

**Forum: Special Political and Decolonization Committee (GA4)**

**Issue: Preventing the radicalization in refugee camps**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Covid 19 pandemic has widened the existing inequalities. The lack of hygiene and basic supplies combined with long school closures take a disproportionately heavy toll on refugees. They have restricted access to public services and cannot afford mobile devices for online learning for their children. Moreover, they are more vulnerable to catching the virus as they are overcrowded.



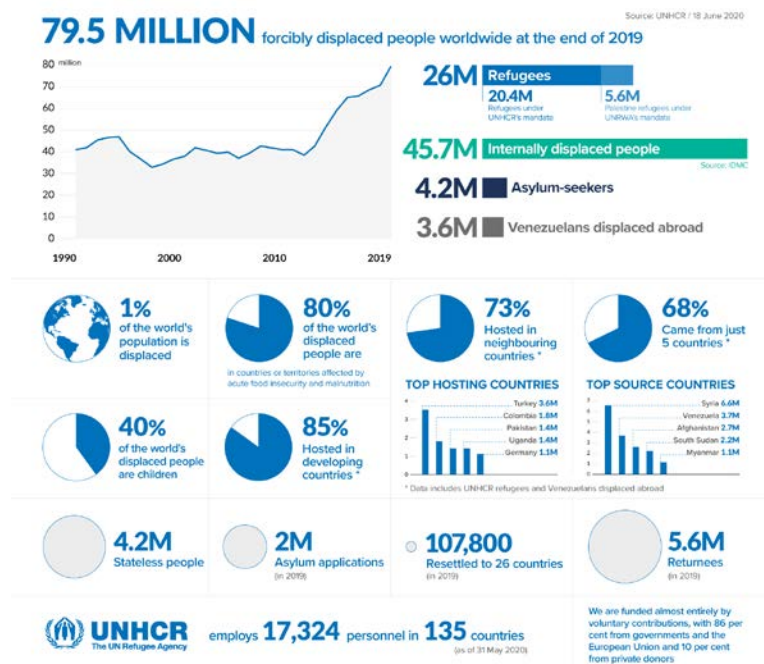
Image of a refugee camp in Somalia.

Image source: Harrouk, Christele. "Refugee Camps: From Temporary Settlements to Permanent Dwellings." ArchDaily, ArchDaily, 27 May 2020, [www.archdaily.com/940384/refugee-camps-from-temporary-settlements-to-permanent-dw](http://www.archdaily.com/940384/refugee-camps-from-temporary-settlements-to-permanent-dw)

Thus, they feel afraid and hopeless. All this adds up to the hardships they encountered before. After arriving traumatized in a new country, they face language difficulties, discrimination from the local communities and unemployment.

So, they are disenchanted by the states that make no allowances for them. This has led to increased incidents of violence inside the camps and to the search for alternative opportunity structures with radical organizations providing such examples. The vulnerability of refugees is magnified where they have limited material and financial resources and their family and community structures have been strained or destroyed. Especially women and children who are vulnerable to attacks. They are raped by other refugees, acting either individually or in gangs or are intimidated and consequently blackjacked for (early) marriage and submission. The frustration of camp life can also lead to sexual abuse, within the family. The overwhelming majority of the perpetrators are not radical terrorists but disconnected from society and look for identity and

belongingness. Hence, it is of the utmost importance to better understand the prevalence of the violence experienced within the immigrant groups in order to implement appropriate strategies. The UNHCR has become much more involved in security issues, especially as they affect ongoing operations. For another, the emergence of new security concerns for states, such as terrorism, has led to the 'securitization' of practices related to asylum.<sup>1</sup>



Figures about refugees at a glance. Image source: "What is a Refugee Camp? Definition and Statistics." How to Help Refugees — Aid, Relief and Donations | USA for UNHCR, [www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/camps/](http://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/camps/).

