



ODUMUNC 39

The Security Council

Insuring the Security of UN Refugee Centers

By: Perta Szonyegi



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I. Introduction

Refugee camps around the world are helpless in the face of exploitation. They are often at risk of both internal and external conflicts by frustrated local and asylum seeking people with strong convictions about the need to engage in violence. How can refugee camps in parts of Africa, South Asia, North America, and the Middle East be kept from becoming centers for crime, violence, extremist recruitment? How can the international community keep old conflicts and wars from reaching and moving into these refugee centers?

“A central practice to the United Nations is the protection of humanitarian rights. In article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights it reads ‘Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution,’¹ and according to the United Nations’ High Commissioner for Refugees there are 51 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, all of whom have been uprooted from their homes and must seek asylum elsewhere. These people have largely no voice, and the United Nations and its member states are tasked with protecting their basic rights.”² One important basic human right that the United Nations has been tasked with is to ensure the security of inhabitants of refugee camps. This is an old issue in African nations, especially in the Democratic Republic of

Congo, Darfur (Western Sudan), South Sudan, and Kenya.



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Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Syria is currently the most famous of these violent refugee camp situations around the world; however this is not merely a Syrian issue. There are about 60 million refugees worldwide, a great deal of them spread out in other regions. Syrian refugee camps in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey seem to become increasingly permanent. A reunified Syria each day seems like a more distant reality and this makes the the main goal of the UN concerning refugees near impossible: repatriation. Repatriation is the process of returning refugees or other expatriates to their homes once the threat to their life has ended, and the returning of people becomes safe. Because of this inability to see the light in the end of the tunnel, major cities that are inhabited by refugees become centers for all kinds of action, including warring groups. Within Syrian refugee camp security issues, most members of the UN, including the NAM

¹ UN. "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UDHR, Declaration of Human Rights, Human Rights Declaration, Human Rights Charter, The Un and Human Rights." *UN News Center*.

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

² Steadman, Christopher, "Rights of Refugees, the Internally Displaced, and Asylum Seeking People", October 15, 2014

³ Bulent Kilic/Getty, "It's About Time: United Nations Plans Refugee Camps for Syrians in Lebanon", *The Daily Beast*, June 12, 2013



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(Non-Aligned Movement) and the Arab League, are more concerned with specifically Palestinian refugee camps, rather than speaking in broad terms. These refugee camps are actually well-established cities, and the refugee's security, safety, and eventual right to repatriation seems impossible because of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian territory dispute, which has left the Palestinian people as a stateless-nation.

To some members these issues, maintaining the security of the refugee camps and of refugees themselves, are not related. Others, such as many host countries for refugees, are afraid that the refugee centers will become nodes of violent extremism, terrorism, and so on. Some have suggested the implementation of a fascist security system in these camps, but that is exactly what the refugees fled.

II. UN Agencies Involved

UNHCR- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the United Nations' refugee agency and is committed to, at the request a country or the United Nations (UN), to assist in the resettlement or repatriation of refugees. The people who fall under the core of the UNHCR's purview are refugees, returnees, the stateless, and asylum seekers, and the UNHCR is tasked to decide if a person falls into the category of a refugee⁴. At the

moment the UNHCR is active in helping Internally Displaced People (IDPs) as well, but IDPs are technically not within the UNHCR's purview because they have not fled the state, and are still within the borders of their home country.

The responsibilities of the UNHCR are incredibly wide ranging, and go from overseeing the budget, to facilitating the protection and support of refugees by international organizations and states. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees himself presides over the 8,000 plus employees of the UNHCR. These employees work in good offices established by the UNHCR to delegate some power and responsibility in order to more effectively run the bureaucracy needed for a large scale humanitarian organization. The UNHCR also has the job of reporting yearly to the GA, and supervising member states to ensure they are cooperating with the UNHCR. Since the establishment of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the agency has won two Nobel Peace Prizes (in 1954 and 1981), and has successfully aided millions of refugees and other displaced and endangered people. There are, however, millions of people that fall under the UNHCR's mandate in the world, and then to fight against statelessness and humanitarian crises is still in its first leg. The UNHCR has made public that the budget given to the organization is a fraction of what is needed to properly address the plethora of humanitarian crises currently happening in the world. The organization has turned to donations to make the extra

⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "The mandate of the High

Commissioner for Refugees and his Office." UNHCR News. , 2013.



