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UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

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Introduction:

1. Director's Welcome Letter

Dear delegates,

I am honored to welcome you to AUSMUN 2024, where you will play an essential role in shaping global discourse about world issues. This year's conference is set to be a platform for innovation, collaboration, and meaningful dialogue. Here we will explore global issues, analyze the complexities of the same, and propose solutions that satisfy the varying perspectives of countries in the international community.

It is important to remember that you think critically, engage in constructive debate, and seek to achieve common ground with your fellow delegates. At AUSMUN, we encourage you to approach this experience with an open mind and a commitment to finding a solution. This conference is not only a simulation but also an opportunity for you to develop skills that benefit your academic, professional, and personal lives. It is a chance to form connections with individuals who share a similar passion for global issues and diplomacy. I encourage you to make the most of this unique experience and to challenge your limits by thinking beyond the ordinary. Together, we will all contribute to the legacy of excellence that AUSMUN is known for.

I look forward to meeting you all and witnessing the remarkable contributions each of you will make to our conference.

Welcome to AUSMUN 2024, and let us embark on this enriching journey together.

Warm regards,

Sarvagya Sharma

Director of Research

AUSMUN 2024

Moderators' Welcome Letter

Esteemed delegates,

It is our greatest joy and utmost pleasure to welcome you to The United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees committee at this year's AUSMUN. We are looking forward and are very excited to see the potential and drive that you will bring to this committee, as well as the insightful debates we all anticipate and love. As your moderators, we will do our absolute best to make this conference as smooth and enjoyable as possible. We have provided you with this background guide to help you understand the topics of discussion and steer you in the right direction of research needed in both the conference, and the position paper. It is encouraged that you read the guide very well to understand what is expected of you in this committee.

This conference is an excellent opportunity to build your confidence, as well as improve your leadership, research, writing, public speaking, and critical thinking skills. Hence we urge you to make the best out of this conference. We will be there every step of the way for any guidance or even just to calm your nerves! Feel free to reach out to us at unhcrasmun2024@gmail.com for any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Your UNHCR Chairs.



Hi, my name is Naya Isam AlMikhi. I am a 3rd-year medical student who loves music, animals, and coffee. My journey with public speaking started as young as 8 years old where I took part in any platform that aided me in expressing what I believed in. I aim to help bring

out the best in delegates, whether they are beginners or not and aid them in gaining an amazing and unique experience. I want all delegates to work smart, not hold back, give out their absolute best, and most importantly have fun while doing it. Can't wait to meet you all.



Hi, my name is Mona Majdalawieh. An English Language and Literature major with a minor in translation here at AUS. I've chaired MUN for several years and this has become my hobby. Reading is where I find myself most of the time, in addition to the gym being my second home. I am very invested in research and can't wait to see what you get to the floor here at AUSMUN. I can't wait to meet you all!