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Refugee camp

Refugee camps are non-permanent facilities set up to provide immediate protection and help to people who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, persecution or

<sup>1</sup> "79.5 million Forcibly Displaced People Worldwide at the End of 2019 (English) – UNHCR Greece." UNHCR Greece, [www.unhcr.org/gr/en/79-5-million-forcibly-displaced-people-worldwide-at-the-end-of-2019-english-3-2](http://www.unhcr.org/gr/en/79-5-million-forcibly-displaced-people-worldwide-at-the-end-of-2019-english-3-2).

physical force. They offer a safe haven for refugees and cater their most basic needs - such as food, water, shelter, medical treatment and other basic services – during crisis.<sup>2</sup>

### Refugee

"A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."<sup>3</sup>

### Radicalization

A phased and complex procedure in which an individual or a group embraces a radical ideology that accepts, uses or approves of violence, including acts of terrorism, to reach a specific political or ideological goal.<sup>4</sup>

### Deradicalization

The process in which somebody adopts more unbiased and open-minded views.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The linkage of security concerns and humanitarian assistance and asylum is not new. It can be seen in accounts of the emergence of organized refugee assistance in Europe following the Second World War. In the 1960s and 1970s, African governments in particular attached considerable importance to security concerns arising from refugee movements. Aware of the potential of conflicts to spill over borders via refugee flows, the international community has always emphasized that asylum must be recognized as a neutral, non-political act embedded in a system of multilateralism. Moreover, the 1951 UN Refugee Convention refers to an explicit system of checks and balances regarding states' security concerns. The system aims to protect individuals and to prevent potential interstate tension.

It should be taken into consideration that countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Uganda, Greece, Turkey, Italy, Germany and Sweden have received large numbers of refugees year after year, whereas many other countries have received almost none and prevent

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<sup>2</sup> "What is a Refugee Camp? Definition and Statistics." *How to Help Refugees — Aid, Relief and Donations | USA for UNHCR*, [www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/camps/](http://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/camps/).

<sup>3</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees." *UNHCR*, [www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10](http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10).

<sup>4</sup> "Prevention of Radicalisation." *Migration and Home Affairs - European Commission*, 6 Dec. 2016, [ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/counter-terrorism/radicalization\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/counter-terrorism/radicalization_en).

them from entering the country by closing their borders. Several of these are wealthy and populous countries that are much more capable of helping than many of the countries taking the greatest responsibility today. A strong example of such a country is Japan, the world's third largest economy with a population of 127 million. Japan has only taken 1,732 refugees in the last ten years – accounting to 0.001 per cent of the country's population.

### **The refugee wave of 2015**

In 2015 hundreds of thousands of people escaped war and suffering, mostly from Syria and Afghanistan due to escalation of conflicts. Shocking pictures of trapped and dead refugees on islands or overseas spread the world causing a controversy over the refugee policy of the EU. Turkey, Greece and Italy are overwhelmed as they become the entrance of refugees to Western Europe. It remains unknown how many people cross undetected each year.

Most refugees entering Greece followed the so-called Western Balkan Route into the EU. Firstly, they went to North Macedonia, followed by Serbia, Hungary and then towards Western Europe. Refugees also sail across the Aegean Sea into Greece from Turkey using boats of smugglers. This sea border is one of the most hazardous borders a refugee may cross worldwide as the Mediterranean border death count is the highest in the world. The refugees more often than not are deceived by the smugglers who claim extravagant sums of money for the route to Greece. The use of open boats contains many risks for refugees who are drenched in water and suffer from hypothermia when they reach land. About half of the people that drowned crossing the Aegean were children.

### **The continuous problems in refugee camps**

Even those who reach their destination after an arduous journey face extreme hardship. Not only do they have to deal with bureaucracy and appalling living conditions but they face resentment from local communities. Local citizens feel insecure by the presence of refugees and are misled by far-right parties who consider the refugees enemies. For instance, the German police registered a total of 609 attacks on asylum-seekers and refugees living in refugee camps during the first half of 2019. The crimes included verbal insults, arson and harassment. It is self-explanatory that these attacks deteriorate the already existing tensions in the camps.

Furthermore, on September 8, 2020 a fire destroyed the camp of Moria, the biggest refugee camps of Greece of more than 12,000 asylum seekers. According to the Greek government, asylum seekers started the fire deliberately in order to protest

against quarantine measures that came into force after detecting positive Covid 19 cases in the camp. The fire caused utter chaos and violence conflict among the refugees. The fire left many refugees homeless on the street. The situation alarmed the EU and sparked a debate about the living conditions in refugee camps.



