The Question of the Treatment of Refugees

Background

Persecution is a threat to life or freedom on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership of a particular social group. According to the UNHCR, refugees are people who are outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution or generalized violence and therefore require international protection. There are an estimated 32.5 million refugees worldwide. Just under half of forcibly displaced people are under the age of 18.

Refugees often report a plethora of mental health problems like depression, PTSD and anxiety, stemming from an uncertain future, an undeserved past and harsh present. Physical illnesses are prevalent. The number of refugees is rising exponentially; this is a prevalent issue with immeasurable, profound consequences, that needs to be addressed.

An asylum seeker is someone who has arrived in a country and asked for shelter – before a decision is made as to whether or not they are a refugee. They don't have the same rights as refugees do. There are 4.9 million asylum seekers worldwide.

In 1951, the UN created UNHCR, an organisation which safeguards rights of refugees, returnees, asylum seekers, stateless people by providing humanitarian assistance, with 10,000 staff members and a reach of over 120 countries. These rights, declared in the 1951 Refugee Convention, can be broken down into five major elements.

1) Non-refoulement: refugees cannot be sent back to countries of origin if this puts them at risk because of conflict or persecution.
2) Refugees should receive at least the same level of rights that any other foreigner who is a legal resident – freedom of thought, movement, from torture/degrading treatment.
3) Socioeconomic rights – refugees have the right to work, to provide for themselves and their families, as well as access to education and healthcare services.
4) Resettlement allows for the transferal between countries of asylum.
5) Once a refugee has crossed the border, they have the right to remain in safety in another country. This includes not to be penalised for being in or entering a country without permission where this is necessary for them to seek and receive asylum. A person is not required to claim asylum in the first safe country they reach.

A person must be physically in a country to claim asylum and cannot obtain a visa with the explicit purpose of seeking asylum. Therefore, individuals who do not

have visa-free travel to a safe country must enter either irregularly, such as by a small boat; by using false documents; or on a visa for some other purpose. This forces people to make dangerous, illegal routes to get to 'safe' countries.

Once claimed asylum, migrants must prove:

- There is a well-founded fear for persecution.
- There is a future risk of persecution/violence.
- The protection needed can't be gotten from anywhere within the country of origin.

Key Facts

- Turkey hosts the most refugees in the world (3.65 million, 4.31% of the population), followed by Columbia, then Germany.
- 72% of refugees originate from 5 countries – Syria (6.8 million), Venezuela (4.6 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million), South Sudan (2.4 million) and Myanmar (1.2 million).
- 36% of all refugees are hosted in just 5 countries.
- 1.5 million children were born as refugees.
- 74% of refugees are hosted in low and middle-income countries.
- 204,500 refugees were returned or were resettled.
- 69% of refugees are hosted in neighbouring countries.
- Of the 10 countries scoring the least accepting of migrants, nine were formerly part of the Soviet bloc, and most are located along the Balkan route once travelled by asylum seekers from Greece to Germany.
- There are 281 million migrants, approximately 3.6% of the world's population.

Key Issues

Poverty

Banned from working, people seeking asylum are forced to live below the poverty line. There aren't any rules regulating benefits given to asylum seekers. In Turkey (the country that hosts the most refugees in the world), every month, refugee families in the EU-funded Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme receive 20 euros for each member of the household. Minimum wage in Turkey is 440.29 euros per month. Even in developed countries like England, refugees are given just £5.84 a day to pay (without permission to work) to pay for all expenses including food, housing, medicine, electricity, sanitisation. Without sufficient funds, asylum seekers are forced to live through conditions, allowing for widespread mental and physical health conditions.

Waiting

People are often left to wait for months to years for a decision on their claim. As many countries don't give work permits before refugee status is granted, asylum seekers are stuck on low social benefits (given little money to support themselves,

access to education, healthcare etc), therefore have low qualities of life and are unable to integrate into society.

Hatred and Isolation

People suffer horrific violence, attacks and racist abuse, to the point where the UNCHR chief brought up the appalling "reported disturbing incidents of discrimination, violence, and racism". Lack of access to language lessons leaves many unable to integrate. It affects job opportunities – refugees don't have the same chances to help the economy, adding to the negative image surrounding migrants, leading to further discrimination.