Brief About the Committee

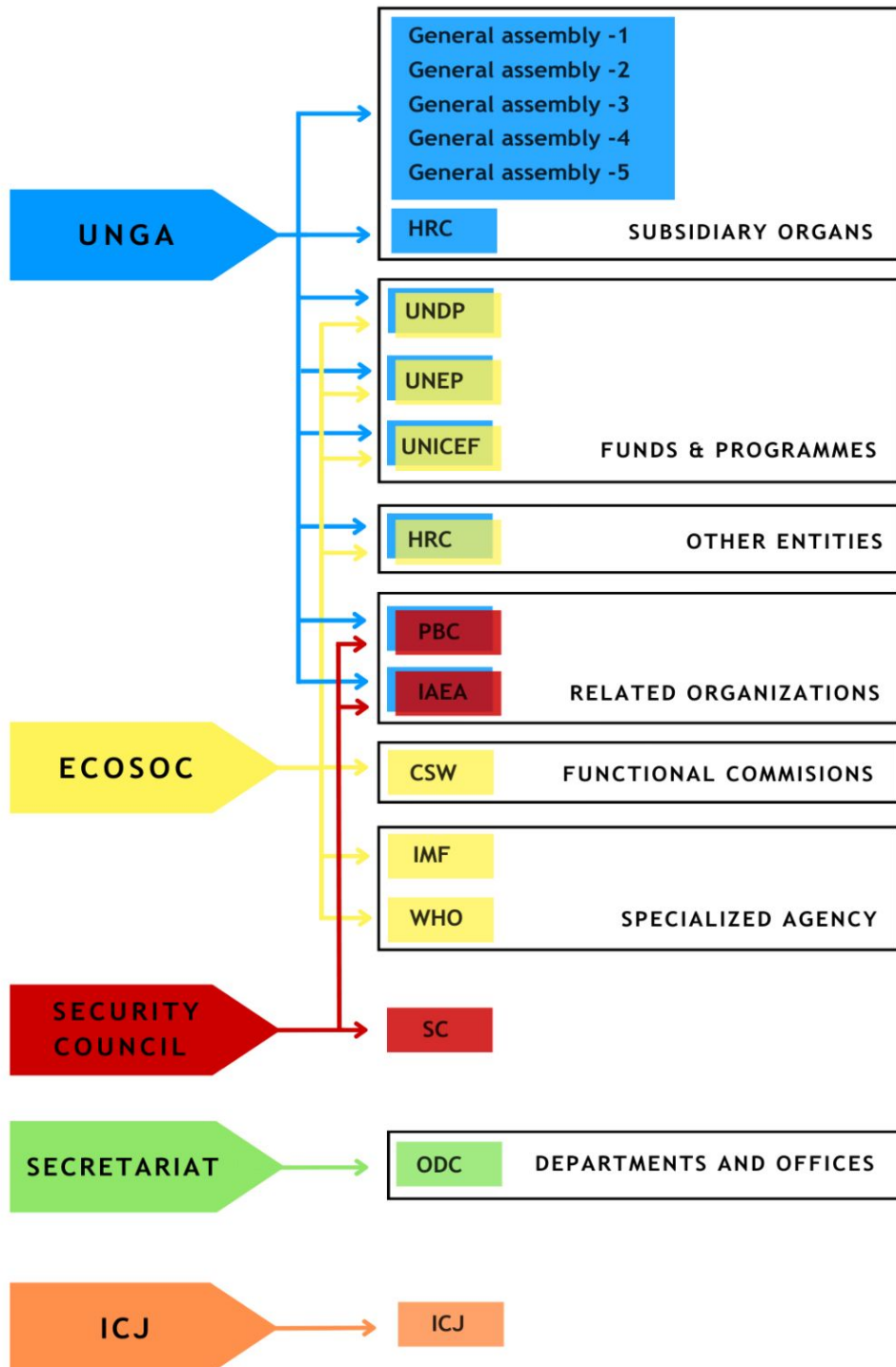
The United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a specialized agency mandated to assist stateless individuals, refugees, and communities forcibly displaced. Its responsibilities include supporting voluntary return, local integration, or relocation to a third nation for those affected. For 72 years, UNHCR has been safeguarding the rights of refugees and handling their resettlement. Though established in 1950, the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (the Advisory Committee on Refugees) did not exist until 1958. Between 1951 and 1954, it was established by the Economic and Social Council, while the UNHCR was beginning its operations. This committee consists of fifteen states including members and non-members of the United Nations. Presently, The Executive Committee Bureau comprises four office holders: the Chairperson, two Vice-Chairpersons and the Rapporteur representing the four United Nations regional groups. The Bureau is elected at the end of the annual plenary session in October (UNHCR, n.d.).



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It is important to note that UNHCR has long-standing partnerships with donor governments which provide crucial funding on an annual basis. By the end of 2021, the largest governmental partners of unearmarked funds were Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, United Kingdom ‘’(UK)’’, and Denmark. Although the three largest partners are the European Union, the United States of America, and Germany (UNHCR, n.d.).

This diagram visually represents the UN system and corresponds to AUSMUN. It reflects the relationships between committees and clearly demonstrates the committee's position, significance, and powers as defined under the UN charter.





