns:

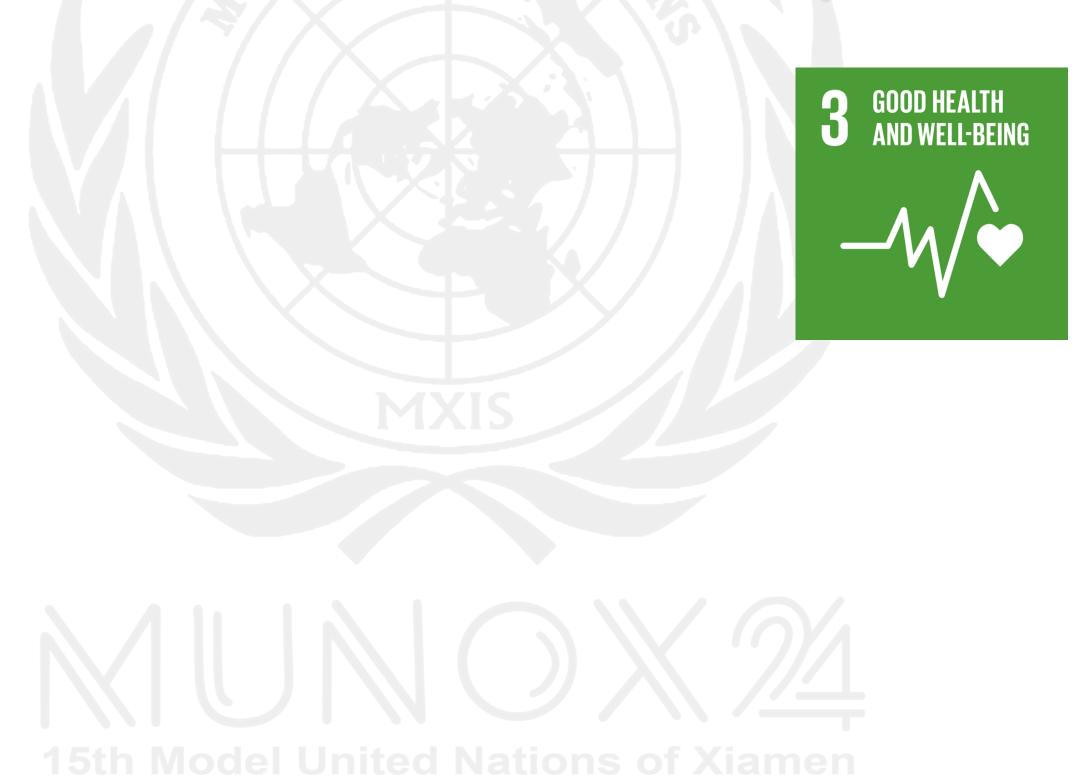
Resettlement refers to the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another state that agrees to recognize them as permanent citizens. The majority of the refugees in the Middle East temporarily reside in neighboring countries and refugee camps while only very few resettle.



Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being

People forced to flee conflict or persecuted often lack access to mental health care with being highly exposed to stress and trauma. While additional resources, such as shelter, water, and food, are needed from UNHCR and other countries, refugees are finding their own ways to accouter mental health services. Good Health and Well-being surround ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all people of all ages. The topic targets SDG 3, Good Health and Well-being when addressing the safety and well-being of refugees in the Middle East. The displaced populations, particularly in conflict zones, face challenges in accessing to basic survival needs, health services, humanitarian assistance, and the protection of human rights.



Current Situation

The Middle East is home to around 16 million refugees and IDPs in 2024, according to UNHCR. Some of the countries holding the greatest number of refugees globally are focused on Middle East Asia. Conflicts that cause the destruction of homes for civilians include the ongoing Israel-Hamas war that forced around 100,000 refugees to leave, the Syrian crisis, displacing 753,000 refugees, the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, the Red Sea crisis, and the Iran-Israel conflict. These areas are the epicenter of the refugee crisis. New and unpredicted impacts often make the situation more complex. In 2022, a drought in southern Iraq pushed 10,000 people from their homes. The earthquake that struck Syria and Türkiye in 2023 deteriorated the situation by causing destruction, injuries, and loss of living essentials. A combination of conflicts and natural disasters are the root causes of the mass number of refugees and displacements.

