

**UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER  
FOR REFUGEES**



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

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## LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL

Delegates, Club and Team Advisors, Parents, and Any Other MUN Folks,

It is my esteemed privilege to welcome you all to Davis Model United Nations Conference XXIII! My name is Brody Andrews, and I am honored to serve as your Secretary-General for the 23rd DMUNC. On the weekend of May 2-3, 2026, delegates will have the opportunity to engage in fruitful debate and cooperation, and hopefully, make lifelong connections.

As a senior at UC Davis, this will be my final DMUNC and my final Model UN Conference. I've been to over 30 conferences in the eight years I've been doing MUN but nothing I've gotten to do in my Model UN career has been as rewarding as DMUNC. Last year I got the opportunity to serve as the Director General of DMUNC XXII and it brought me so much joy to watch a massive number of future leaders bring their imaginative ideas to important debates. Thank you all for the opportunity to watch the magic unfold again, I truly cannot wait to see and be inspired by all of you in May.

I joined MUN my freshman year in high school and I could not be more grateful for the experiences it has brought me. Having been in your position I know how simultaneously nerve-wracking and exciting a MUN weekend can be. Whether this is your first conference or your 100th I'm happy you chose to come to DMUNC. In college, MUN has only become a larger part of my life. Not only has MUN afforded me educational and competitive opportunities, but it has also brought me lasting relationships with incredible people who continue to push and support me every day.

As someone who has done Model UN for so many years, I've had all the classic MUN experiences. Every author's panel, crisis update, closing ceremony celebration, and moderated caucus speech led me to DMUNC and I couldn't be happier. As graduation looms large, I want to remind all of you of the amazing joys that MUN can bring and all of the exciting things college has in store for all of you. When you love MUN, it loves you back. The skills you will improve, friendships you will form, and knowledge you will gain from even one MUN conference is enough to make having to explain what a crisis committee is to your non-MUN friends worth it.

I have had the honor of serving as the Director General of DMUNC XXII and as the crisis director for DMUNC XXI's The Muppets committee and DMUNC XX's Star Wars JCC on the Rebels side. With three DMUNCs and countless more conferences under my belt, I feel confident that my experience and passion will help make DMUNC XXIII a truly memorable conference. However, none of this would be possible without the hard work of the CONSEC and staff members who have worked tirelessly for months to prepare for DMUNC XXIII. Running DMUNC is in *no way* a one person job and I am eternally grateful to every single DMUNC staff member. My greatest thanks goes to my Director General Mae Tyson who has stepped up at every turn in extraordinary ways. Thank you Mae, CONSEC, head chairs, crisis directors, and all the DMUNC staff.

Delegates, we have been planning this weekend since August of 2025 and we're so excited for you to enjoy it. I encourage you to read through your committee background guides thoroughly and formulate collaborative resolutions. I look forward to the thought-provoking ideas that each of you will bring forth to your respective committees. Good luck! We truly can't wait to share this with you.

Sincerely,

Brody Andrews | Secretary-General

**Davis Model United Nations Conference XXIII**

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## LETTER FROM THE HEAD CHAIR

My dear delegates,

Welcome to the 2026 iteration of DMUNC, and to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees! My name is Vadim Kabardin, and it is my highest honor to serve as your head chair— covering a topic very close to my heart.

A bit about me personally: I'm a junior studying International Relations at UC Davis, looking to pursue law school after graduation. I hope to go into immigration law, and I'm confident that the knowledge and skills I've developed in my classes and extracurriculars (like MUN!) will help me in my expertise.

I grew up in Sacramento, so my life has unfortunately been rooted to the same 50-mile range. Regardless, I was super excited to transfer to UC Davis from community college and experience all that a four year university has to offer, including the Davis MUN team. Despite this being my first year doing MUN in college, it has quickly become a core part of my academic career and one of the most fulfilling experiences of my time at UC Davis.

I'm so grateful for all the club has offered me, from new friendships, travel opportunities, and crucial diplomatic skills. This is my first time chairing a committee for DMUNC and I couldn't be more excited. As a collective, our team has worked so hard to put together this conference and ensure a fun and engaging weekend. A ginormous shoutout to Brody, Mae, and especially Celine, my Vice Chair. I'm so thrilled to meet you all, and am looking forward to the innovative ideas delegates bring to this year's UNHCR!

