



Chair Report

Special Political and Decolonization Committee

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee deals with issues relating to decolonization and special political matters and focuses primarily on a group of five decolonization related issues.

<https://www.un.org/en/ga/fourth/>

REPORT: Protection of Asylum Seekers

Introduction

In recent years as the world has seen a spike in violent conflicts, there has been a spike in the number of people fleeing their countries and seeking asylum. Asylum is a process in which refugees, normally fleeing from violence or conflict in their home country, attempt to gain refuge in another country. Asylum-seekers are those who are waiting for the asylum requests to be processed.

After the great conflicts of the first half of the 20th century and the millions of people that they displaced, it was clear to the nations of the UN that there had to be framework established that would set guidelines as to how the nations of the world would handle refugees. The 1951 Refugee Convention clearly outlined who a refugee was and the rights guaranteed to individuals who are granted asylum in certain countries. The 1967 refugee protocol later came, replaced the 1951 treaty and extended the status of refugee to those whose displacement occurred after 1951. These two treaties set in place the framework that would be used to tackle the problems up through the modern day.

General Overview

At the end of 2018 there were 3.5 million asylum seekers through out the world, many coming from conflict riddled nations like Syria, South Sudan, and Venezuela. Many of the asylum-seekers have attempted to flee to countries like Turkey, Germany, Russia and the US. On their journey to asylum, asylum-seekers often face dangers, be it from the violence they are fleeing from, or from the dangers involved with the long journey to



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the country of asylum. Given the dangers faced by asylum seeker both in and out of their country, protection of asylum-seekers is an important priority for the UN.

The civil war in Syria has been waging since 2011 when protests during the Arab Spring against President Bashar al-Assad's government turned into violent conflicts between rebel group and his government. Since then, the situation has only worsened with many different groups fighting each other and the government fighting their own people. President Assad has even used chemical weapons on communities of innocent civilians. Given all of this violence, millions have fled to neighboring countries and European countries, seeking a better life and an escape from the violence that is gripping their home countries. Most of these refugees have sought asylum in countries like Turkey and Germany. While Turkey has welcomed many, the government has expressed that they will one-day return to Syria. The German government has welcomed millions of refugees from Syria, but anti-refugee sentiments have been on the rise, and some refugees face violence.

The crisis in Venezuela began when long time socialist president, Hugo Chavez died in 2013. This coincided with a drastic drop in the price of crude oil that was the driving force of the Venezuelan economy and that paid for the social programs that made Chavez so popular. Chavez's successor, Nicolas Maduro, was forced to cut the social programs due to this lessened income, which caused widespread protests across the country. These protests continued, with many protesters calling for the ousting of Maduro. This situation culminated with Juan Guaido, the leader of the National assembly, declaring himself president and attempting to overthrow Maduro. Given the economic crisis in the country and the violence-taking place between pro-Maduro, and pro-Guaido forces, many Venezuelans have sought asylum in countries like Colombia and Peru.

South Sudan is another country that has seen violent conflict that has displaced millions of civilians. The conflict started when Salva Kiir, the president of South Sudan and a Dinka, South Sudan's ethnic majority, accused Reik Machar, his vice president and a Nuer, one of South Sudan's biggest ethnic minorities, of trying to overthrow him. This began a violent struggle between the Dinkas and the Nuers, with each faction being led by Kiir and Machar respectively. Both sides of this conflict have committed atrocities against each other and have forced millions to flee to countries like Uganda, Ethopia and Sudan.

Major Parties Involved



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Countries that are being fled: Syria, South Sudan, and Venezuela

Countries where people are seeking asylum: Turkey, Germany, Russia, and US

The UNHCR, the UN's refugee agency, has played a major role in the protection of asylum seekers, and has established much of the framework that governs the asylum process.

Timeline of Key Events

1939-1945: The violence of the Second World War along with the atrocities of the Holocaust displaced millions, and makes it clear to the world community that there must be standards and protocols relating to refugees and asylum-seekers.

1950: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established to protect refugees and help them in their attempts to seek safety.

1951: The 1951 Refugee Convention defines what a refugee is and establishes who can or cannot seek asylum. It also establishes the rights of those seeking asylum and the responsibilities of countries that grant asylum.

1967: The Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted and extended the rights outlined in the 1951 Refugee Convention to refugees who were displaced after 1951.

March 2011: The Syrian civil war begins, which will devastate that country and force millions from their homes. The millions would most often seek asylum in neighboring countries or countries in Europe.

April 2013: Nicolas Maduro is elected president of Venezuela. Under his administration the country will see a great deal of economic hardship and political upheaval. This economic hardship and the violence caused by this political upheaval will lead millions of Venezuelans to seek asylum in countries like Colombia and Peru.

December 2013: Salva Kiir accuses Reik Machar of plotting to overthrow Kiir, which begins the South Sudanese Civil War. This war, fueled by ethnic division, has displaced millions. Most refugees have fled to Uganda, Ethiopia and Sudan.

2019: 70.8 million people across the world have been forced from their homes.

Past Attempts at Resolving This Issue



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GA: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares in Article 14 that “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.”

GA: A/RES/2312(XXII), which passed in 1967, outlines who does and doesn't qualify for asylum. It also establishes the rights of those who are seeking asylum.

UNHCR: In 2013 the UNHCR released a report outlining ways to make sure that Syrians fleeing into Greece seeking asylum are accepted and are well treated.

GA: In 2018, due to increasing demands on the UNHCR, its executive committee was expanded.

Suggested Websites

- UNHCR website: <https://www.unhcr.org/>
- UN documents relating to refugees and asylum-seekers: <https://www.refworld.org/>
- A brief article about the history of the 1951 and 1967 Refugee Treaty and Protocols: <https://immigrationhistory.org/item/the-1951-refugee-convention/>