



SciMUNC XVII

SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN & CULTURAL ISSUES (SOCHUM)

Syrian Refugee Crisis

BACKGROUND GUIDE

SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN & CULTURAL ISSUES

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Letter from the Dais

Dear Delegates,

Greeting Delegates, welcome to SCIMUNC XVII! We are so excited to be your chairs for this year's Bronx Science Model UN conference!

My name is Julia Shellira, and I am a junior here at Bronx Science. I am honored to address this assembly as the representative of the Dias for the Syrian Refugee crisis committee. This will be my third year participating in Model UN. My initial love for model UN started when I had the ability to not only develop more diplomatic skills but to network, exchange, and learn more about various cultures and countries. Model UN has given me skills that I use in everyday life and has helped me become a more educated individual. Outside of MUN, I volunteer, work on S.O as JSLT, on nonprofit organizations such as YMA and Lady Equity, and play sports such as soccer and basketball. I'm also on a TV production team Wolverine TV! I am excited to see each of you form and develop stances on the Syrian Refugee crisis and working collaboratively to address this conflict. I am looking forward to meeting you all! If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to email me at julias161@nycstudents.net.

My name is Veronica Hu and I am also a junior at Bronx Science in my third year on the Bronx Science Model UN team. I joined Model UN in my freshman year with the mindset of stepping out of my comfort zone and improving my public speaking skills. In my time at Model UN, I learned about the art of diplomacy and negotiating with others as well as developing solutions with creativity rather than "thinking inside the box". Outside of Model UN, I am on the school's weekly television production team Wolverine TV, and have a passion for learning new languages! Both Julia and I encourage that all delegates will actively contribute to finding a fair and balanced solution to this ongoing crisis regardless of this being your first conference or if you're a seasoned MUNer. Be sure to take advantage of this guide, come prepared with your research, and good luck!

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions! You can email us yuyingh@nycstudents.net.

Best,
Veronica Hu and Julia Shellira

Committee Description

SOCHUM

The Social, Humanitarian and Cultural committee is the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. The Social, Humanitarian and Cultural committee addresses a wide range of social, humanitarian, and cultural issues affecting people around the world. This council serves to formulate solutions to tackle various global challenges and promote human rights, and more social progress. One of the main focuses of this committee is addressing and creating resolutions regarding global challenges. Some of those may be human rights, culture preservation, and social development. Specifically with the Syrian Refugee crisis, we will focus on the displacement and violence that has happened in that region.

Background Information

Syria has been in perpetual unrest for more than a decade now, with millions of its citizens fleeing out the country to neighboring countries like Lebanon and Jordan, and countless other Syrians that are displaced within the country. The crisis traces back to 2011 when the Arab Spring protests broke out as a result of the public's discontent with the government, calling for reforms. This rebellion inspired a group of Syrian adolescents to spray anti-government graffiti on the walls of Daraa, a town in southern Syria. As the uprisings shifted to target President Bashar Assad, arrests quickly escalated and security forces from the government were sent out to suppress the pro-democracy spirits, thus the beginning of an upheaval that is still very much present up to this day.

Ever since the death of the previous president, Hafaz (who is the father of President Bashar Assad), Syrians have been upset with the ineffectiveness of the ruler. Despite a relatively peaceful and stable society in comparison to the one after the war, pre-war Syria was already experiencing high unemployment rates, lack of political freedom, and corruption. Ever since the civil

war broke out on March 25, 2011, no one but the very own people of Syria has been affected in the most detrimental ways, bringing them to a state that is much worse than what it was before the war. As of today, over 300,000 civilians have been killed in the war, public infrastructures have been damaged, leaving the country and its people in a constant state of vulnerability. More than 15.3 million Syrians needed assistance to help save their lives.

Recently (February 9th, 2023), a Mw 7.8 earthquake struck southeast Turkey and the northwest borders of Syria, leaving millions of people devastated with the further destruction of their already war-torn homes. The aftershocks of the earthquake were not any less cruel than the wreckage that the earthquake itself caused. Due to the already deteriorating state of the region, Syrians are recovering from the stresses of this disaster up to this day. In addition to the natural disaster, the communities still have other fatal obstacles that are waiting to be dealt with, that is to include the displacement, disease, starvation, and the fires that have been set off by the torrid summer heat, further intensifying the existing crisis faced in this region. The crises

emanating from the natural disaster goes beyond the loss of education or jobs, it leads to more urgent issues that directly threaten the lives of Syrians such as lack of shelters and growing numbers of deaths from varying reasons, both physical and mental. With people struggling to find access to healthcare, those who could have survived are at higher risks of death as hospitals and other health facilities were a part of the ruins that could be found. The fire that had occurred in July only made matters worse for the Syrians, the tents that they sought temporary shelter in were either damaged or burnt down; it made the circumstances more difficult for even the aids to come to mend the wound.