Sincerely,  
Vadim Kabardin

# TOPIC A: Addressing Asylum Seekers

## KEY TERMS:

**Refugee:** a person fleeing life-threatening or dangerous circumstances who crosses an international border

**Asylum seeker:** a person fleeing life-threatening or dangerous circumstances who crosses an international border and *is in the process of applying for international protection in a host country*

**Non-refoulement:** core principle in international law that prevents refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants to be returned to “a territory where they may be at risk of persecution, torture, or other forms of serious or irreparable harm”

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of people fleeing their nation due to threats to their life or freedom has existed for centuries. Even now, during the age of international agreements and global democracy, war, famine, and genocide still *permeate several countries, threatening millions*. These issues continue to force people out of their home nations— the only difference is, modern border laws now complicate that process for many refugees. Typically, refugees who seek protections in another nation must submit asylum claims, in which they must prove their persecution to be officially accepted. In the time when a refugee waits to be admitted into a country under asylum, they become asylum seekers.

## BACKGROUND OF ISSUE

The reasons for seeking asylum in foreign nations are various. Persecution in all forms, violence, human rights violations, war, and natural disasters form just some examples; as an overarching theme, conditions in an asylum seeker’s home country make it incredibly difficult to continue leading a life there. Thus, an asylum seeker seeks protection and safety in a foreign host country.

The 1951 Refugee Convention establishes a series of legal protections and rights that refugees and asylum seekers should be granted, such as non-refoulement, access to basic needs (food, shelter, work), and general dignity. However, even despite this convention, asylum seekers still

face various legal and social barriers that impede on their ability to properly seek out protections in a foreign country.

### *Offshore detention*

Offshore detention involves keeping asylum seekers on islands or territories away from the country in which they are attempting to seek asylum. An idea recently tossed around by European leadership, the idea has become popular due to mass influxes of asylum seekers gathering at points of entry, creating an immense backlog and delays in processing asylum applications. However, the practice does not come without controversy. Australia currently utilizes offshore detention, detaining asylum seekers that arrive by boat and transporting them to the island nations of Nauru and Papua New Guinea. Brookings cites that “for the past five years, more than 1,500 children, women, and men have been held on the Pacific nations” in “facilities paid for by the Australian government and run by private contractors”. Conditions in the facilities have been reported as very poor, with insufficient facilities, mass spread of disease, and extreme use of violence against asylum seekers. There is little international scrutiny of these human rights abuses, working with a loophole in Australian law that offloads accountability for these abuses.

### *Non-refoulement*

Non-refoulement is a core principle in UN law, defined as the standard “that no one should be re-turned to a country where they would face torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and other irreparable harm” (UN Network on Migration). International law protects asylum seekers from being forced back into the very conflict or persecution they are fleeing from, framing non-refoulement as a human right. However, this standard faces threats especially in states such as Thailand, in which thousands of Burmese refugees fleeing military clashes and persecution in Myanmar are being forced back over the border. In 2024, the Thai military gave Burmese individuals only a two-week time frame to return, a violation of their rights as outlined in The 1951 Refugee Convention. In cases such as these, asylum seekers are left with little to no options, with fears of persecution or death in their home country but not accepted by neighboring countries.

### *Inhumane on-shore detention*

Concerns with inhumane on-shore detention have also arisen, citing many of the same problems associated with off-shore detentions: intense overcrowding, poor access to sanitation and hygiene, little to no healthcare, and rampant abuse from guards and detention officials. This problem is especially severe in states such as the United States, where numbers of asylum seekers keep climbing. The state may not have the facilities to properly meet the needs of each and every asylum seekers— as such, asylum seekers are forced into detention facilities “filled with spoiled food, moldy bathrooms, and inadequate hygiene and recreation”.

The use of punishment and deliberate neglect are a consistent human rights violation within the walls of detention facilities. As a punishment for “misbehavior”, detained asylum seekers and advocates have cited the removal of basic necessities such as sleeping mats, forcing even

children to sleep on cold, hard floors. Strip searches, handcuffing, and disciplinary segregation are likewise common inhumane practices in intimidating in-compliant detainees.

## **PAST UN / INTERNATIONAL ACTION**

### 1951 Refugee Convention / 1967 Protocol

Created in the wake of the post-WW2 refugee crisis, the 1951 Refugee Convention lays out the definition of a refugee and the specific rights to which they are entitled. A fundamental principle of the document is non-refoulement (see Key Terms) as well as basic humane treatment of refugees through access to food, sanitation, and housing. The UNHCR is the intergovernmental body that oversees that the principles of this convention are met. In 1967, the convention was expanded with one amendment to apply not just to Europe, but all members of the UN. This updated protocol created the legal framework by which the United Nations can hold member states accountable for human rights violations against refugees and asylum seekers.

### 1969 African Union Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa

Taking from the 1951 Refugee Convention, this convention significantly expanded on the definitions outlined in the original convention, expanding “refugee” to include those fleeing from war, colonialism, and general domination from foreign powers. This enhanced version of the original standards were pivotal for African nations entering the global arena as newly independent countries, and in addressing the subsequent refugee crisis.

