

Forum: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Issue: Addressing the issue of transparency in regard to inclusivity within institutions

Student Officers: Juan Lucas Oblitas and Sophia Villegas

Position: Chair of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Introduction

As more people are displaced worldwide, they seek refuge in different countries. This has caused an influx of newcomers into countries like Turkey, which in 2020 had received the largest quantity of refugees worldwide. As these refugees settle into a new country, many difficulties arise. The refugees often face language barriers, housing issues, dealing with cultural differences, and xenophobia. All of this prevents refugees from integrating into the country and its institutions. This is due primarily to xenophobia, which prevents any inclusion from occurring. The lack of inclusivity within the institutions limits the refugee's abilities to adapt and be welcomed into the new country. For this reason, there is a desperate need for institutions to be transparent and inclusive. While countries strive for change, xenophobia is at an all-time high directed

particularly towards the Asian communities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN works to fight against xenophobia by promoting the celebration of other cultures, educating others on differences, and promoting respectful and safe environments.

Definition of Key Terms

Refugee

A person who has been forced to leave their country due to war, natural disaster, or conflict.

Institutions:

An established official organization that has an importance in a country such as a church or bank.

Inclusivity:

The practice of providing equal opportunities for people who belong to marginalized or excluded groups.

Xenophobia:

Dislike or prejudice against people from other countries.

General Overview

One of the biggest issues that refugees face when being sheltered in other countries is the discrimination they might face for being foreign refugees. The 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees guarantees certain rights to them such as anti discrimination, housing, education, and freedom to earn wages, among others. However, refugees in certain countries are denied these rights through discrimination within institutions. Some ways that refugees might face discrimination within institutions are: being denied formal education, healthcare, open bank accounts, buy property, among many others. Real life examples of discrimination of refugees in institutions are Syrian children refugees in Europe partaking in child labor and living in detention centers with inadequate living conditions. Another example is in Canada, where refugees in detention centers have devastating housing conditions and lack of adequate medical treatment. Xenophobia is also heavily engrained in politics, as some politicians use xenophobic and racist fears to manipulate the public into supporting them. Discrimination is not only felt in systematic ways through institutions but also in a social manner through peoples behavior. In many

instances immigrants are scapegoated and blamed for the social and economical struggles of a country, which fuels xenophobia among the population. It is vital that institutions be transparent and inclusive so that refugees can have equal opportunities. If countries overlook the rights of refugees and asylum seekers they are violating their rights as human beings.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Turkey

As the number of individuals displaced forcefully around the world due to conflict, violence, and persecution reached historic highs, Turkey continues to house the greatest number of refugees. In addition to the over 320,000 people of concern from other nationalities, Turkey is currently home to about 3.6 million registered Syrian refugees.

Colombia

277 refugees, 625 asylum applicants, and 11 stateless people were housed in Colombia. There are 7,671,124 internally displaced Colombians, who were compelled to evacuate their homes but did not look for refuge elsewhere. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a former guerrilla group, have formally laid down their guns and the government is implementing the terms of their peace pact

Germany

The largest host nation for refugees in Europe as of the middle of 2021, Germany recorded almost 1.24 million refugees and 233 000 asylum seekers. Syrian

refugees make up half of the total. Another 27 000 stateless people reside in Germany. In addition, Germany has long been the second-largest bilateral donor after the United States, supporting UNHCR's global efforts.

Pakistan

Around 1.3 million Afghans are recognized as refugees in Pakistan, but an additional 1.5 million are thought to be living there illegally, including the 250,000 Afghans, the government claims have entered since the Taliban seized power there in August 2021.

Timeline of Events

Date	Event
1965	The 1965 Amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) Created a seven-category preference system that gives priority to relatives and children of U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents, professionals, and other individuals with specialized skills, and refugees.
1967	The 1967 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Refugee Protocol Protocol says that countries that ratify it agree to abide by the Refugee Convention as well – even if they are not a party to it.

1972	INS Administrative Asylum Policies Under U.S. immigration law, a person granted asylum is legally allowed to remain in the country without fear of deportation. They qualify to work, travel abroad and apply for their spouse or children under the age of 21 to join them.
1980	Refugee Act of 1980 It raised the annual ceiling for refugees from 17,400 to 50,000, created a process for reviewing and adjusting the refugee ceiling to meet emergencies, and required annual consultation between Congress and the President.
1991	First INS Asylum Offices Opened

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The 1951 Convention on the status of Refugees is the key document regarding refugee law. The core principle of this document is that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face a serious threat to their life or freedom. In

this document, it also states that countries cannot discriminate against refugees based on race, religion, gender, etc.

UNHCR also released a document called "Guidance on Racism and Xenophobia", where the UN proposes adding to the UNHCR's framework as well as the national framework to stop racism and xenophobia. They also proposed using regional organizations in places where xenophobia and racism and refugees is taking place.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

In a statement issued marking the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Filippo Grandi said that although he had been "humbled" by the outpouring of support seen by communities welcoming well over three million Ukrainian refugees since the Russian invasion began, many minorities – often foreigners who had been studying or working there – had described a very different experience. They reported disturbing incidents of discrimination, violence, and racism. The UNHCR chief noted that the refugee experience is universal, with "the same pain and sorrow; the same loss and anguish; the same relief at finding safety and trepidation of an uncertain future", experienced by everyone on the run, "who also and equally deserve our compassion, our empathy, and our support."

Possible Solutions

The most effective ways to promote inclusivity within institutions and eradicating xenophobia from them could be by calling on governments to strengthen the legal framework concerning xenophobia as well as using already existing organizations. Implementing programs within institutions to combat xenophobia and all types of discrimination to be more inclusive.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

The issue is related to the sixteenth goal, that being reduced inequalities, since it tackles the complex issue of bringing light to the issues of diversity within agencies: an issue that affects communities worldwide, particularly refugees.

Bibliography

- "5 Ways to Fight Racism and Xenophobia." *UNICEF USA*, 18 Mar. 2021, que.
- "Global Report 2021." *Global Focus*, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/globalreport2021/pdf>.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "The 1951 Refugee Convention." *UNHCR*, UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, <https://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html>.
- "Afghanistan's Refugees: Forty Years of Dispossession." *Amnesty International*, 13 Aug. 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/afghanistan->

refugees-forty-years/.

- “Promoting Welcoming and Inclusive Societies.” *UNHCR*, <https://www.unhcr.org/handbooks/ih/welcoming-inclusive-societies/promoting-welcoming-and-inclusive-societies>.
- “Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons.” *HRW*, <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/campaigns/race/refugeepresskit.html>.
- Niang, Rokhaya, and Rokhaya Niang. “The Inhumane Treatment of Forced Migrants and Its Roots in Xenophobia: Immigration and Human Rights Law Review.” *Immigration and Human Rights Law Review | The Blog*, 24 May 2022, <https://lawblogs.uc.edu/ihr/r/2021/10/28/the-inhumane-treatment-of-forced-migrants-and-its-roots-in-xenophobia/>.
-

Appendix

I. Links

- A. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/basic/3b66c2aa10/convention-protocol-relating-status-refugees.html>
1. This link is useful because it is a UN document on the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.
- B. <https://www.unhcr.org/55cb153f9.pdf>
1. This document is useful because its and evaluation by UNHCR itself on Xenophobia and how to combat it.
- C. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/>
1. This article is helpful because it provides an overview on refugees and asylum seekers in general.