Particularly, the political dynamics within the United Nations Security Council have played a crucial role in shaping the response to the Syrian refugee crisis other and subsequent challenges. For instance, the Security Council has been divided over how to address the Syrian conflict for years, with certain member states supporting different factions and interests within the region. The United Nations Security Council has remained deeply divided for years in its approach to addressing the Syrian conflict,

primarily due to the conflicting with different geographical interests of its members. Additionally, Russia and Iran have always supported the Syrian government, since their military is supported through them. However, other countries have backed various oppositions for reasons of not getting involved. The complex web of regional and proxy conflicts in Syria, involving countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, has further complicated international efforts to find a resolution with the Syrian Refugee Crisis. With no consensus on the post-conflict future of Syria and the role of key players, the Security Council's semi-division has impeded effective action to end the conflict and address its devastating humanitarian consequences, leaving millions of Syrians stuck in a state of suffering and uncertainty.

The Security Council has also impacted recent aid for Syria along the years. The United Nations Security Council's impact on recent aid efforts in Syria has been quite complicated with political decisions. The Council's authorization of cross-border aid deliveries in 2014 helped the reach of humanitarian organizations, enabling them to provide vital assistance to

areas previously inaccessible due to government restrictions. However, the renewal of resolutions related to aid access caused delays and disruptions in aid operations. Security concerns stemming from the ongoing conflict have also affected aid workers' safety, while the Council's diplomatic initiatives, when successful, have created windows of opportunity for aid delivery. However, the Council's effectiveness has been limited by the divisions among its members, with the use of veto power leading to harsh resolutions critical to humanitarian access. Despite these challenges, the Security Council remains an important actor in shaping the provision of aid to Syria, impacting the lives of millions caught in the middle of this horrible conflict.

The two major issues that will be discussed in this committee are poverty/unemployment as well as the crisis revolving around the millions of refugees that have sought shelter in neighboring nations. The high number of poverty and unemployment rate can be seen as a reflection of the poor economy in the country. The war has created conflicts beyond losses of fortune from high unemployment rates, it is threatening the

survival of the 20+ millions of lives currently living in Syria. Many lack food, water, and do not have access to proper nourishments for the dry, Mediterranean climate in Syria. The war left the Syrians with destroyed farms and irrigation systems, blockade to uncontaminated water, putting their lives at risk on a day-to-day basis. The shortage in survival essentials causes more than half the population to be held captive by hunger every day, with the numbers increasing day by day and year by year. The devastation is not merely affecting Syria itself; it is also spilling into neighboring countries with the millions of refugees who've fled away from the motherland, which makes the situation even more difficult to resolve at this point.

Main Committee Topic

Covid-19 Impact

The global pandemic of Covid-19 spread at alarming rates, leading to great death and illness. This pandemic had a huge effect on the global market, including fields of education, economy, and mental health of the population. With that being said, there have been many social and economic challenges that have affected Syrian refugees. One instance is in Lebanon, where a study was performed on 129 Syrian refugee families. Over 68% of those who had jobs had their wages reduced, and 70% of children did not continue education at home. Not only did this majorly affect the future of these children, but also the mental health and behavioral changes. There were major restrictions hit on the global economy, leading to debts and bankruptcy, and financial crises. The pandemic has caused restrictions to essential services such as healthcare, education, and further opportunities for these Syrian refugees. Millions of people had to flee their country, and the addition of the pandemic added another layer to an already complex situation.

Additionally, healthcare has been greatly disrupted. Many of the refugee populations live in densely populated camps or urban areas with limited access to proper medical facilities. So, the pandemic made it even more difficult for refugees to access proper healthcare. This puts them at a higher risk of contracting and spreading the virus which creates even bigger risks of disease transmission.

Education is another sector deeply affected. Many refugee children were already facing challenges in accessing quality education before the pandemic because of them having to move. With schools closing and the shift to remote learning, those that didn't have access to technology or stable internet connections were at an even bigger disadvantage which could have long-term impacts on their future prospects. Overall, the pandemic increased the vulnerability of the Syrian refugees, not only impacting their health but their way of living. To address this, the government, humanitarian organizations, and the rest of the community.

Food Shortages

Before the war, Syria was economically diverse and was rather stable in its agricultural production in comparison to its neighbors of the same region. However, things began to take a turn since the drought that began in 2006, the living conditions for Syrians have been declining. The lack of water made it difficult to grow sufficient crops for its inhabitants under the dry Mediterranean climate. The country's main source of food, the farming systems, has been cut majorly due to the drought and an abundance of livestock were decimated. Water became scarce and more precious than ever, driving over a million people from their rural homes into cities. This was only one of the many reasons that sparked the war.