### Asylum Capacity Support Groups (ACSG)

Launched at the first 2019 Global Refugee Forum, the Asylum Capacity Support Groups were created to provide recommendations to states on how to improve their asylum systems. Creating partnerships and drawing expertise from other global stakeholders, ACSGs create “pledging commitments” that draw on four main categories: “1. strong institutional capacities, 2. legislative and regulatory frameworks that facilitate asylum processing, 3. procedures, systems and practices that enhance efficiency and quality, and 4. quality and efficiency through diverse expertise, innovation, and research” (Global Compact on Refugees). States can rely on these ACSGs to promote the efficiency of asylum application processing and ensuring human rights are not being breached through the process.

### Global Strategy - Beyond Detention 2014-2019

This strategy, initially implemented in 2014, is a specific applicable strategy set forward by the UNHCR, aiming to accomplish three goals:

1. End the detention of children
2. Ensure that alternatives to detention are available in law and implemented in practice
3. Ensure that conditions of detention where detention is necessary and unavoidable meet international standards by, inter alia, securing access to places of immigration detention for UNHCR and/or our partners and carrying out regular monitoring.

(UNHCR)

Specific strategies in executing this plan include the following: “strong advocacy interventions, awareness-raising and campaigning, cooperation and capacity-building, strengthening partnerships, information sharing, data collection and reporting, research and monitoring”.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How can the international community ensure the rights enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention (non-refoulement, humane treatment, due process) are not being violated?
- How can, or should, nations sustainably take in refugees without overwhelming internal processing systems and ensuring equitable access to resources?
- What steps can be taken to ensure detention centers commit to providing basic resources and upholding human rights, especially when resources may be limited?
- How can member states / global stakeholders collaborate in financing the improvement of asylum detention centers?
- How will international organizations, such as the UNHRC, hold member countries accountable upon discovered violations of the 1951 Refugee Convention?
- What role should the international community take in tackling causes for people seeking asylum (war, persecution, natural disasters, etc.)?

# TOPIC B: Social and Economic Integration of Refugees

## KEY TERMS:

**Xenophobia:** a prejudice/dislike of people from foreign countries

**Internally displaced people (IDP):** people who are forced to leave their place of residence due to persecution or danger, but who remain within their nation's borders

## INTRODUCTION

An asylum seeker's fight is far from over once finally gaining access to asylum. After the entire process, refugees are often faced with a multitude of new challenges in their host country that the United Nations has taken many strides in addressing. Some of said challenges may include the adaptation into a new culture & language, complex legal systems, xenophobia and social discrimination, as well as struggles in finding work and housing. Refugees must learn how to navigate a completely distinct environment, whilst governments must figure out how to effectively socially and economically integrate often mass influxes of people fleeing crisis.

Not to mention, not all refugees come from abroad. Internally displaced people (IDPs) actually make up the majority of the world's refugees, accounting for 58% according to UNHRC's website. Not having the opportunity to seek refuge across a national border, IDPs are forced to flee conflict or disaster but are still held responsible by their national government. Often, IDPs are the most vulnerable classification, as they face danger of some kind yet are not provided any protection or aid from their national government. IDPs depend entirely on international aid and their rights under international law.

## SOCIAL INTEGRATION:

### Violence / xenophobia

Violence is a major concern increasingly voiced by refugees, with many citing fears of physical/verbal attacks from others within the host country. A study done with Syrian refugees in Germany found that in 2023, 54% of refugees "expressed some or great concern about xenophobia", with Syrians currently make up the second largest population of refugees in Germany (the largest group being of Ukrainians).

Xenophobia is rooted in social identity perspective, when a particular "out-group" is defined as distinct and is subsequently ostracized by an "in-group". The out-group does not possess the

same value, knowledge, or cultural understandings, thus they are seen as a threat to the cultural and social integrity of the in-group. Xenophobia manifests itself in several ways, often stemming from local frustration with improper refugee policy, clashing of cultural values, or from fear. Multiple cases of xenophobia-driven violence against refugees have arisen especially in the 21st century refugee crisis. In 2016, several EU member states reported harassment and xenophobic incidents against refugees: 75 cases of racism and xenophobic attacks against migrants and refugees in Greece; 53 in the Netherlands; 735 cases in Germany; and 47 cases reported in Finland. In Sweden, hand grenades were used to commit arson on several refugee accommodation centers in 2015, while several asylum centers, especially serving refugee Asians and Africans, were attacked by right-wing groups in France and Italy.

### Cultural/linguistic barriers

As taking on refugee status is not a choice but more often a necessity, refugees don't have ample time or opportunity to familiarize themselves with a completely distinct language or cultural customs. As such, communication with local populations is diminished, which can lead to social isolation, depression, and feed into other mental health issues. Struggling to speak a local language may also induce harassment and bullying, which discourages refugees from learning local languages altogether.

