

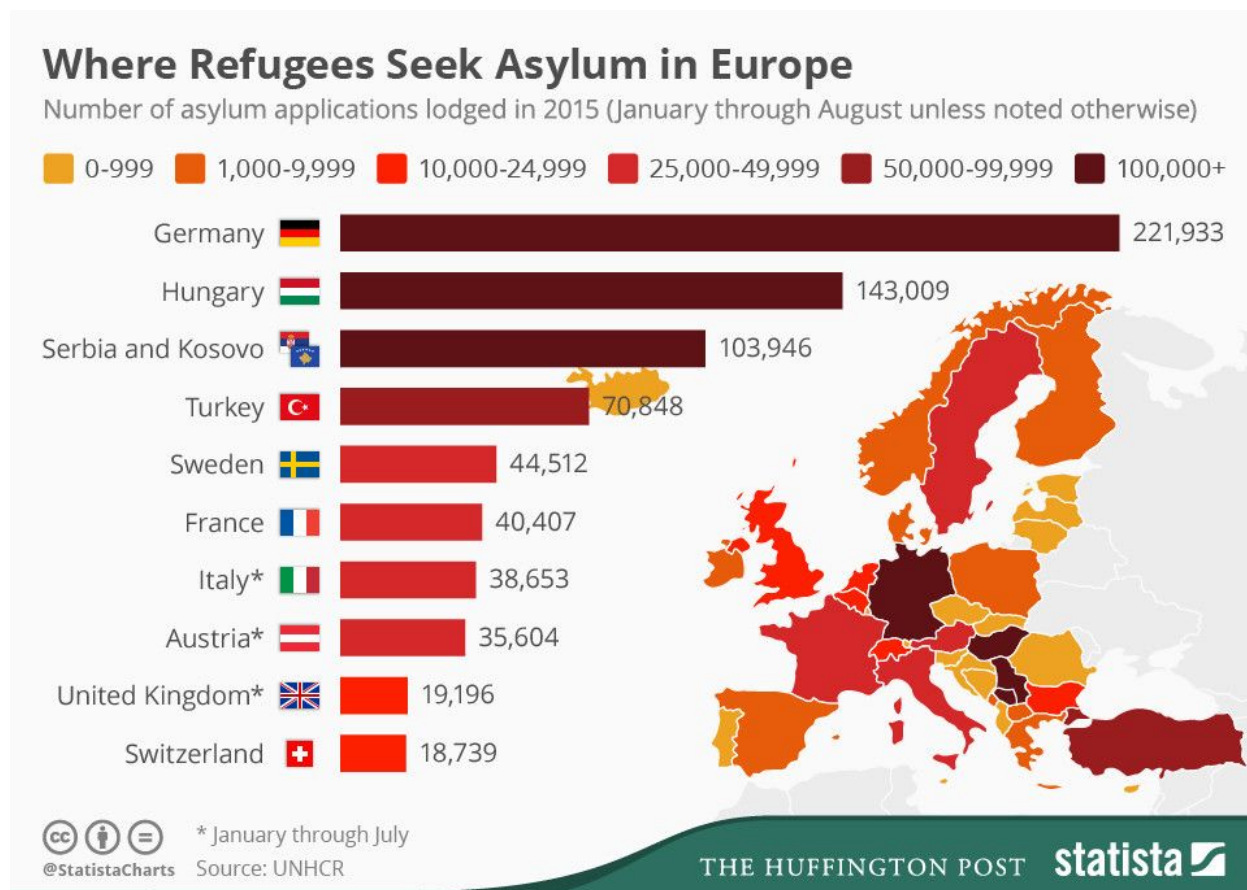
SAIMUN 2017 Research Report

Committee: General Assembly 4

Issue: Redefining the role of neighboring countries in refugee crisis

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1. Description of Issue



Caption #1: A chart of the number of asylum applications lodged in 2015 in Europe

According to the United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees (UNHCR), there are 65.3 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, 21.3 million refugees (16.1 million of which are under UNHCR mandate), and 10 million stateless persons - with nearly 34,000 people forcibly displaced every day. Notably, 53% of the world's refugees came from Somalia, Afghanistan, and Syria. Jordan, Ethiopia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Turkey are among the top hosting countries for refugees.

Syria

The main cause for the rise in the number of refugees is the turmoil and civil war that some countries are going through. Because of this rise in the number of refugees, many neighboring countries are feeling pressured to provide asylum while not being economically able. Consequently, this pressure creates a sense of 'quantity over quality' as many refugees and asylum seekers are not treated well by the host country. There are several situations that have caused significant influxes in refugees and asylum seekers.

