



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Topic B. UNHCR obstacles to
political restrictions imposed
by Türkiye and their effects on
Syrian refugees



UNHCR

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

President: Mana Kawakami

Moderator: Homero Garza López

Conference Officer: Nathaly Cruz Méndez

Dear delegates,

As your chair, we are pleased to welcome you to the 15th edition of the United Nations Model of Alexander Bain Irapuato. We are truly eager to have you join us in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (**UNHCR**), where we trust that your engagement, diplomacy and critical thinking will lead to interesting discussions and innovative solutions to some of the major global challenges.

This year, the committee will address **Topic B: UNHCR obstacles to political restrictions imposed by Türkiye and their effects on Syrian refugees.**

In this debate, you will have the opportunity to develop a wide range of valuable skills, like public speaking, negotiation, critical thinking and research. We encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to express your ideas, engage in thoughtful discussions, and collaborate to find effective and constructive solutions to current problems. In the debate, you will defend your perspective, listen, learn, and grow through collaboration and mutual respect.

As your Chair, we are ready to support your development as delegates, offering guidance, feedback, and resources to help you make the most of this experience. Our goal is to create an environment where you can exchange ideas, learn, and have fun while participating in thoughtful debates. We want this experience to be as enjoyable as possible, encouraging personal growth and contributions to the debate topics at hand.

We wish everyone the best of luck in this debate. We trust that this debate will give you new skills, memories, and a deeper understanding of the world's most pressing issues.

Enjoy the experience,

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees





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SEMBLANCE

History:

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established by the General Assembly of the United Nations in Switzerland in 1964, to provide aid to those who had lost their homes due to insecurity or armed conflict. Initially it was established for a three-year period; from January 1, 1950 to December 31, 1953, and then was voted successively for a five-year extension.

In 1951, the UNHCR adopted the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees which provides international protection to refugees and it has been operative since 1954, besides being ratified by sixty countries.¹

From 1955 to 1958 a UNHCR material assistance program was created, called “UNREF” program (United Nations Refugee Fund), that was made for finding solutions for refugees in European camps and assistance to refugees in the Far East.² In 1967, the protocol was expanded to include the United Nations Declaration on Territorial Asylum, to improve international protection of a greater number of refugees, this with the objective of promoting legal instruments for the benefits of the refugees in accordance with the right of work and social security.³

Then, the assistance of UNHCR moved from Europe to Africa and Asia, which enabled them in 1969, to provide material assistance to refugees. In the Asian continent, the main solution for the refugee question has, since then, been to apply rural settlements and therefore develop programs for refugees to guarantee the protection of their integrity; Resources were also distributed to local populations so there was a greater awareness of the refugee question.⁴

¹ Abdelaaty, Lamis. “UNHCR: difficulties and dilemmas”. Forced Migration Review. (s.f.). <https://www.fmreview.org/recognising-refugees/abdelaaty/>

² Australian Multilateral Assessment. “UNHCR”. Australian Government. (2012, March). Access on December 9th, 2024. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/unhcr-assessment.pdf>

³ Abdelaaty, Lamis. “UNHCR: difficulties and dilemmas”. Forced Migration Review. (s.f.). <https://www.fmreview.org/recognising-refugees/abdelaaty/>

⁴ Abdelaaty, Lamis. “UNHCR: difficulties and dilemmas”. Forced Migration Review. (s.f.). <https://www.fmreview.org/recognising-refugees/abdelaaty/>

Actual State:

Nowadays, UNHCR works in 136 countries, to provide life-saving assistance, including food, shelter, water and medical care for people forced to flee from their countries.

The UNHCR works to ensure the basic human rights of people, such as health and education.

UNHCR responds to emergencies, it protects refugees, working with governments and organizations to strengthen international law, making suggestions to member states and respecting at all times sovereignty while also upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Through these actions, it ensures people have access to education, nationality, documentation and laboral opportunities.

This ensures the construction of better futures for refugees, giving them employment to support themselves and their families, help children access education, and safeguard their future.