According to UNHCR, by 2024, more than 40 million people in this region experience an acute level of food insecurity, and most of the refugees and asylum seekers are at worse levels. Insufficient food and improper sanitation result in malnutrition, which puts refugees in danger of illness and even death. For instance, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERSC) has been a significant health concern since 2012. In 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported 2,622 cases with 953 deaths. Yemen has also been experiencing serious cholera since 2016, with 230,121 cases suspected by WHO in 2020. Moreover, violence in refugee camps is common, especially sexual abuse, trafficking, gender-based violence, and exploitation. In 2015, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) reported 22,000 deaths of children due to collective violence in the Middle East. The lack of legal protection prevents refugees from being completely secure. Stricter regulations are needed to enhance the safety and protection of refugees.

In addition to these physical harms, the mental health of displaced people is also at risk. Separations, destruction, violence, deaths, and displacements impose depression, anxieties, psychosis, profound psychological trauma, and difficulties in navigating and living in asylum systems. Living in overcrowded and insecure refugee camps exacerbates their mental status as they face stress in food supply, personal safety, unemployment, and education. Children are

especially vulnerable, as these prolonged trauma and mental disorders may impact their long-term growth and well-being. Access to psychological care remains a challenge but is essential for supporting the long-term recovery and resilience of refugees.

At the same time, economic pressures are straining both refugee-hosting countries and supporting countries. Since 2019, three-quarters of the population in Lebanon have fallen into poverty. Türkiye and Egypt, two of the countries holding the largest number of refugees were stroked hard by inflation in the past two years. Although neighboring countries previously enabled socio-economic inclusion policies for refugees—for example, Türkiye's Temporary Protection Regulation that granted Syrian refugees access to education and healthcare deteriorating economic conditions lead to significant difficulties in maintaining the establishment of refugee-inclusive policies. Countries now face the challenge of providing living necessities for refugees while balancing their own economic and political stability. As a result, several countries implemented stricter measures on refugee movement and fewer job opportunities within the country. Additionally, decades of humanitarian assistance have stressed international donors, leading to reduced financial support for critical crises from international organizations. In 2022, Syria had the largest funding shortfall, with the received funding not reaching even half of the required amount. In 2022, UNHCR was forced to cut cash assistance for 1.7 million displaced people in Lebanon, Jordan, and Yemen due to funding shortages. Economic downfall and financial burdens threaten the livelihood of millions.

Although host countries shelter millions of refugees, they lack the resources to integrate such large populations. Some countries, such as Germany and Türkiye granted employment and education for refugees, but these resources could not follow with the growth of refugees flooding in. In 2023, only around 1% of Syrian refugees were resettled outside the region. Resettlement remains an extremely constrained solution due to the vast scale of refugees.

The average time of displacement for refugees is two decades, and more than a decade for internally displaced persons. Barriers for refugees to return remain widespread; concerns include the destruction of infrastructures, lack of basic social services, insecurity, and lack of employment. Due to these concerns, the number of refugees returning drop to 38,300 from 50,800

in 2022. In 2023, the UNHCR also surveys that only 1.1% of refugees are willing to return to their homes. Security, safety, access to social services, and living essentials are the main factors influencing their decisions. Although some host countries have pushed for the repatriation of refugees to reduce the social and economic pressures, the return process must ensure that refugees are not forced back into unsafe conditions, which violates the International Refugee Law regarding the voluntary return of refugees.