Destitution

Many people seeking safety are forced into housing that is crowded, damp and unsafe. 22% of the world's refugee population live in refugee camps – an estimated 6.6 million people. Of this, 2 million are sheltered in self-settled, unmanaged camps. Refugee camps are designed as a short-term solution – tarp shelters, tents, shipping containers, concrete buildings - to keep people safe during emergencies, but emergency situations can become protracted, resulting in people living in camps for years or even decades in these unfathomable conditions. Refugees living in urban areas also face major challenges, forced to live in sub-standard dwellings, such as public buildings, collective centres and other types of informal settlements. Close proximity and lack of sanitation allows illness to thrive, and hope for the future to fall.

Relevant Organisations
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR)
- International organisation for migration
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- World food programme
- Non-governmental organisations of all scales
- Inter-governmental organisations (specific aid programmes).
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)
- European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX)

Questions to Consider
1) How can migrants travel safely to a country to declare asylum if they can't cross the country's borders legally? What reasons would they have to deny the first 'safe' country's help?
2) How do we change prejudice mindsets about refugees, to help with integration, against isolation? How are these discriminating ideas perpetuated and passed on? What groups of people tend to have these mindsets?
3) How do we protect the mental and physical health of refugees? What level of humanitarian support is necessary?

4) Is it necessary/possible for stricter regulations to be made on an international level affecting the rights for refugees? Is it a duty for member states individually, or a matter of international law?
5) How does addressing this problem affect the international community? What areas of the UN should be called upon to help?

Useful Links

Rights of refugees (3min video)

The UN Refugee Convention 1951 (4min video)

Asylum seekers (3min video)

Refugee-hosting countries (website)

Refugees, migrants, asylum (website)

Countries offering the most social benefits to migrants (website)

The Issue of the International Drug Trade

Background

The international drug trade is a global illegal market for drugs that has significant social, economic, and political consequences. It involves the cultivation, manufacturing and distribution of illegal drugs across borders. The demand for drugs is driven by a variety of factors, including social and economic factors. The drug trade has a number of negative impacts on society, including increased crime, violence, and public health issues. Drug trafficking organizations often resort to violence and intimidation to protect their profits and market share, leading to an increase in crime and insecurity in affected communities. Drug abuse can lead to serious health problems, including addiction, overdose, and the spread of infectious diseases such as HIV and hepatitis.

Key Definitions:

Narcotics - a drug or other substance that affects mood or behaviour and is consumed for non-medical purposes, especially one sold illegally

Drug trafficking - The production, transportation, and sale of illicit drugs, often involving organized criminal groups

Illicit drugs - Substances that are illegal to produce, sell, or use, such as heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine

Key Issues:

The sheer scale

- Drug trafficking is a global problem, with an estimated 271 million people using drugs in 2019
- The production and trafficking of drugs generate billions of dollars in revenue each year, with estimates ranging from $426 billion to $652 billion per year

This makes the drug trade one of the largest illicit markets in the world. The production of drugs occurs in many countries, including those in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, with the majority of the world's cocaine and heroin originating from Colombia and Afghanistan, respectively. The transportation and distribution of drugs involve a range of criminal organizations, including drug cartels,

transnational criminal organizations, and street gangs, and often involves the use of sophisticated networks and technologies. The trade in illegal drugs is linked to a range of other criminal activities, such as money laundering, corruption, and human trafficking, and contributes to social problems such as addiction, overdose deaths, and violence.

Overconsumption and Discoordination

An example of such is the opioid crisis, fuelled in part by the overprescription of prescription painkillers, has led to an increase in overdose deaths in many countries, including the United States, Canada, and Australia.

Drug policies and approaches to drug control vary widely between countries, with some countries focusing on harm reduction and treatment programs, while others focus on drug interdiction and law enforcement efforts.

COVID-19

The pandemic has disrupted global supply chains, including those related to the production and trafficking of drugs. For example, travel restrictions and border closures have made it more difficult for drug traffickers to move drugs across borders, leading to shortages of some drugs in some regions. As a result, drug prices have increased in some areas, as drug traffickers seek to maintain profits in the face of supply chain disruptions.

It has also led to increased stress, anxiety, and social isolation, which has contributed to an increase in drug use in some populations. In some countries, the pandemic has also led to a reduction in access to treatment and harm reduction services, exacerbating the negative consequences of drug use.