Actions and Objectives:

The committee's main goal is to aid refugees in becoming independent and sustaining their well-being without external assistance. It's work improves their skills, resources and confidence to manage their own life, allowing them to take control.⁵

It also protects refugees, delivering protection and humanitarian assistance to populations that have been involved in an armed conflict. It also allocates resources and delivers results with governments to help refugees, protects people with disabilities with provisions and protection. And improves gender equality regardless of age, gender or race.⁶

Its main role is to create a clear and consistent corporate vision, operational priorities and strategies in consultation with senior management. It also collaborates with governments, especially with UN agencies, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations. In that way and with their support, UNHCR seeks to resolve refugees' problems through:

- Voluntary repatriation that allows refugees to return to their country.

⁵ Australian Multilateral Assessment. "UNHCR". Australian Government. (2012, March). Access on December 9th, 2024. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/unhcr-assessment.pdf>

⁶ Zavallis, Achilleas. "What we do?". UNHCR. Access on December 9th, 2024. <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do>

- Emigration, it has a cooperation with the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration.
- Integration, which has proven effective for a large number of refugees.⁷

Limitations:

Within it has limitations, one of them is that it has a limitation with its capacity to implement projects and solve emergencies, because some of them can be very big or difficult. Difficulties in ensuring effective refugee status determination, especially in countries where it shares responsibilities with the governments.⁸

It has restrictions by political pressures from host governments, the main limit in this is independence. And there is a lack of cooperation from national authorities.⁹

Main accomplishments:

Since its creation in 1950, UNHCR has protected millions of refugees, asylum seekers and stateless people in the world. In 2023, UNHCR assisted over 117 million displaced people who experienced serious conflicts and crises.¹⁰

In 2021, UNHCR provided \$100 million to vulnerable refugees, as a cash assistance. That also includes emergency aid during the COVID-19 pandemic, funds for basic needs like food and shelter.¹¹

In 2023, more than 158,700 refugees were resettled in other countries, and 30,800 refugees obtained citizenship in their host countries.¹²

UNHCR awards the Nansen Refugee Award to individuals or organizations that have made contributions to refugee relief. UNHCR has also led emergency responses to major crises,

⁷ Azia, David. "About UNHCR". UNHCR. (2001-2024). Access on December 9th, 2024. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr>

⁸ Abdelaaty, Lamis. "UNHCR: difficulties and dilemmas". Forced Migration Review. (s.f.). <https://www.fmreview.org/recognising-refugees/abdelaty/>

⁹ Brown university. "Refugees and health". Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs. (s.f.). <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/refugees#:~:text=It%20includes%20lack%20of%20access,rates%20of%20indirect%20war%20deaths>

¹⁰ Gumuchian, Marie-Louise., Heritage,Timothy. (2024, June 17th). "Actor Theo James named UNHCR global goodwill ambassador". Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/actor-theo-james-named-unhcr-global-goodwill-ambassador-2024-06-17/>

¹¹ UNHCR. "10 ways UNHCR helped refugees in 2021". UNHCR. (2021, December 22th). <https://www.unhcr.org/16703-10-ways-unhcr-helped-refugees-in-2021.html>

¹² UNHCR. "Global Trends". UNHCR. (2024). <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends>

such as the war in Ukraine, providing lifesaving aid, and continues to advocate for sustained international support to protect refugees.¹³

UNHCR works with governments, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations to strengthen international protection and promote refugee rights, like healthcare, employment, identity recovery and access to education.¹⁴



¹³ Gumuchian, Marie-Louise., Heritage, Timothy. (2024, June 17th). "Actor Theo James named UNHCR global goodwill ambassador". Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/actor-theo-james-named-unhcr-global-goodwill-ambassador-2024-06-17/>

¹⁴ Azia, David. "About UNHCR". UNHCR. (2001-2024). Access on December 9th, 2024. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr>

Topic B: UNHCR obstacles to political restrictions imposed by Türkiye and their effects on Syrian refugees

1. Introduction:

Türkiye hosts more than 3 million Syrian refugees, and is therefore the country with the most refugees in the world.¹⁵ The UNHCR supports Türkiye providing humanitarian aid, such as tents and other basic items, and supports the refugee registration process in coordination with Türkiye's General Directorate of Migration Management. It also offers legal protection, counseling, and assistance with refugee resettlement.¹⁶ Despite the support provided for a smooth process, Turkish government policies significantly impact UNHCR's ability to operate fully. Türkiye has assumed control of refugee registration, and most Syrian refugees in the territory are granted temporary protection status, limiting their access to rights and services those with full refugee status do have, complicating their integration.¹⁷

Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, Türkiye has become the world's largest host of refugees, accommodating over 3.6 million Syrians under protection. At the very start of the conflict, Türkiye adopted an open-door policy, promoting access to necessary resources to Syrians, such as healthcare and education. However, due to economic pressures and changing political dynamics, the government has imposed restrictions on refugee rights, limiting their access to work permits, and threatening their forced return. These restrictions have also limited the operational capacity of UNHCR, which continues to advocate for refugee protection despite objections from the Turkish authorities.¹⁸

In this context, the role of UNHCR remains indispensable in supporting the protection and well-being of Syrian refugees in Türkiye. While national policies have increasingly constrained access to rights and services for refugees, particularly those with only temporary protection status, UNHCR continues to collaborate with Turkish authorities to provide humanitarian assistance, ensure fair registration processes, and advocate for legal safeguards aligned with international refugee law. Unfortunately these efforts are often not

¹⁵ UNHCR. "Türkiye". UNHCR. (2001). <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/operations/t%C3%BCrkiye>

¹⁶ UNHCR. "Türkiye". UNHCR. (2001). <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/operations/t%C3%BCrkiye>

¹⁷ UNHCR. "Temporary protection in Türkiye". UNHCR. (s.f.). <https://help.unhcr.org/turkiye/information-for-syrians/temporary-protection-in-turkey/>

¹⁸ Guzel, Mehmet., Fraser, Suzan. "The warm Turkish welcome for refugees is ending and Syrians are worried". APnews. (2024, December 20th). <https://apnews.com/article/turkey-syria-assad-erdogan-refugees-e5ea4587b0d010d5319667897a52ff51>

sufficient to ensure that all refugees are granted the rights they deserve, as UNHRC is unable to violate the principle of sovereignty. As political, economic, and social pressures persist, the ongoing commitment of UNHCR to upholding the principles of protection, inclusion, and shared responsibility remains more critical than ever, making this particular issue of paramount importance and its resolution a plausible landmark in the defence of refugee human rights.

2. Concept definition:

1. **Restriction** - Any policy or measure that limits the rights, freedoms, or access to services for refugees.¹⁹
2. **Refugee** - An individual who has been forced to flee their country due to war, violence, environmental problems or persecution and has crossed an international border.²⁰
3. **Deportation** - Forced removal of a person from one country to his or her country of origin, usually carried out by government authorities when an individual is deemed to be violating immigration laws.²¹
4. **Xenophobia** - Fear and hatred of foreigners, or of anything strange or foreign, which can lead to discrimination and exclusion.²²
5. **Integration** - Refugees adapt and become part of the social, cultural, economic, and political life of their host country, while still maintaining their own identity.²³

3. Actual situation:

Syrian refugees face several legal challenges. They are often required to reside within the province they are registered in and must obtain permission in the case they travel

¹⁹ Guzel, Mehmet., Fraser, Suzan. "The warm Turkish welcome for refugees is ending and Syrians are worried". APnews. (2024, December 20th).

<https://apnews.com/article/turkey-syria-assad-erdogan-refugees-e5ea4587b0d010d5319667897a52ff51>

²⁰ UNHCR. "What is a refugee?". UNHCR. (2001). <https://www.unhcr.org/us/what-refugee>

²¹ Hickson, Alice., Wilder, Calvin. "Protecting Syrian Refugees in Turkey from Forced Repatriation". New lines institute. (2023, May 16th).