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The Function of the Committee

The UNHCR was established on the 14th of December 1950, by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UNGA) in the aftermath of the Second World War “(WWII)” to help the millions of people who had lost their homes. Furthermore, in terms of the voting procedure, it's crucial to understand that each government present at the conference holds one vote. Decisions made during the conference rely on the majority vote from the attending representatives of participating states. Those members who opt not to vote will be regarded as abstaining from the voting process.

Topic I : Discussing the Rights of Palestinian Refugees

Summary and History

The issue of displaced Palestinians is a long-standing, deeply entrenched, and sensitive issue, with political, historical, and humanitarian dimensions. The Israeli–Palestinian conflict has left roughly 14 million Palestinian refugees stateless and residing in deplorable conditions within refugee camps (Alfonseca, 2023). At least 1.5 million Palestinian people live in 58 official camps spread across the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Syrian Arab Republic. This accounts for approximately one-third of all legally registered Palestinian refugees (UNRWA, 2023). Living in refugee camps has severely limited Palestinians' access to employment opportunities, social services, education, adequate nutrition, and clean drinking water.

Britain conquered Palestine from the Ottoman Empire in 1917, the same year the Balfour Declaration was released. In 1922, the League of Nations put in place the Mandate for Palestine, which placed territories of Palestine and Transjordan officially under British administration. Due to the incorporation of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 in the mandate, all of these territories eventually became fully independent States, except for Palestine, as it was established to be a national home for the Jewish people. As there was large-scale Jewish immigration, mainly from Eastern Europe from 1922 to 1947, mainly due to the 1930s Nazi persecution, Palestinians demanded independence from the British administration and resisted this immigration. This led to The Great Palestinian Revolt of 1936 – 1939. Due to this uprising, the UN declared partitioning Palestine into two independent States, one Palestinian Arab and the other Jewish, with Jerusalem internationalized (Resolution 181 (II) of 1947).

In 1948, following the declaration of independence of the State of Israel, the Arab–Israeli war took place between Israel and Arab forces from Egypt, Transjordan (Jordan), Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. During this war was the Catastrophe, or the Nakba, which caused a mass displacement and dispossession of Palestinians. Ignoring UN discussions and resolutions, Israel occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza, Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula in 1967, which led 280,000 to 325,000 Palestinians out of the territories captured by Israel (Bowker, 2003). After 75 years and numerous UN resolutions, the rights of the Palestinians remain unfulfilled, highlighting a persistent and deeply concerning issue in international relations.

The issue of Palestinian refugees has significant global implications, as it concerns geopolitics, humanitarian efforts, and upholding human rights. They include, but are not limited to, regional instability, humanitarian crises, hindrance of peace and security, and its

impact on host countries. As many Palestinian refugees reside in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, the presence of large refugee populations can strain the resources and infrastructure of these host countries, leading to economic, social, and political challenges.

Key Terms

Palestinian Refugees: Are people whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.

Balfour Declaration: Statement of British support for the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.

The League of Nations: The League of Nations was an international organization, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, created after the First World War to provide a forum for resolving international disputes.

The League of Nations Mandate: A League of Nations mandate was a legal status for certain territories transferred from the control of one country to another following World War I.

The Great Palestinian Revolt: An uprising by Palestinian Arabs in Mandatory Palestine against the British administration of the Palestine Mandate.

Discourse on the Issue

This issue reflects the broader challenges faced by the international community in addressing complex political conflicts and upholding human rights. At its core, this issue violates the fundamental principles of the UN Charter, particularly those related to the right to self-determination, sovereignty, and protection of human rights, as mentioned in Article 1 (2) of the UN Charter. The denial of fundamental rights to Palestinian refugees, including their right to return to their homeland, contradicts the principles of justice and fairness outlined in Article 13(2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The lack of a peaceful resolution not only perpetuates the statelessness of the Palestinian people but also creates a state of constant instability and tension in the Middle East, directly contravening the UN's mission to maintain international peace and security.

Socially, generations of Palestinians have grown up in refugee camps, facing limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Economically, the lack of stable living conditions and restricted access to resources have impeded economic growth and prosperity in the region, affecting not only the refugees but also the broader communities that

they are part of. Politically, the issue of Palestinian refugees remains a major obstacle to achieving long-lasting peace in the Middle East. The unresolved status of Palestinians perpetuates grievances and serves as a rallying point for extremist ideologies. This, in turn, hampers diplomatic efforts and complicates negotiations between involved parties. Moreover, the situation of Palestinian refugees has strained relations between nations and has been a contentious topic in international diplomacy.