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money needed but was not allocated; the agency has received less than half of the donations it asked for.

Bank, all of which play a significant role in the United Nations' Human Rights Council.⁶ Head of the UNRWA is Commissioner-General Pierre Krahenbuhl, who serves as an Under-Secretary-General to Ban Ki-moon.⁷



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UNRWA- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

With five areas of operation, over thirty-thousand personnel, and four generations of refugees, UNRWA is a subsidiary organ of the UN that promotes human development. The four goals that the UNRWA seeks to obtain are: increased knowledge and skills, long and healthy lives, decent standards of living, and improved human rights situations. The UNRWA is an under-funded agency that works closely with other organizations such as UNESCO, WHO, UNICEF, UN Habitat, and the World

⁵ "Refugee Run." David Gillett Freelance Digital Design Bath. 2012

⁶ Karen Mingst and Margaret Karns, "The United Nations in the 21st Century"

⁷ "UNRWA | United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East." <http://www.unrwa.org/>.



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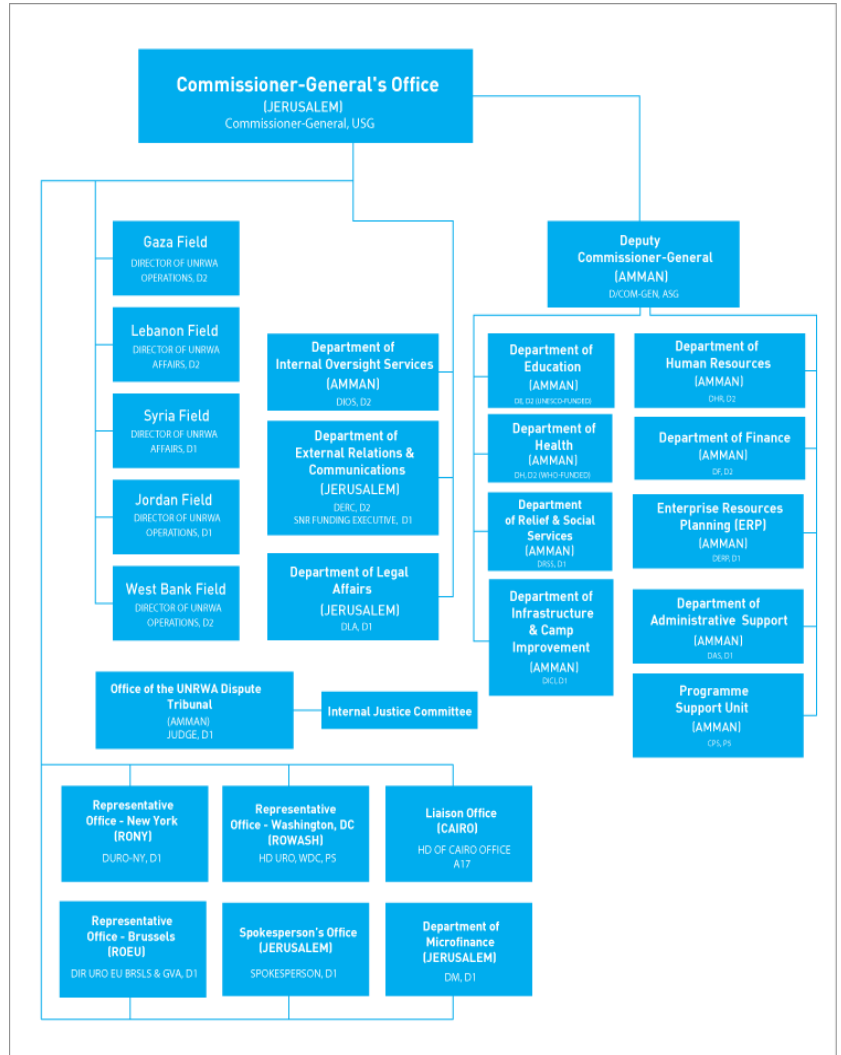