Bloc Positions

Syrian Arab Republic

The ongoing Syrian crisis has triggered one of the largest refugee crises in history. Since the onset of the Syrian conflict in 2011, millions of people have been displaced, lost their homes, and are forced to flee from where they belong. Nearly half of the Syrian population is displaced due to armed conflicts, with over 16.7 million in need of emergency aid in 2024, according to UNHCR. An estimated 6.5 million people are identified as refugees and asylum seekers, and 7.2 million are displaced within Syria. Syrian refugees have sought asylum in more than 137 countries, and 73% of them are hosted by neighboring countries in refugee camps.

Of Syrian refugees who stayed in the country, only 8% of them live in refugee camps. Refugee camps also lack the necessities for healthy living, such as electricity and heat. The brutal summer, chilly nights, and common sandstorms are just the daily difficulties they experience. Limited clean water and insufficient food supplies are some other challenges refugee camps often encounter. Aside from the basic living necessities that cannot be met, security and protection from violence are another serious concern. A total of 195 incidents of armed threats and violence in refugee camps were recorded between 2021 and 2023. 123 citizens were killed, and numerous women and children were injured. The use of explosive weapons and attacks from armed groups also threaten the safety of refugee camps. The lack of basic needs, poor living conditions, and widespread violence leave millions of refugees in a state of constant insecurity.

Children remain the most vulnerable group in this crisis. According to UNICEF in 2024, over 47% of Syrian refugees are under 18. The rights and protections of children are being undermined daily. The number of child labor, child abuse, and child soldiers increase with the number of children dropping out of school. 2.4 million children do not have access to education. Meanwhile, most children are susceptible to the impacts of poor hygiene, sanitation, and food insecurity.

In Syria, UNHCR has provided protection assistance to more than 311,000 individuals

affected by the earthquake that occurred in February 2023, as well as psychosocial support. UNHCR has also provided shelter assistance, financial assistance, and other support to those affected. In 2023, UNHCR provided relief items to more than 68,000 families in earthquake-affected areas. In the government-controlled areas of Aleppo and Latakia, UNHCR and its partners renovated community shelters and provided settlements to more than 3,000 people. UNHCR also provided financial assistance to affected individuals in Aleppo, Ladhiqiyah, Hama, and Tartus governorates, reaching more than 16,000 families.

Despite the efforts made, the UN still estimates that 16.7 million people—more than 70% of the Syrian population need humanitarian assistance in 2024. More than half of the population lacks stable and clean sources of water, 12.9 million people face food insecurity, and 15.4 million people need protection services.

In 2020, \$3.8 billion was required to meet the urgent needs of most Syrian refugees, but only half were received. In 2022, \$1.86 million in cash assistance was only enough to be distributed to refugees in Syria, not in neighboring countries. Funding shortages perpetuate the cycle of hardship and displacement. Moreover, over 90% of the Syrian population lives in extreme poverty. While Syria experiences an economic crisis, a mass number of refugees remain unemployed. Returning to independent life remains a long-term challenge for Syrian refugees.

Republic of Türkiye

According to UNHCR, starting from 2014 Türkiye has been hosting the largest number of refugees worldwide, with around 3.7 million Syrians under protection. The country brings up the need for political solutions and more international support to manage refugee projection effectively. Türkiye is home to most Syrian refugees who left the country due to its ongoing conflict. To address the refugee crisis, the government has continuously called for greater international assistance and burden sharing.

Türkiye draws attention to the lack of international aid in view of the seriousness of the situation and emphasizes the significance of finding a political solution to the Syrian conflict.

Moreover, it calls for refugees to return safely and freely when conditions allow. Working with international organizations like the UNHCR, Türkiye has put in place several measures to integrate refugees, including social services, healthcare, and education. However, as the number of refugees rises in the country, the society faces macroeconomic instability. Inflation and dissatisfaction from the public towards the flooding refugees in the nation are currently restricting the extent of social support provided for migrant refugees.