Past International Organization (IO) Actions and Latest Developments

Within the UNHCR committee, the topic of discussing the rights of Palestinian refugees remains an issue under-discussed. Only one international organisation, UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), has been actively working to address the challenges faced by Palestinian refugees. The UN has discussed this issue on multiple occasions, leading to resolutions aimed at safeguarding the rights and providing humanitarian aid to the Palestinian refugee population. This issue has been discussed over and over again throughout the past century. The UN proposed resolutions at several points of time, such as the UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (II) that called for refugee return, property restitution and compensation, however, these resolutions were almost always temporary (United Nations, 2022). The effectiveness of these resolutions has been limited and rarely implemented due to ongoing tensions. While the UN has made efforts to tackle the issue, limitations persist in implementing long-term, sustainable solutions for Palestinian refugees. Therefore, the UN has not yet been able to tackle the issue of Palestinians' right to return. Recent developments indicate ongoing discussions within the UN regarding the Palestinian refugee crisis, with renewed attention to finding comprehensive and lasting resolutions. Organizations like UNRWA continue to play a significant role, providing essential services to Palestinian refugees.

Major countries involved in these discussions include those in the Middle East region, along with influential global powers. Egypt, Jordan, and Syria are one of the major countries that are directly discussing Palestinian refugees. The analysis of the situation suggests that while there are concerted efforts to address the rights of Palestinian refugees, political complexities and historical disputes continue to pose significant challenges. Current discussions focus on bridging gaps, fostering dialogue among involved parties, and seeking peaceful resolutions to ensure the rights and well-being of Palestinian refugees. The latest developments are very recent indeed, and are happening currently. No apparent efforts are being made towards the current crisis. The only official announcement made from the UN was the urgent call for Israeli Authorities to protect all civilians sheltering in Gaza by UNRWA (United Nations, 2023).

Timeline of Major Events

1915 – British cabinet member Herbert Samuel calls for the British annexation of Palestine in the memorandum “The Future of Palestine.”

1917 – The Balfour Declaration promises a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

1922 – The League of Nations grants a mandate over former Ottoman territory Palestine to the UK. Provisions include the terms of the Balfour Declaration.

1933 – Palestinians oppose sudden rise in Jewish immigration from Nazi persecution

1936 to 1939 – Palestinian rebellion against the British Mandate and Jewish immigration.

April, 1948 – Deir Yassin massacre: Zionist paramilitary groups kill hundreds of Palestinian Arabs in Deir Yassin, a village near Jerusalem.

May, 1948 – Great Britain terminates the Mandate over Palestine and Israel declares independence on 15th May. Territorial expansion using force results in the first large-scale exodus of Palestinian refugees.

November 1948 – The UN established the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR) special fund to provide relief to over 500,000 Palestine refugees.

December 1948 – UNGA passes Resolution 194 calling for refugees to be allowed to return, Jerusalem to be under an international regime, UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine replaces the UN mediator.

February/July 1949 – Israel signs armistice agreements with Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.

1950 – Israel moves its capital from Tel Aviv to western Jerusalem, in defiance of UN resolutions. The West Bank is brought formally under Jordanian control.

1967 – Six-day war: Israel occupied the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza, Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula.

1968 – Establishment of a UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

1982 – Sabra and Shatila Massacre

1987 – The first “Intifada” begins in the Jabaliya Refugee Camp in the Gaza Strip

2000 – Second Intifada

2002 – The UN Security Council passes Resolution 1397 affirming the vision of a two-state solution to the conflict.

2007 – Israel imposes a blockade on the Gaza Strip after an armed takeover of Gaza by Hamas.

2008 – Israel broadens its sanctions and completely seals off the Gaza Strip.

2012 – In November, Israel launched the Pillar of Defense, which is an 8-day military operation against the Gaza Strip.