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As a result of the Arab-Israeli war on April first of 1948, over 700,000 Palestine men, women, and children have become displaced refugees, now widely seen as a stateless people. As an answer to the Palestine refugees' plight, the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees was created under United Nations General Assembly Resolution 302 on December 8th 1949.8 With no permanent solution to the Palestine Refugee Problem, the number of refugees has grown from 700,000 to 5 million since 1948. Although the UNRWA was originally established as a temporary agency, its mandate has continuously been renewed and is set to expire (unless again renewed) on June 30, 2017. Originally, the mandate of UNRWA was to: "carry out direct relief and works programs in collaboration with local governments, consult with Near Eastern governments concerning measures to be taken preparatory to the time when international assistance for relief and works projects is no longer available; and to plan for the time when relief was no longer needed."9 Most of the five million refugees reside in UNRWA's five main areas of operation in Gaza, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and the West Bank. Refugees eligible to be assisted by UNRWA are those who's "normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June, 1946 to 15 May,

1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict."10 Descendants of fathers fulfilling the above and people displaced in the 1967 Arab-



Israeli conflict are also eligible, which is one of the main reasons for the growth of the number of refugees in the agency.

8 UN resolution: United Nations. "Assistance to Palestine Refugees", General Assembly Resolution A/RES/302/IV

9 "UNRWA | United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East." http://www.unrwa.org/.

10 Ibid.



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UNRWA operates over 700 primary schools in the Middle East to promote education to half a million children. They provide healthcare facilities and mobile clinics to promote health and longer lives. To raise the refugees' standards of living, the UNRWA spends much of their budget to provide shelter and food supplies to refugee camps in need. The Operations Support Officer program was established the agency to ensure the promotion of human rights inside the camps by monitoring the authorities provided by the host state. The agency's headquarters are located in Amman and Gaza, with additional liaison offices located in New York, Washington, Brussels, and Cairo. Its biggest donors are the United States and the European Union.¹¹

III. Historical Incidents

Qana Bombing 1996 and 2006

On April 18, 1996 the Israeli Air force shelled a small southern Lebanese village called Qana, killing 106 civilians and injuring a further 110 civilians, mostly children, women, and the elderly.¹² Those hundreds of civilians at the time were taking refuge in a UN shelter, within a compound belonging to UNIFIL. At the time, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert stated that "The village and its surrounding areas were a source for launching hundreds of rockets" and his ambassador to the United Nations, Dan Gillerman "charged that Hezbollah was

responsible for the killings in Qana because it "used women and children as human shields." He suggested that the Lebanese government and the Lebanese people were harboring Hezbollah and therefore reaping what they had sowed."¹³ Ten years following this incident in 2006, July 30, another 55 civilians including 27 children were bombed in another attack on the same village of Qana in Lebanon for similar justifications.¹⁴

Gaza 2014

In July of 2014, a UN school set up by UNRWA as a refugee center for displaced Palestinians was targeted by Israeli shelling, resulting in 15 deaths and 90 individuals injured. The reaction of most UN member states was an outrage, which UNRWA's commissioner-general, Pierre Krahenbuhl voiced when he "condemned 'in the strongest possible terms this serious violation of international law by Israeli forces'".¹⁵ The people inhabiting the UN school at the time were Palestinians who have been previously warned by Israel to flee their homes because they stood in areas that would be shelled, so they came to the UN shelter in hopes of safety. Among the deaths and injuries of the incident were children, women, and one UNRWA guard, committed to protect the civilians of the

¹¹ "UNRWA | United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East." <http://www.unrwa.org/>.

¹² "The Second Qana Massacre; Photographic Evidence of Israeli Crimes against Humanity." Global Research.

¹³ "World Socialist Web Site." The Qana Massacre: Slaughter of Innocents in Lebanon -. July 31, 2006.

¹⁴ "The Second Qana Massacre; Photographic Evidence of Israeli Crimes against Humanity." Global Research.