<https://newlinesinstitute.org/displacement-and-migration/protecting-syrian-refugees-in-turkey-from-forced-repatriation/>

²² Religion & race. "What is xenophobia?". Religion & Race. (s.f). <https://www.r2hub.org/library/what-is-xenophobia>

²³ USA for UNHCR. "Syria refugee crisis explained". UNHCR. (2025, March 13th). <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/>

elsewhere. Since 2017, Turkish authorities have progressively imposed restrictions on the rights granted under international protection, limiting freedom of movement, access to employment, and legal recourse for many asylum seekers and refugees.²⁴

Between February and July 2022, Turkish authorities have arbitrarily arrested, detained and deported Syrian refugees to areas like Tel Abyad in northern Syria, where humanitarian conditions are inhumane, an area that has become unlivable.²⁵

Syrian refugees have also faced problems with access to work opportunities, making them resort to informal employment like agriculture or garment manufacturing. Being pushed to turn to informal labor, exposes them to exploitation, poor working conditions, a bad salary, and exacerbates child labor. In addition to that, Syrian refugee children have unfortunately faced educational challenges, given that the majority of them do not have access to education, and in the case they are granted the opportunity, they are often provided the such right in Temporary Education Centres.²⁶

A current pressing challenge that Syrian refugees face, and a root cause for the political limitations imposed is xenophobia. In 2014, anti-Syrian riots invaded cities like Kayseri, attacking Syrian-owned businesses and homes. In addition to suffering discrimination, Syrians are subjected to violence and exclusion. The seriousness of the issue lies on the fact that the inhumane treatment is continued, as the political limitations imposed by the Turkish government does not aid refugees in healing and progressing but rather keeps them secluded and discriminated, mimicking the treatment they would usually get in their home countries²⁷

²⁴ Kaya, Ayhan. "The World's leading refugee host, Turkey has a complex migration history". MPI. (2023, November 1st). <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/turkey-migration-history>

²⁵ Hickson, Alice., Wilder, Calvin. "Protecting Syrian Refugees in Turkey from Forced Repatriation". New lines institute. (2023, May 16th). <https://newlinesinstitute.org/displacement-and-migration/protecting-syrian-refugees-in-turkey-from-forced-repatriation/>

²⁶ UNHCR. "Syria situation". UNHCR. (2001). <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/syria-situation>

²⁷ Religion & race. "What is xenophobia?". Religion & Race. (s.f). <https://www.r2hub.org/library/what-is-xenophobia>

4. Initiatives:

Despite political restrictions and limited resources, UNHCR has implemented several key initiatives in Türkiye to support Syrian refugees.

- **Education:** UNHCR offers semester-long scholarships to Syrian students under temporary protection enrolled in Turkish universities, helping them cover essential expenses such as accommodation, transportation, and study materials.²⁸
- **Legally:** UNHCR works closely with the Union of Turkish Bar Associations (UTBA) to operate legal clinics that offer refugees free legal assistance, particularly in matters related to documentation and deportation. Refugees can also apply for legal assistance from Bar Associations across the country.²⁹
- **Psychologically:** UNHCR implements community-based programs that promote protection awareness, especially for women and children. Through these joint efforts, UNHCR seeks to help refugees regain their identity, access their rights, and integrate into society despite the current challenges.

5. Guide questions:

1. What measures has your country taken to support Syrian refugees, and how does it balance national security concerns?
2. Does your country recognize the legal challenges faced by Syrian refugees in Türkiye? What measures is your country taking to address these challenges?
3. In light of the restrictions on refugee rights in Türkiye, what is your country's position on refugee protection?
4. Given the current xenophobic sentiments toward Syrian refugees, what measures should the international community take to prevent further violence and discrimination?
5. How can the international community better support UNHCR's efforts to provide educational, legal, and psychological assistance to Syrian refugees in Türkiye?

²⁸ UNHCR. "Education FAQs". UNHCR. (s.f.). <https://help.unhcr.org/turkiye/faqs/education-faqs/>

²⁹ UNHCR. "Legal aid". UNHCR. (s.f.). <https://help.unhcr.org/turkiye/social-economic-and-civil-matters/legal-aid/>

Countries

- Arab Republic of Egypt
- Commonwealth of Australia
- Democratic Republic of Algeria
- Dominion of Canada
- Federal Republic of Germany
- French Republic
- Islamic Republic of Iran
- Islamic Republic of Pakistan
- Italian Republic
- Kingdom of Jordan
- Kingdom of Netherlands
- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- Kingdom of Spain
- Kingdom of Sweden
- Lebanon Republic
- Republic of Bangladesh
- Republic of Chile
- Republic of Iraq
- Republic of Sudan
- Republic of Türkiye
- Swiss Confederation
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom
- United Mexican States
- United States of America



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