2014 – Gaza Conflict, lasting from 8 July until 26 August 2014

2018 to 2019 – Gaza border protests, The Great March of Return

2021 – Sheikh Jarrah Evictions, Violence At Al Aqsa Mosque

2023 – Israel – Hamas War

Questions that the Committee and Resolutions Should Address

1. How can the international community ensure the recognition and protection of the rights of Palestinian refugees, including their right to return to their homes and properties?
2. How can the UNHCR contribute to peaceful conflict resolution in the region to address the root causes of the Palestinian refugee crisis?
3. What measures can be taken to safeguard the basic human rights, dignity, and safety of Palestinian refugees, both within their host countries and in the context of potential repatriation?

Suggestions for Further Research

- Analyze the existing legal frameworks relevant to the rights of Palestinian refugees, including UN resolutions, international treaties, and conventions. Evaluate the effectiveness and gaps in these frameworks and propose legal reforms to better protect the rights of Palestinian refugees.
- Investigate the portrayal of Palestinian refugees in media and its impact on public perception and policy making. Analyze how media narratives influence attitudes toward Palestinian refugees and explore strategies for promoting accurate and empathetic representations.
- Explore the concept of the right to return for Palestinian refugees and its implications under international law. Investigate potential mechanisms for implementing the right to return and discuss issues related to reparations, compensation, and restitution for displaced individuals and their descendants.

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Topic II: Addressing The Challenges of Forced Displacement of Refugees

Summary and History

Forced displacement of refugees is a widespread issue that has profound humanitarian, social, and political implications. It occurs when people are compelled to leave their homes or homelands due to various reasons, including but not limited to armed conflict, persecution, violence, environmental disasters, or human rights violations. This displacement results in a loss of security, dignity, and access to basic necessities, pushing millions of people into precarious and uncertain situations. The number of forcibly displaced persons has continued to rise in 2023, calling for increased humanitarian assistance. The number of displaced people reached 100 million in the first half of 2022 due to the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Globally, 108.4 million people were displaced by the end of 2022 (UNHCR, n.d.). This conflict created the fastest, and one of the largest, displacement crises since WW2 (UNHCR, n.d.). The history of forced displacement is as old as human civilization itself, with various historical events and circumstances leading to the uprooting of people from their homes and homelands. The issue of forced displacement has persisted throughout history, beginning as far back as the Colonial Era. During this period, European colonization resulted in the forced relocation of indigenous communities in different regions worldwide, as settlers seized their territories. Native Americans in the Americas, Aboriginal peoples in Australia, and various African communities experienced forced displacement during this period. Displacement was also seen during WW2, the Partition of India in 1947, the Cold War era, the African displacement, the Syrian Civil War, and much more.

As a result of their fragile legal status in the countries where they live, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) often face protection challenges and lack access to shelter, food, and other basic services. Up to 76% of the forcibly displaced are hosted in low- or middle-income countries, which puts a strain on host communities and resources (EU, n.d.). Their survival depends on the availability of assistance provided by the authorities, local communities, and humanitarian organisations as well as collective international efforts, cooperation, and commitment to upholding human rights. 52% of all refugees and other people in need of international protection fled from just three countries: the Syrian Arab Republic (6.5 million), Ukraine (5.7 million), and Afghanistan (5.7 million) (UNHCR, n.d.). Finding durable solutions to conflicts, offering safe havens, and providing the means for refugees to rebuild their lives are crucial steps toward addressing this humanitarian crisis.\

When refugees are hosted in neighboring countries, economic, social, political, and environmental impacts are created on these host countries. refugees may compete with local citizens for scarce resources such as water, food, housing, and medical services. Their

presence increases the demands for education, health services, infrastructure such as water supply, sanitation and transportation, and also in some cases, for natural resources.

Discourse on the Issue

There's a possibility that some of these displaced individuals won't be able to return home. Given the protracted nature of forced displacement, it is of paramount importance due to humanitarian, social, economic, and political concerns. Individuals and communities facing forced displacement are often in dire need of providing legal and physical protection and minimizing the threat of violence – including sexual assault and gender-based violence, safety, and essential services. Failing to address this issue can lead to immense suffering, loss of life, and the violation of fundamental human rights. Providing safe havens, fostering dialogue, and facilitating reconciliation can contribute to conflict resolution and post-conflict stability. Creating stability in countries hosting large numbers of refugees and restoring their economies is also vital as significant economic and social strains are placed upon them.

