

From the Chair's Desk

Welcome, delegates, to NTUMUN 2012.

As co-chairs of NTUMUN 2012 High Commissioner of Refugees, we look forward to seeing you for a fruitful session

Every Model United Nations session is a prestigious platform to be able to voice your opinion, think on your feet, have productive interactions with people, learn, and articulate yourself.

As representatives of various countries, we hope to see you at NTUMUN with the spirit of wanting to learn and interact, and not merely focus on the academic and competitive side of the debate.

It is with the intention of clarifying the duty of our council as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, our key points of focus, and the intent of our discussion, that we present to you a brief council guide.

It will serve as a starting point and as a helpful preliminary guide to your own research. Within this council guide, we have tried to cover as many key points of the agenda as possible; however, do note that the information within this guide is brief, concise, and should definitely be supported by your own research about the issue and your country's standpoint.

As responsible and diligent delegates, you are reminded to keep your country's best interests in mind, and also to behave in a manner appropriate for a diplomat – that is, with decorum, tact, and respect for your fellow delegates,. We also hope that delegates will come adequately prepared for the debate, and will be prepared to defend your country's stance on the issue discussed.

We hope you find that this council guide is an adequate summary of our agenda, and that you enjoy yourselves at NTUMUN!

Refugees – A Backdrop

Refugees are people who have suffered human rights violations and who have fled to other countries in search of protection (Loescher et al, 2008).

Throughout much of human history, there have been refugees due to wars, political risings, ethnic discrimination and a host of other human rights abuses, with the biggest numbers during the two world wars and from the 1980s to the 1990s (Loescher, Betts, Milner, 2008).

Other Similar Terms

Asylum Seekers

Generally refugees who have managed to make their way to More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs), usually in the West, have to claim asylum – which is the right to safety in another sovereign authority or country. While seeking asylum, they are not allowed to hold employment until the approval of their claims. If their claims are not approved, they are supposed to return back to their home countries, but in reality, many continue to remain in the country illegally (Senker, 2011).

Migrants

Migrants, unlike refugees, are not forced to flee from their homes due to strife and conflicts. Migrants may be desperately poor with little prospects in the area or country they live in (Senker, 2011).

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

IDPs face the same problems as refugees, but instead of crossing the border to another country, they travel to a different part of their own country to escape conflicts. As of 2007, there were 25 million IDPs worldwide (Senker, 2011).

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. By mandate, the UNHCR is meant to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide.

The main purpose of the UNHCR is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country. It also has a mandate to help stateless people. (UNHCR Website, 2012)

In more than six decades, the agency has helped tens of millions of people restart their lives. Today, a staff of some 7,685 people in more than 125 countries continues to help some 33.9million persons. (UNHCR Website, 2012)

António Guterres became the 10th UN High Commissioner for Refugees on June 15, 2005. A former Portuguese prime minister, Guterres was elected by the UN General Assembly to a five-year term. In April 2010, the General Assembly re-elected Guterres to a second five-year term.

As High Commissioner, he heads one of the world's foremost humanitarian organizations. UNHCR has twice won the Nobel Peace Prize. Its more than 7,685 staff members work in 126 countries providing protection and assistance to millions of refugees, returnees, internally displaced people and stateless persons. More than 85 per cent of its staff work in the field, often in difficult and dangerous duty stations. UNHCR's needs-based budget for 2012 is US\$3.59 billion. (UNHCR Website, 2012)

Focal Points

Kurds in Syria

The routine discrimination of the Kurdish minority in Syria has a variety of aspects – ranging from them being controversially stripped of citizenship rights in 1962, to the ‘Day of Rage’ and the assassination of Kurdish leader Mashaal Tammo in 2011. The examination of existing laws to protect their rights, the limitations of laws, and means to overcome the laws should be focused upon.

Romas in Europe

The Romas, as Europe’s largest minority group, have often been the target of attacks in central European countries. The brutality meted indiscriminately upon man, woman, and child, is a shocking violation of the spirit of the United Nations, and must be discussed, assessed, and solved.

Rohingyas in Southern and South East Asia

The human rights violations suffered by the Rohingyas under the Burmese junta, and allegedly as of 2005 in UNHCR refugee camps, is a grave issue that requires immediate attention by the council.

Afghani, Somali, and Libyan Refugee Crises

The Afghani refugee crisis that dates back approximately 33 years, the brunt borne especially by children in Somalian refugee groups, and the ‘logistical nightmare’ (Guterres, March 2011) that is the Libyan refugee crisis, encompass a variety of problems, each with specific problematic areas that must be scrutinized, discussed, and possibly resolved during the course of our discussion.

In Conclusion

We anticipate an in-depth, productive discussion of the heinous violations of basic human rights in the situations faced by refugees. The discussion will be based on the areas highlighted in the guide.

The refugee crisis is a vast problematic area faced by the global community. Focusing solely on the geographical and ethnic groups stated would ensure a detailed, and therefore more fruitful debate on the issue, and ensure a higher possibility of resolving the issues at hand. We expect you to research thoroughly about the ethnic groups stated, and provide to your fellow delegates a healthy amount of information to process and analyze, so that the discussions are comprehensive, and the results are as satisfactory as possible.

We wish you all the very best!

Sincerely,
Your co-chairs,

Meher Deva
Chua Hexun