Republic of Lebanon

Lebanon currently faces its worst socioeconomic crisis in decades by hosting one of the highest numbers of refugees per capita. Based on the Migration Policy Institute, around 1 million Syrians have sought protection in Lebanon a neighboring country since the start of a brutal civil war that has displaced millions of Syrians across the Middle East. Lebanon, with its relatively small size and vulnerable political structure, hosts a significant number of Syrian and Palestinian refugees.

The country frequently emphasizes how the flood of refugees has overextended its resources and infrastructure. Poverty, food insecurity, and limited access to social services are some of the most urgent issues. Lebanon has repeatedly demanded more international support and is concerned about the extended stay of refugees that creates risks to its financial stability and social balance. When safe conditions are met, the government supports returning refugees to their own countries. Lebanon has increased border controls and placed limitations on residency permits to reduce the number of refugees entering the country. Lebanon also introduced the residency regulations in January 2015 and has concerns about destabilization, it is still cautious regarding long-term integration.

As wars in Gaza continue and the Israel-Hezbollah conflict escalates, a rapidly increasing number of refugees are expected to come. The living conditions for refugees are also driving concerns. Syrian refugees start to struggle to find shelters in Lebanon while Lebanon itself faces the issue of increasing IDPs. By October 2024, around 100,000 refugees had fled to the border of Syria from Lebanon. Refugees in Middle Eastern nations are trapped in a vicious cycle,

they struggle from ongoing displacements, insecurities, and physical violence such as bombings, armed clashes, and crossfire in conflict zones.

European Union

By the end of 2023, Syrians and Afghans continue to be the two largest groups of asylum-seekers, according to the UNHCR. In 2024, Europe held more than 600,000 refugees who escaped from conflicts in the Middle East. Among them, Greece and Germany are two countries holding the greatest number of refugees in Europe. Throughout 2024, the UN continuously reminds the increasing number of refugees that are expected to reach the European shores amid the escalating crisis in the Middle East. Although risky and costly, refugees are willing to take the long travel to Europe to seek economic opportunities and an equal society.

EU has long been one of the biggest donors to the Middle East refugee crisis. In 2024, the EU around 15 million dollars for humanitarian support. It has been the largest donor for the Syrian Crisis since 2011. Over the past years, the EU has mobilized nearly 1 billion dollars in humanitarian, social development, and stabilization assistance. This includes approximately 431 million dollars of humanitarian aid just within Syria. Working with international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like the International Red Cross, health care, food, water, sanitation, shelter, and education are provided to refugees as humanitarian assistance. EU has also funded programs to provide access to education for children. For instance, it has contributed more than 4.3 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees to deliver basic education for Palestine refugee children and youth in Syria.

EU has made significant contributions to the Middle East refugee crisis for a notable period, mostly assistance focused on funding and humanitarian aid. However, strict immigration policies due to resource strain and the rise of anti-immigration sentiment due to societal and security concerns like crimes made resettlements and legal immigration restricted.

Questions To Consider

- 1. How can the safety and security of vulnerable populations (women, children, elders, disabled people) be ensured?
- 2. How can violence and illegal trafficking in refugee camps be monitored?
- 3. How can the need for proper health services be addressed?
- 4. What measures can be applied to predict recurrences of natural disasters and outbreaks of diseases that would cause and affect refugees?
- 5. What are some strategic approaches in regulating the resettlement of refugees?
- 6. In what ways can host nations develop socio-economic inclusiveness for refugees?
- 7. How can policies balance national security, economic concerns, and humanitarian support for refugees?
- 8. How can international parties and NGOs provide both short-term and long-term assistance in response to the growing refugee crisis in the Middle East?

15th Model United Nations of Xiamer

For Further Research

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UNHCR Report on Well-Being and Basic Needs

https://reporting.unhcr.org/global-appeal-2024/outcome-and-enabling-areas/well-being-and-basic-needs

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Challenges and Opportunities for Refugee-Hosting Countries

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