Upholding international laws and agreements related to refugees and displaced populations is essential for maintaining the rule of law and promoting respect for human rights. Failing to address forced displacement undermines the principles enshrined in international law. Many UN organizations as well as non-governmental organizations such as the UNHCR, International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNRWA, World Food Programme, International Committee of the Red Cross, and Amnesty International, play a significant role in providing assistance, protection, and support to refugees and displaced populations. These organizations work to address the humanitarian needs of refugees and promote their rights (UNHCR, n.d.).

Past International Organization (IO) Actions and Latest Developments

In recent years, the forced displacement of refugees has reached alarming levels, demanding urgent and coordinated international responses. Many UN organizations as well as non-governmental organizations such as the UNHCR, International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNRWA, World Food Programme, International Committee of the Red Cross, United Nations Children's Fund, Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) and Amnesty International, play a significant role in providing assistance, protection, and support to refugees and displaced populations. These organizations work to address the humanitarian needs of refugees and promote their rights (MSF, 2023).

The UN has held extensive discussions on this pressing issue, leading to the creation of resolutions aimed at improving the lives of refugees (Resolution 319 A (IV)). However, the effectiveness of these resolutions has been restricted by various limitations. Insufficient funding poses a significant challenge, hindering the implementation of comprehensive

programs for refugees. Additionally, political complexities in regions troubled by conflict often block the delivery of humanitarian aid, leaving millions in critical conditions. The legal frameworks, while existent, are not always effectively enforced, leaving refugees vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination.

Discussions such as the Global Refugee Forum, within the UNHCR committee reflect a collective recognition of the need for innovative solutions. There is a growing emphasis on empowering displaced populations by enhancing their access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities; thus, fostering self-reliance and resilience. These strategies are crucial for creating stable environments where refugees can voluntarily return to their home countries.

The international community's response has been varied, with some countries generously offering support, while others struggle to manage their own domestic issues. Recent developments indicate a shift in focus towards fostering global solidarity and cooperation. Collaborative initiatives between host countries, humanitarian organizations, and donor nations have led to innovative projects aimed at improving living conditions and ensuring the well-being of refugees.

Questions that the Committee and Resolutions Should Address

1. How can legal protections be strengthened to prevent the displacement of refugees and protect them from discrimination, violence, and forced eviction?
2. What measures can be taken to protect vulnerable groups within refugee populations, such as women, children, and the elderly?
3. How can the international community support host countries in their efforts to integrate refugees into their societies while promoting social cohesion?

Suggestions for Further Research

- Investigate the role of media in shaping public perceptions of refugees and its impact on social inclusion and acceptance. Develop strategies to combat misinformation and promote positive narratives.
- Analyze the social, economic, and environmental impact of hosting large refugee populations on local communities.
- Conduct in-depth studies on the root causes of forced displacement, including political, economic, social, and environmental factors. Understanding these causes can inform conflict prevention strategies.

Links for Research

- <https://www.unhcr.org/>
- <https://blogs.worldbank.org>
- <https://www.icrc.org/en/migrants>
- <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-refugees-and-migrants-0>

Timeline of the Major Events

1945 – The UN was established after WW2, with its charter emphasizing the importance of promoting and protecting human rights.

1951 – The UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is adopted.

1989 – The UN General Assembly adopts the Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons.

1990s – Various conflicts in the Balkans, Africa, and Asia lead to large-scale forced displacements.

2004 – The UNHCR launches the Global IDP Project to address the rights and needs of IDPs worldwide.

2010 – The United Nations General Assembly adopts the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

2016 – The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants is adopted.

2018 – The Global Compact on Refugees is formally adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, providing a comprehensive framework for responding to refugee situations.

2020s – Ongoing conflicts, climate change-related displacement, and other challenges continue to shape the global forced displacement landscape.

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