Violence and anger becoming commonplace in refugee camps. Image of refugees in Moria, 21.07.2017, Reuters/G. Moutafis <https://www.dw.com/en/violence-becoming-commonplace-in-moria-refugee-camp/a-39793594>

### **The situation in the African continent**

According to the United Nations, especially developing countries, mostly in Africa, are welcoming at the moment 80% of the world's refugee population. Refugees living in developing countries put enormous pressure on water and health care systems. One region that has been putting up with particularly high numbers of refugees for a long time is Sub-Saharan Africa. Around one third of global refugees are hosted there. Most refugees from these countries remain within the region. The highest numbers of refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa were recorded in 1994. At that time, the conflicts in Central Africa and the Rwandan genocide forced millions of people to flee from their home. When the tensions eased in these countries, Eastern Africa and the Horn of Africa became the primary source of refugees.<sup>5</sup>

Kakuma refugee camp, located in northwestern Kenya, is the biggest refugee camp in the world. Set up in 1992, the camp is managed by the Kenyan Department of Refugee

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<sup>5</sup> Kasozi, Jafali. "The Refugee Crisis and the Situation in Sub-Saharan Africa." Österreichische Gesellschaft Für Europapolitik, 26 Nov. 2020, [www.oegfe.at/policy-briefs/the-refugee-crisis-and-the-situation-in-sub-saharan-africa/?lang=en](http://www.oegfe.at/policy-briefs/the-refugee-crisis-and-the-situation-in-sub-saharan-africa/?lang=en).

Affairs as well as the UNHCR. Today, Kakuma hosts 100,000 South Sudanese and 55,000 Somali refugees, most of whom escaped from their homelands due to civil war. All in all, the camp hosts refugees from about 22 countries. The camp's resources and infrastructure are overtaxed, and thus residents have not access to proper education. Malnutrition is widespread throughout the camp—especially among disillusioned younger people—and overcrowding has hastened the spread of infectious diseases.<sup>6</sup>

## **MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED**

### **UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)**

The agency plays a very significant role in the issue. It collaborates with governments and provides humanitarian aid to refugees. However, it has been criticized for procrastination and the lack of modernization after its foundation. The UNHCR opposes the creation of camps as most of them do not offer decent living conditions. When there is no alternative, the organization provides resources and humanitarian support so that good and secure shelters are made.

### **Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN)**

The RAN is a network of frontline practitioners who deal with people prone to radicalization and those already being radicalized. They have many different roles with social workers, teachers, healthcare experts, police officers or prison officers being an example. They are engaged in preventing and tackling violent extremism in all its forms and reintegrating violent extremists.

### **The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)**

Has been extending humanitarian aid and a safe haven for migrants and displaced people for a long time, in various countries irrespective of their legal status. It has a presence in more than 190 countries. Red Cross and Red Crescent groups annually help millions of refugees and asylum seekers

### **Global shelter cluster**

Major organizations have joined forces to provide shelters to homeless refugees. UNHCR co-leads the Global Shelter Cluster with the International Federation of the Red

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<sup>6</sup> "Story Map Journal."

[www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=8ff1d1534e8c41adb5c04ab435b7974b](http://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=8ff1d1534e8c41adb5c04ab435b7974b).

Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). While the IFRC is in charge of the team in natural disaster situations, the UNHCR leads the team in conflict-generated displacement.

### Greece

Greece has been severely hit by refugee waves from 2015 in midst of an unprecedented social and economic crisis. In addition, its neighboring state Turkey, which has also been disproportionately stricken by the refugee surge, behaves in a provocative manner. In March 2020, Turkey opened borders for Europe-bound refugees and helped them go to the Greek border with the Greek government pushing back all undocumented immigrants.

### Germany

Germany welcomed over one million refugees in 2015. The UN figures propose that Germany managed to integrate many refugees into the community. All refugee children that receive asylum in Germany have access to education.

### Italy

Italy has also faced severe hardships due to the refugee crisis. After ongoing tensions, the local authorities increasingly refused to let boats with asylum seekers dock in their ports. In 2016, 181,000 refugees and migrants came to Italy by sea, but that number dropped to 14,000 in 2019.

### Central African Republic (CAR)

Ongoing tensions sparked by armed groups since 2013 and instability due to turbulent and obscure elections in the Central African Republic (CAR) have provoked a refugee surge to Sub-Saharan Africa. Many people have been internally displaced and many leave the country voluntarily because of the high poverty rates.