### Complex legal system

Relating to linguistic barriers, refugees often encounter complex legal systems with little to no direction on proper navigation. These systems include intricate immigration laws, which are crucial for refugees in understanding their personal rights and in avoiding deportation. With limited access to legal assistance, many refugees are left to fend for themselves.

The legal needs and demands of refugee populations are unique. Brookings cites that for “for both Syrian and Palestinian refugees, the most common types of legal problems were family law issues, accounting for 65 percent of all cases”. The remaining 35% was a combination of criminal legal issues, refugee-related issues, and civil issues. War and displacement in Syria and Palestine have torn apart families, creating enormous needs for legal advice “involving marriage, divorce, alimony, and child custody” (Brookings).

## **ECONOMIC INTEGRATION:**

Refugees face barriers not only in social integration, but also in economic integration: acquisition of proper housing and employment is heavily impeded due to structural boundaries.

Governments have historically struggled to integrate refugees into their economies due to strained public resources, invalid transfers of credentials (i.e a doctorate degree obtained in one country may not be valid in another), and lack of access to credit. In combating this,

governments must find ways to economically incorporate refugees into local and national economies.

### Housing

Housing access is a major concern for refugees worldwide. A refugee's first housing situation is more often than not "temporary federal custody"-- as previously stated, these facilities tend to be overcrowded and unsustainable, frequently becoming hotspots for human rights violations. If a refugee does not already have support networks that assist in finding housing, they are largely left to fend for themselves. Depending on the host country, refugees may face unaffordable housing prices, while also juggling a reliance on income support, lack of rental history and documentation, lacking understanding of the rental system, and discrimination from landlords. Combined, these factors prevent newly arrived refugees from securing adequate, long-term housing.

### Jobs

Employment for refugees may be hard to come by for many of the same reasons listed. Employers may not recognize formal training or education obtained abroad, or may hold unconscious (or conscious) bias against refugees. Refugees themselves may be unfamiliar with local labor laws, or unaware of opportunities open specifically for refugees. Additionally, some countries require refugees to provide proof of stable housing and an address before becoming eligible to open a bank account.

## **PAST UN / INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### Global Refugee Forum

The Global Refugee Forum is held by the UNHCR every 4 years and brings together member states & stakeholders to find solutions for problems faced by refugees. The forum mainly serves the purpose of supporting governments in creating conditions to be able to support refugees in ways which align with the 4 primary objectives which are from the Global Compact on Refugees, endorsed in 2018 (GCR). The first goal is the GCR is easing the pressure on host countries, which the forum supports through mobilizing financial support from the world bank, various financial institutions, charities, NGOs, & etc. The forum may also plan social support & service projects to reduce the economic & social strain on the host countries. The second is to enhance opportunities for self-reliance, which the forum supports by organizing policy reforms for governments on the right to work of availability or access to education, coordinating funding for vocational training programs, & including refugees in the social protection & healthcare systems of host countries. The third objective is to expand access to third country solutions, enabled by the forum through the creation of resettlement programs or complementary programs for educational or work opportunities or sponsorships. The final objective is supporting the conditions in the countries of origin for safe & dignified return for those who have fled. This

objective is supported by the forum through the creation of multistakeholder pledges to support development & reconstruction of infrastructure, land, and property.

#### ILO (International Labor Organization)

The International Labor Organization has worked in tandem with UNHRC, establishing projects in regions such as the Middle East, East Africa, the Sahel and Southeast Asia to develop the skills of refugees in self-reliance. Focusing mainly on “technical and vocational education and training, entrepreneurship support, work-based learning, skills development and recognition” (Global Compact of Refugees), the organization empowers refugees to seek out sustainable employment. At the same time, the ILO has reached out to national employment agencies in promoting equitable access for refugees seeking work, establishing education and skill development centers alongside facilitating access to refugee work permits.

#### UNESCO: Qualifications Passport

The UNESCO Qualifications Passport (UQP) has allowed refugees to receive recognition for their education and professional qualifications abroad, in countries where such experience would have been invalid. Acting as a middleman between refugees and host countries, a refugee applies for the Qualifications Passport, which takes them through an extensive evaluation process in determining their eligibility. Once the UQP has been granted, doors are opened for the applicant refugee in furthering their tertiary education and vocational opportunities.

## **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

- How should national governments properly incorporate refugees into established communities and economies, without impeding on the cultural values of refugees?
- How can the international community provide protections for internally displaced people, as well as pressure national governments to ensure similar protections?
- How can nations facilitate a practical transition from refugee to citizen through balancing social and economic integration?
- How will the international community ensure the rights of refugees are not violated whilst seeking refuge in host nations?

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