Beginning with a peaceful protest against Bashar al-Assad, Syria has been in a civil war since 2011, during the Arab Spring. The protests were ignited by the detainment and torture of 15 boys for writing the slogan of the Arab Spring, translated as "The people want the downfall of the regime", in graffiti. However, the government responded with the murder of hundreds of protesters as well as the imprisonment of many more. Soon thereafter, the Free Syrian Army was formed, military defectors whose goal was to overthrow the government. Described as 'terrorist groups' by the Syrian government and its few supporters, the Sunni Arab rebel groups, the Syrian Democratic Forces, Salafi jihadist groups, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) are the groups fighting in this war. Because of this civil war, there has been an enormous influx in the number of those forcibly displaced. Civilians, to avoid the conflict as well as the bomb raids initiated by foreign powers, are risking their lives and crossing the borders (as well as going on a dangerous journey) to seek a new life.

As of May, 2016, countries that were present at a summit to help Syrian refugees in London have so far only committed one sixth of the money originally pledged for 2016. The money pledged at the summit was a total of \$12.1 billion - reportedly the 'largest amount ever raised for a humanitarian crisis in a single day'. 94% of the donors at the summit were reported to have not 'turned their pledges into actual commitments, and 18 of the donors that made pledges had committed none of their funds', with only Australia, Malta, and Lithuania fully committing to their funding pledges. These funds were raised to help the neighboring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, or Jordan to help with increasing the chances of refugees seeking paid work as well as improving their children's education. Many reports also claim that 'too many of the pledges are skewed towards neighbouring countries, when there are huge humanitarian needs inside [Syria]'.

Iraq

The Iraqi Civil War, beginning in 2014 due to the Iraqi insurgency from 2011 to 2013 (the direct continuation after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the United States of America), is "part of the Arab Winter and the spillover of the Syrian Civil War". As of March, 2016, there have been approximately 156,000 to 174,000 documented civilian deaths by the Iraq Body Count project (IBC).

Another situation is the War in Afghanistan, which began in 2001 after the United States' war against the al-Qaeda and the Taliban following the September 11 attacks. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) became more involved after 2001, eventually formally ending its combat operations on December 28, 2014 by transferring the country's security responsibility to its government. Even after its troops withdrawal, it has been reported by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism that American airstrikes on the country have killed approximately 2,400 - 3,000 people since January 1, 2001. Furthermore, as reported by Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, there have been more than 31,000 civilians to have "died violent deaths as a result of the war" as of August, 2016. Consequently, those dealing with health issues as well as war wounds have difficulty travelling to health clinics and hospitals due to the violence. Not only have the country's security been immensely impacted, it was also reported that "the war has exacerbated the effects of poverty, malnutrition, poor sanitation, lack of access to healthcare, and environmental degradation on Afghans' health". Afghans, in attempts to escape the conflict and the issues that have come with it, have fled the country, much like those from Syria.

There are many more situations in which countries have had its civilians attempt to escape from conflict into another country, seeking asylum, and in all of those countries, it has been incredibly difficult for them to start anew or even to get by safely. With such a rapid increase in those displaced, it is extremely difficult for neighboring countries (as well as other host countries) to accommodate such needs whether it is due to xenophobia or whether it is because governments are not economically able to provide asylum for such large numbers.

2. Definition of Key Terms

Neighboring countries

A neighboring country is a nation that is close to and/or borders the country which the refugees and asylum seekers are from.

Refugees

A person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster. They are protected under international law by the 1951 refugee convention, which defines what a refugee is and outlines the basic rights afforded to them.

Asylum

The protection granted by a nation to someone who has left their native country as a political refugee.

Asylum seekers

A person who has left their home country as a political refugee and is seeking asylum in another. An asylum seeker is a person who is currently seeking protection as a refugee, but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been assessed. While refugees are entitled to international protection and assistance, asylum seekers who are found to not be refugees can be sent back to their country of origin.

Statelessness

According to international law, a stateless person is ‘a person who is not considered as a nation by any State under the operation of its law’.

Repatriation

The act of sending back a person (especially prisoners of war, refugees, etc.) to his or her country or land of citizenship.

Globalisation

The process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas, and other aspects of culture.

3. Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
October, 2001	[Afghanistan] US-led bombing of Afghanistan begins after September 11 attacks
December, 2009	[Afghanistan] US President Barack Obama unveils new strategy, boosts US troop numbers by 30,000 (total of 100,000) and says that the US will begin to withdraw its forces by 2011
January - July, 2011	[Syria] The Arab Spring in Syria - protests, civil uprising, defections
April - May, 2012	[Syria] Ceasefire attempt, failed to repeated vetoes from Russia and China
August, 2012	[Afghanistan] US hands over Bagram high-security jail to the Afghan

	government
June, 2013	[Afghanistan] Afghanistan's army is given, by NATO forces, command of all military and security operations
June, 2014	[Syria] The start of the United States' airstrikes
December, 2014	[Afghanistan] NATO formally ends its 13-year combat mission in Afghanistan
March, 2015	[Afghanistan] US President Barack Obama says the US will delay its troop withdrawals
September, 2015	[Syria] The start of Russian airstrikes
August, 2016	[Syria] The start of Turkish military intervention
October, 2016	[Afghanistan] the Islamic State of the Levant (ISIL) emerges as a growing security threat
December, 2016	[Syria] The start of Russian and Turkish backed ceasefire

4. Positions of Key Member Nations and Other Bodies on the Issue (not done)

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)

Because the United Kingdom does not have a Schengen area, it has refused to take part in Germany's proposed quota system, to fairly distribute refugees amongst the 28 European Union (EU) states. However, there are still asylum seekers who go to the UK, and when they do, it is reported that they receive a weekly allowance of £36.95 per person. Furthermore, those pregnant or with kids usually receive an additional £3 - £5 based on the child's age.

Federal Republic of Germany

It has been reported that Germany was "one of the main countries of destination for asylum seekers in 2015". Further, after the introduction of Angela Merkel's open door policy, more than 300,000 refugees were reported to have arrived in Germany. However, protests have taken place in Germany (both for and against the refugees). Additionally, she reportedly said that Syrians would benefit from 'extra protection',

and those that are refused asylum will not face repatriation. Asylum seekers can also work after three months of being in Germany, and can receive up to €330 while waiting for asylum.

French Republic

Before asylum seekers are granted refugee status in France, they must formally submit an application for asylum at the prefecture before they are even lawfully accepted into France. They are then given temporary residence and can only work if a decision is not reached after nine months (by the body that hears the cases). Those living in the temporary residence halls are provided with monthly allowance, depending on their age and size of the size of their family. Additionally, asylum seekers in France receive universal and free healthcare.

Kingdom of Sweden

Although Sweden does not have the highest quantitative number of refugees and asylum seekers, the nation does have the highest proportion of asylum seekers for every thousand inhabitants (at 8.4, rather than the average 1.2 that the European Union has as a whole). In 2013, Sweden announced that all refugees from Syria would be granted permanent residency. Asylum seekers are offered emergency accommodation upon arrival, and then relocated to temporary housing. As for the issue of employment, Sweden allows asylum seekers to work upon arrival given that they are likely to receive asylum.

Netherlands

In 2016, the Netherlands announced its intention on being more strict and strengthening its asylum policy - those that do not qualify for refugee status will be refused food and shelter benefits. Furthermore, if those denied asylum refuse to return to their place of origin, they would only be offered “a few weeks” of shelter.

Denmark

While Denmark has parties that are strongly against immigration, the nation still continues to provide support for its asylum seekers (including those that do not qualify for refugee status) despite cutting down 45% of social benefits to \$891 per single adult in 2015. Denmark’s policy intends to, if migrants are considered “uncooperative”, reduce its support, and Syrian refugees are granted temporary one-year permits. Refugees are also qualified to apply for a permanent permit. Healthcare is also limited to urgent treatment, but children are granted full access.

Amnesty International

Amnesty International (or more commonly known as Amnesty) is also a non-governmental organisation that focuses on human rights. The organisation’s objective is “to conduct research and generate action to prevent and end grave abuses of human rights, and to demand justice for those whose rights have been violated”. Amnesty can mobilise public opinion in order to place pressure on governments that it deems are letting abuse take place. Amnesty, much like the HRW, can work towards punishing those who have been guilty of human rights abuse without ulterior motives.

5. Suggested Solutions

Funding

It is clear that pledging countries are not lacking in funds - it is an issue of when and if they will turn their pledges into monetary commitment. The countries that have pledged at the London summit, organised by British prime minister David Cameron, must further be pressured to commit the promised funds. This refugee crisis must be addressed immediately, and if these countries delay their aid, the refugees will be in danger and may lose their chance at life due to the lack of funding. The neighboring countries simply cannot aid all of these asylum seekers on their own - they need help from even more foreign powers. Furthermore, these pledges are simply not enough - perhaps a new agreed-upon asylum and/or funding policy could be implemented.

Tackling problems from the roots of the causes

One solution, although much harder to achieve, is to solve the issue within the countries so that there would be less asylum seekers. This may be done through means such as setting a foundation for political stability or the elimination of the groups that are causing citizens to flee. However, before engaging in any attempts to solve issues in countries going through strife, we must consider the consequences of our actions and weigh out the possibility of perhaps making the situation even worse.

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