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

| DATE              | DESCRIPTION OF EVENT   |
|-------------------|--|
| 9 September, 2011 | Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) comes into force with the view of |

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
|                  | promoting collaboration on countering extremisms   |
| 2015             | Hundreds of thousands of people escape war and suffering, mostly from Syria and Afghanistan due to escalation of conflicts and want to seek safe haven in Europe. Countries in the Mediterranean sea are overburdened as they are seen as getaways.        |
| August 2015      | German Chancellor Angela Merkel declares an open borders policy towards refugees fleeing into Europe. This unleashes a wave of refugees who want to go to Germany through the Balkan route. Thousands of refugees try to migrate to the western countries. |
| March 2016       | The Balkan route through Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary is officially closed. In addition, The EU concurs to safely resettle one Syrian refugee from Turkey for each irregular migrant returned to Turkey from Greece.                                      |
| 9 December, 2020 | The Counter Terrorism Agenda is put into force with the aim to assist Member States in better anticipating and protecting innocents from terrorist threat.   |

## RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS



It is a fact that many countries feel not affected by the issue of radicalization in refugee camps, as they either do not open their borders for refugees to enter the country or do not face the issue in their facilities and thus hold the UN back from taking action to tackle the issue efficiently. Nevertheless the following consists of the UN's most successful attempts on solving the issue at hand.

### **Refugee Protection and Sexual Violence No. 73<sup>7</sup>**

The resolution establishes fundamental rights of refugees when assaulted and aims to accelerate the process of cases when refugees have been hurt. Moreover, it establishes a feeling of safety by considering the aforementioned cases of special concern.

### **The 1951 Refugee Convention<sup>8</sup>**

The treaty defines who a refugee is under international law and elaborates the rights of people granted asylum and the respective responsibilities of the host countries regarding their housing, education and employment.

### **Universal declaration of human rights of 1948<sup>9</sup>**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. It is a common ground of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected. It proclaims that everyone has the right to enjoy decent living conditions and safety.

### **Convention on the Rights of the Child (resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989)<sup>10</sup>**

One of the aspects the convention explores are the requirements governments need to meet and social measures they need to take so that they protect children from abuse and neglect.

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<sup>7</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Refugee Protection and Sexual Violence No. 73 (XLIV) - 1993." *Refworld*, 7 June 2021, [www.refworld.org/docid/3ae68c6810.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae68c6810.html).

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency, [www.unhcr.org/4d934f5f9.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/4d934f5f9.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> United Nations. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." *United Nations*, [www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights](http://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights).

<sup>10</sup> "OHCHR | Convention on the Rights of the Child." [www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx).

## PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

There are not many previous efficient actions in order to tackle this particular issue. One which is closely related with the topic is the global Shelter Cluster. The programme promotes collaboration among states and strengthens existing capacities in order to cope with humanitarian crisis and offer a safe shelter. It supported in 2015 15,5 million people with shelter. The decent living conditions should contribute to the deradicalization of refugees.

Another attempt has been the Counter-Terrorism Agenda, parts of which seek to support Member States in implementing preventive actions such as funding the provision of psychological help from experts to traumatized refugees. Its aim is to deter refugees from joining terrorist organizations by exchanging information about radical refugees and integrating them in the local community.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

There are a plethora of possible solutions but it goes without saying that more than this must be done to tackle the issue. First and foremost, the UN could raise the awareness of its member states and decide upon a common migration policy which will respect the fundamental rights of refugees and highlight the positive aspects of refugees. Bearing in mind that many nations with open sea borders or financial constraints carry a much heavier burden as many refugees stay there for a long period waiting for a granted asylum. It would be advisable to make each country pay its fair share so that the refugees would not be overcrowded in one region.

Eliminating bureaucracy obstacles and accelerating the asylum process should be a priority. In addition, the states could find other housing alternatives. For instance, make private hosting arrangements for the refugees financed by UN funds. The states will need to give regular feedback to an independent UN committee which will supervise the situation and promote transparency regarding the allocation of the money. Another solution would be to use abandoned state buildings and rearrange them to shelters. Refugees must be able to exercise their rights and freedoms, make meaningful choices about issues affecting their lives, contribute to their community and live with greater dignity and independence. Sending psychologists and promoting education inside the camps will contribute towards deradicalizing people and easing tensions. Bridging gaps and creating an environment of respect is very significant. The responsibility of providing security in a refugee camp usually lies with the host country. In many camps

refugees take advantage of the power vacuum and create their own patrolling systems as police protection is insufficient. Consequently, camp security forces should be enhanced and be available around the clock in order to deter conflicts.

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Field Code Changed

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