In reverse, the war also contributed to the worsening of the food shortages. Ever since the war, the production of food has been dwindling continuously undoing all the improvements that Syria gained prior to the conflict. The war was destroying the country's infrastructures on top of the fact that many already cannot be sustained from the drought, leaving many either damaged or idle. The once prominent and prosperous

sector of agriculture in Syria is now diminishing and it is taking a huge toll on the public's health and nutritional intake. Moreover, the war itself has been directly targeting the availability of food as well. The government imposed economic blockades to punish the protesters, purposely making it a challenge for the people to obtain basic living necessities. The government also intermittently limited the people's access to fuel and flour, depriving them of any humanitarian aid. The depletion of resources in Syria is leaving its people in devastation. As of 2023, an estimate of 12 million people are severely hungry in Syria, a 57% increase since 2019, being the highest ever in the span of Syria's history, but it will only continue to escalate if no substantial action is being done to resolve the crisis.

Unemployment and Poverty

Even without the flame from the conflict, Syria was already not in great shape in terms of its employment rate; 8.6 percent of Syrians were out of work and over 20 percent of youths were unemployed. A vital factor that fueled the upheaval was the corruption of the government. Rather than investing these funds for civil purposes, the corrupted officials took the wealth into their

own pockets, putting a restraint on the potentials of their people, hindering economic growth. Amidst the not very favorable employment opportunities in Syria, the war only exacerbated the issue. As mentioned, the agricultural sector of the country was impaired greatly as a result of the conflict, with the farmers moving out due to the rising expense for irrigation, the rural outlook of the country declined substantially. These displaced populations end up in displacement camps, which profoundly limits the already very small pool of job opportunities.

The crisis is only accelerating after the occurrence of Covid, in which the global economy fell off a cliff, not to mention the already collapsing Syria. Consequently, many businesses were severely impacted, and millions of people were displaced even in urban areas, finding themselves without a job while having to feed their families on top of the food insecurity. Some people are currently earning as little as one dollar a day, with more than 80 percent of Syrians considered in poverty. At this point in the conflict, the extent to which poverty has disseminated is far more than what it originally was, it reformed the culture in the

nation, affecting a whole generation's wellbeing and future. For instance, the financial burdens that were imposed on many families have forced them to take approaches that can be considered quite extreme such as child marriage. The fragility of Syria is coercing its people into devastating conditions that are becoming growly difficult to bear.

Past Actions

The Security council has engaged in various actions in focusing on trying to alleviate the Syrian Refugee Crisis. Specifically, the UN has helped contribute to the aid of millions of refugees along with other nonprofit organizations. Bigger countries allied with Syria have contributed in mending the economic, humanitarian crisis. Additionally, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI Syria), which is a body established by the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC). COI Syria is tasked with investigating human rights violations and abuses occurring during the Syrian conflict. This not only relates to the war itself but also the natural disasters like the earthquake. Notably, Resolution 2139, adopted in February 2014, called for an end

to indiscriminate weapons use in populated areas and demanded unrestricted humanitarian access throughout Syria. Subsequently, Resolution 2165, passed in July 2014, authorized humanitarian aid delivery across Syria's borders and conflict lines, eliminating the need for government approval. These measures greatly expanded the reach of aid organizations and enabled them to access areas previously off-limits due to government restrictions or security concerns.

Questions to Consider

1. How can the international community collaborate to enhance healthcare access and ensure proper medical facilities for Syrian refugees?
 2. What steps do we take to combat this crisis?
 3. What strategies can be implemented to provide quality education for refugee children?
 4. In what ways can economic opportunities and livelihoods be restored for refugees?
 5. How can mental health support be effectively provided to Syrian refugees, considering the pre-existing stressors brought on by the pandemic?
 6. What can we do to ensure the stability of the country?
 7. What diplomatic efforts can be undertaken to ensure that governments in the region continue to uphold their responsibilities towards refugees and provide them with legal protection?
 8. How can funding challenges faced by humanitarian organizations be addressed to ensure consistent and effective aid delivery to refugees?
 9. How can the international community work to address the root causes of the Syrian conflict and displacement, in order to create lasting solutions for the refugee crisis?
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Bloc Positions*Syria**Turkey**Germany**Italy**Lebanon**Jordan**Iraq**Egypt**Great Britain**United States**France**Norway**Sweden**Russia**China**India**Australia**Brazil**Belgium**Canada**Korea**Japan**Greece**Saudi Arabia**Israel*

*Bangladesh**Sudan**Yemen**Libya**Armenia**Serbia**Tunisia**Austria**Kuwait*

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