¹⁵ "The world stands disgraced' - Israeli shelling of school kills at least 15', *Guardian*, 31 July 2014;



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refugee center.¹⁶ This attack was not the first to target a UN center, as a few days before, another UN school was hit at its playground in Beit Hanoun by the same Israeli forces. Israel it never claimed responsibilities for the incident. During the Israeli shelling of Gaza, UNRWA schools have been attacked over six times, to which the organization had an outraged response, claiming that the very people volunteering to help the humanitarian issues in the area and their own staff are being killed on United Nations territory. Response also came from four nations in Latin America. Chile, Brazil, El Salvador, and Peru recalled their respective ambassadors to Israel; Chile specifically sent a message from their foreign ministry claiming that it “observes with great concern and discouragement that the military operations- which at this point appear to be a collective punishment to the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza- don’t respect fundamental norms of international humanitarian law”.¹⁷ As a result of the combined attacks on UNRWA shelters in Gaza in the summer of 2014, approximately 44 civilians died, out of which 10 were UN staff members.

IV. The Current Situation

Syria

The Syrian Civil War has been raging since 2011, and since then an estimated 9 million Syrians have either been internally displaced or have fled to neighboring countries as asylum seekers.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

The crisis has put enormous strain on the asylum systems of states worldwide.¹⁸ “According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 3 million have fled to Syria's immediate neighbors Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. 6.5 million are internally displaced within Syria. Meanwhile, under 150,000 Syrians have declared asylum in the European Union, while member states have pledged to resettle a further 33,000 Syrians. The vast majority of these resettlement spots – 28,500 or 85% – are pledged by Germany.”¹⁹ In the mid-year report from the UNHCR out of the 44 developed countries selected for the study almost all of them had Syrians as the most numerous nationality applying for asylum in their country. What makes this situation worse is that no end is clearly visible, and the international community will be dealing with the fallout of this war for a very long time.²⁰

“For many who lived in the ruined landscape of the self-declared "caliphate" of ISIS, also known as Islamic State or ISIL, across parts of Syria and Iraq, constant fear is what finally drove them to Western Europe.”²¹ These refugees have reported that simple things such as a short interaction with the other sex, a western-styled haircut or clothing could result in serious punishment under the cruel interpretation of

¹⁸ Steadman, Christopher, “Rights of Refugees, the Internally Displaced, and Asylum Seeking People”

¹⁹ The European Union. "Hello, World!." Syrian Refugees. <http://syrianrefugees.eu/>

²⁰ Steadman, Christopher, “Rights of Refugees, the Internally Displaced, and Asylum Seeking People”

²¹ Hendawi, Hamza. "Refugees Describe Life under ISIS." CBCnews.



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the Islamic Shariah Law.²² Over 10,000 Iraqis and 175,000 Syrians have fled their homes this year by making a dangerous journey to Greece and further into Europe, in the fifth year of the immense influx caused largely by the civil war in Syria.²³ According to recent UN studies, Kurdistan currently has more than 1.7 million IDP Iraqis and refugees, out of which 43 percent are women aged between 4 and 60, who all have been resettled between 13 refugee camps.²⁴ “Outside the conflict, in sprawling camps and overloaded host communities, aid workers report a soaring number of incidents of domestic violence and rampant sexual exploitation.”²⁵ A large part of these Iraqi and Syrian female refugees after escaping the inhumane violence now have to face new threats of harassment and sexual violence in their refugee camps from sexual predators.²⁶ Because of the extremely conservative nature of their society, “the endemic violence suffered by Syrian women and girls is hidden under a cultural blanket of fear, shame and silence that even international aid workers are loath to lift.”²⁷ As an attempt for a solution to this hidden

problem within the refugee camps, there have been requests for patrols by officials within the UN to reduce the number of young men in gangs from harassing women.²⁸ The biggest problem in this situation is that when for example Sunnis are forced to leave their hometowns because of the rule of ISIS, Baghdad would be their next best option, however the Shia-led government refuses to give them security clearance and therefore the only place for them to go are these refugee camps where over 80 percent of their women are subjects to aggression.²⁹ For these women, there is nowhere else to escape to. This is a cultural problem that has embedded itself into refugee camps that host Syrian refugees, as the primary reason for this abuse on women seems to be simply the fact that the Iraqi Kurdistan’s men do not have any respect for Syrian women. This is one of the many reasons that influences refugees to travel to European countries after failing to find security in their own towns, in their own nations’ capitals and sometimes even in refugee camps. They hope that Europe will offer them a more favorable option.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Sharifi, Hajir. "EXCLUSIVE: Report Exposes Rampant Sexual Violence in Refugee Camps." Rudaw.