Synthetic Drugs

In recent years, there have been significant changes to drug use patterns, with some users turning to new drugs or new methods of drug use. For example, in some areas, the pandemic has led to an increase in the use of synthetic drugs such as fentanyl, which are easier to transport and distribute than traditional drugs such as cocaine or heroin allowing for maximised profits.

Previous Action

The United Nations (UN) has been involved in addressing the issue of the international drug trade for the last few decades. In 1961, the UN adopted the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, which established a global framework for drug control and criminalised the production and distribution of narcotics and their raw materials.

The United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances: This treaty was adopted in 1988 and aims to strengthen international cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking. The treaty established measures for controlling the production and distribution of drugs,

including provisions for the deportation of drug traffickers and the seizure of drug-related products.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC): The UNODC was established in 1997 and serves as the primary UN agency responsible for addressing the issue of international drug trade. The UNODC works with governments and other partners to develop and implement drug control policies, including those related to drug demand reduction, drug treatment, and international law enforcement.

Since then, the UN has taken a comprehensive approach to the drug trade, focusing on harm reduction strategies that focus on reducing supply and demand. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is the lead agency responsible for coordinating global efforts to combat drug trafficking and abuse. It supports countries in implementing drug control policies and programs and works to promote international cooperation in addressing the drug trade.

The UN has also held several high-level meetings on drug policy, including the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS) in 2016. The UNGASS aimed to take stock of the current drug situation and introduce new more modern strategies to mitigate the issue of drugs. The result being a document that reaffirmed the UN's commitment to a more comprehensive approach to drug control, which includes both law enforcement and public health measures.

Questions to Consider

1. What are the key factors driving the international drug trade, and how can the international community address these factors effectively?

2. How can the delegation promote cooperation and coordination among different countries and organizations to address the issue of the international drug trade?

3. What are the challenges in addressing the issue of the international drug trade in conflict-affected areas, and how can the international community effectively address this issue in such contexts?

4. How can the international community address the issue of drug addiction and drug-related harm, including overdose deaths and the spread of HIV and other infectious diseases?

Useful Links

Drug Trafficking UNODC

Illegal Drug Trade - Wikipedia

Examples of Some Drug Strategy Reports (this is a US source)

The Issue of the Treatment of Indigenous Populations

Definition

Under the 1980 Martinez Cobo study on the 'Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations', a working definition of indigenous communities, peoples and nations was given. This definition included the right of Indigenous Peoples themselves to define what and who is Indigenous.

The working definition read as;

"Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions, and legal system."(Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022)

The Study defined historical continuity as consisting of;

1.Occupation of ancestral lands, or at least of part of them;

2.Common ancestry with the original occupants of these lands;

3.Culture in general, or in specific manifestations eg. religion, dress, means of livelihood, lifestyle

4.Language (whether used as the only language, as mother-tongue, as the habitual means of communication at home or in the family, or as the main, preferred, habitual, general or normal language);

5.Residence on certain parts of the country, or in certain regions of the world;

6.Other relevant factors.

On an individual basis, an Indigenous person is one who belongs to these Indigenous populations through self-identification as Indigenous (group consciousness) and is recognised and accepted by these populations as one of its members (acceptance by the group). This preserves for these communities the sovereign right and power to decide who belongs to them, without external interference." (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022)

Background

Indigenous Peoples are also known as First Peoples, Aboriginal Peoples, or Native Peoples.

According to Amnesty International, there are 476 million Indigenous people around the world that are spread across more than 90 countries. They belong to more than 5,000 different Indigenous peoples and speak more than 4,000 languages. Indigenous people represent about 5% of the world's population with 70% residing in Asia and they safeguard 80% of the planet's biodiversity.

However Indigenous people make up 15% of the world's extreme poor. Globally, they also suffer higher rates of landlessness, malnutrition, poverty and internal displacement than other groups. All across the world, Indigenous peoples' life expectancy is up to 20 years lower compared to non-Indigenous people. Indigenous people are also often discriminated and marginalised against in legal systems leaving them even more vulnerable to violence and abuse.

Around the world, Indigenous People have been denied self-determination, which according to Amnesty International is – a binding principle in international law which refers to peoples' right to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

Indigenous women have higher rates of maternal mortality, teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases and are more likely to suffer violence. In South-east Asia, most trafficked women and girls are from Indigenous communities.

Previous Action and Key Points

- 1923-1925 First International Involvement
  - In 1923, Haudenosaunee Chief Deskaheh travelled to Geneva to speak to the League of Nations and defend the right of his people to live under their own laws, on their own land and under their own faith. He was not allowed to speak and returned home in 1925.
  - Māori religious leader T.W. Ratana sent part of his delegation to Geneva to the League of Nations after being denied access to petition

King George. He was protesting the breaking of the Treaty of Waitangi from 1840 but was denied access.
- 1981 Martínez Cobo Study
  - o This study on the "Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations" gave the first working definition of "Indigenous communities, peoples and nations". (See definitions)
- 1982 Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP)
  - o Established as a subsidiary organ to the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. The Working Group provided an opportunity for Indigenous Peoples to share their experiences and raise their concerns at the UN.
  - o Met for the last time in July 2007.
- 1989 International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No 169
  - o Indigenous and Tribal People's Convention 1989 - only international conference that deals exclusively with the rights of Indigenous and Tribal people.
- 1993 International Year of the World's Indigenous People
  - o The UN General Assembly proclaimed the 'International Year of the World's Indigenous People' to encourage a new relationship between the international community and Indigenous people.
  - o The UN Secretary-General opened the Voluntary Fund to foster educational and cultural events to assist with the Year's activities.
- 1994 International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples
  - o An attempt to increase the United Nations' commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples worldwide.
  - o As part of the Decade, several UN specialised agencies worked with Indigenous Peoples to design and implement projects on health, education, housing, employment, development, and the environment to promote the protection of indigenous peoples and their traditional customs, values, and practices.
- 2000 Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
  - o Advisory body to the Economic and Social Council, with a mandate to discuss Indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health, and human rights.
  - o Provides expert advice and recommendations on Indigenous issues to the Council, as well as to programmes, funds and agencies of the United Nations, through the Council
  - o Raises awareness and promotes the integration and coordination of activities related to Indigenous issues within the UN system
  - o Prepares and disseminates information on Indigenous issues
- 2001 Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
  - o Appointed as part of the system of thematic Special Procedures.
  - o Renewed by the Commission on Human Rights in 2004, and by the Human Rights Council in 2007.
- 2005 Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples
  - o Done in order to further strengthen international cooperation to solve problems faced by Indigenous People

- - - o Trust Fund established to promote the decade's objectives and used to provide small grants to projects by Indigenous organisations or organisations working for Indigenous Peoples.
  - 2007 Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)
    - o Made up of five independent experts on the rights of Indigenous Peoples which are appointed by the Human Rights Council.
    - o Provides the Human Rights Council with thematic advice.
  - 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
  - 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP)
  - 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages
    - o Proclaimed in 2016 resolution 71/178
  - 2020 A Call to Action on Building an Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Future with Indigenous Peoples
  - 2022 International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL)

Relevant Organisations

- International Labour Organisation (ILO) 1919
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) 1945
- The UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) 1982-2007
- United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) 2000
- Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) 2007

Relevant Resolutions and reports

- 1993 Resolution A/RES/47/75 proclaimed the International Year of the World's Indigenous People
  http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/48/163
- 1994 resolution A/RES/48/163 launched the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples (1995-2004)
  http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/48/163
- 2005 resolution 59/174 proclaimed the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (2005-2015)
  http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=A/RES/59/174
- 2005 document A/60/270 in resolution 59/174 contains the Programme of Action for the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People
  http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=A/60/270
- 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
  https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/un-declaration-rights-indigenous-peoples-1#:~:text=Indigenous%20peoples%20and%20individuals%20are,their%20indigenous%20origin%20or%20identity.
- 2007 Resolution 6/36 that established 'The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' (EMRIP)
- http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_6_36.pdf
- 2012 final report on the achievement of the goal and objectives of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A%2F69%2F271&Submit=Search&Lang=E
- 2016 resolution 71/178 that proclaimed 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/71/178
- 2019 resolution A/RES/74/396 that proclaimed the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/389/49/PDF/N1938949.pdf?OpenElement

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