²⁵ Greenwood, Phoebe. "Rape and Domestic Violence Follow Syrian Women into Refugee Camps."

²⁶ Sharifi, Hajir. "EXCLUSIVE: Report Exposes Rampant Sexual Violence in Refugee Camps." Rudaw.

²⁷ Greenwood, Phoebe. "Rape and Domestic Violence Follow Syrian Women into Refugee Camps."

²⁸ Greenwood, Phoebe. "Rape and Domestic Violence Follow Syrian Women into Refugee Camps."

²⁹ Hendawi, Hamza. "Refugees Describe Life under ISIS." CBCnews.



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“A group of refugees as they walk along the railway tracks near the town of Roszke, Hungary, after crossing the border from Serbia, on Sept. 3. Among the tens of thousands fleeing war and despair in the Middle East, one group feels a special relief in reaching Europe — those who have escaped areas ruled by Islamic State extremists and the harsh scrutiny of their religious police. (Santi Palacios/Associated Press)”³⁰

V. Country Positions

Arab League:

The Arab League is badly polarized and almost paralyzed on Syria. It wants United Nations support for its affected member states. However, at the same time it really wants to keep pressure on Israel to permit the right of return for Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. This is an issue that the Arab League always comes back to.

The Non-Aligned Movement [NAM]:

Favors the humanitarian action, but is extremely suspicious about anything that weakens state sovereignty. They are all newly sovereign, de-colonized, and very uneasy. African members are especially worried about the camps they host.

China:

Is very cautious on this topic. It supports humanitarian action, but is suspicious of anything that dilutes state sovereignty.

The European Union:

Might favor the presence of peacekeepers in the refugee camps and would possibly pay, in the case if others do too. Depends on the specific situation and what the host government says.

Russia:

Would like Syria to be represented in the room and to participate in talks. It will only favor measures that strengthen the government of Assad.

United States:

Wants maximum pressure to be implemented on the Assad government, will support humanitarian assistance, but will not send peacekeeping troops because it expects others to do that and would not like to spend much money on this, but it might in the end, depending on the situation.

Pakistan:

³⁰ Ibid.



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Pakistan has been very supportive of international backing in the protection of refugee shelters, as Pakistan itself is an important host country for a large number of refugees who are principally from Afghanistan.

Africa:

In most African countries, the refugee situation puts a much larger restraint on their governments and therefore some of these nations will seek international support in their refugee camps.

VI. Proposal for Further Action

Issues:

Where are the refugee camps that need assistance, how large are they, and what system is set up to maintain its security today? Is there a significant distinction between refugee camps in surrounding countries and IDP camps within Syria? The United Nations doesn't have much room for action in the latter, unless the Syrian Government decides to invite help. How can the safety of residents from crime and domestic violence be maintained? Can policing be implemented in a more structured manner? Is there a method to permit legitimate and peaceful demonstrations, which are already constant among the borders, without it escalating into violence? How can security be insured from external attacks, such as protecting the camps in Syria from rebel groups like ISIS or the Syrian government itself? Is it possible to keep these camps that often host

millions of residents, from being used as safe havens, recruiting and staging centers by rebel groups? This is especially important, because when this situation occurs, refugee camps can potentially become centers for fighting. How can peace and order be maintained in camps that have been in existence for many years, and where hope has been lost for people to return to their homes?

Solutions to Consider:

- A more aggressive intervention to end civil war.
- Establishment of policing in the camps, possibly by recruiting camp residents or local host country residents. This, however may create power issues and other resentments.
- Send national military forces to protect civilians and stabilize security around refugee and IDP camps. However, there may be a problem with deciding who would send troops, as not many nations are in favor of the idea.
- Station peacekeeping troops around or within the camps. However, the problem is that host countries will see this action as an attack on their sovereignty. They would most likely prefer money to upgraded security on their own.
- The most important issue in creating solutions to the problem is deciding who will pay for the costs. If nations come up with great plans for solution but do not want to pay for it, than no matter how good of a solution is



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created, because in the end nothing

will happen.



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