Forum: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)

Issue: Protecting the rights of displaced persons

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Introduction:

The question of protecting the rights of displaced persons is a common and prominent problem in our world. Displaced people are constantly suffering from many mental and physical issues due to the actions taken by the authorities in a country.

There are numerous countries around the world with displaced people. There are 2 different types of displaced people: internally displaced people and refugees. Internally displaced people are people who have been forced to leave their homes but are still in the same country. Major countries include Syria, Colombia, Iraq, The Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan. Refugees, however, are people who have been forced to leave their country of origin or residence. The top five countries which create the most refugees include Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia.

According to the International Organization of Migration, 25 million people are displaced annually, contributing to a total of 40 million people being displaced at any given time globally. All this displacement causes a negative impact on many people. For example, it causes mental health issues like depression, anxiety and stress. These mental health issues lead to health problems related to eating habits, sleeping habits and living habits as a whole. Refugees are present all over the world and in many communities refugees are not being treated fairly and are not receiving their basic human rights which can lead to poverty, increased crime rates and many other issues that could be crucial to a country.

Definition of Key Terms:

1. **Refugee:** Someone who has been forced to leave their own homes for reasons including persecution, escaping war, and natural disasters.

2. **Displaced Person:** According to the UNHCR, displaced persons are classified as "a person who, as the result of authorities of regimes, has been deported from, or has been obliged to leave his or her country of nationality or of former habitual residence."

3. **Internally Displaced Persons:** Someone that is forced to leave their homes but remain inside their own country.

4. **Immigrant:** A person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country.

5. **Asylum:** A form of protection granted to a person which allows them to remain in the country they're taken asylum from instead of being deported to a country where they may fear persecution or harm.

6. **Persecution:** Oppression; hostility or ill-treatment particularly due to beliefs (political and/or religious) or race.

Background Information

The start of the issue of displaced people started 82 years ago in 1939 during the Second World War. During World War II, 60 million people were displaced due to the war and conflict. This entire beginning of displacement as a whole, resulted in millions around the world getting displaced for various reasons such as natural disasters, government regulations and even lack of basic rights or human living standards.

Following the Second World War was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This took place in 1948 and resulted in 5.1 million people being displaced. Other events in which conflict has caused people to be displaced was the Korean war, the Vietnam war, and the Afghan conflict. There are currently many countries around the world that are the source of refugees and have many internally displaced people globally.

Displacement has had numerous knock-on effects. For example, people who are counted as displaced persons are more subject to committing crimes to help live up to the living standards for themselves and their families and to even gain the basic necessities of life. Displacement also causes mental health issues. This is because, living in a country that is not of your own, being unemployed and trying to find out when the next meal will be is very stressful and taxing for an individual. Therefore, mental trauma can take place in the form of anxiety, depression and other mental illness or conditions.

One of the largest nature related displacements that took place was in the US in 1900. Over the course of one month The Great Galveston Hurricane affected many lives. Along with 8000 fatalities, approximately 10,000 people were displaced and homeless. All these 10,000 people were affected greatly as shelters, food sources, water sources and many other essentials of living were not accessible.

Current Situation

Amidst conflicts across the globe, individuals are denied basic human needs and are burdened with the task of seeking refuge. Although the IHL (International humanitarian law) has been established, many displaced persons still face injustices daily. Globally, there are over 80 million forcibly displaced people, this includes internally displaced people (IDP), refugees and asylum seekers. Of which a large number face violations of their rights.

People can be displaced by regimes that carry out persecution or violate the human rights of residents. Nations facing political, religious, or tribal conflicts drive the ever-growing number of displaced persons. Many organisations like the UN (including their subcommittees like UNHCR and SOCHUM) and NGOs have been working tirelessly to ensure the protection of the rights of displaced persons.

The main factor that has severely affected this issue is the rise of political conflicts that have occurred globally; for example, the Syrian Civil war, the Israel-Palestine conflict, and most recently, the developments in Afghanistan. Currently, the number of displaced persons is at the highest there has ever been. As the world progressively becomes more socially and

internationally connected, there are more opportunities for humanitarian organisations like the UNHCR to provide external aid**.** This also means that there is more awareness towards this issue and that significant developments can be made to escalate or solve this issue.

Another major issue that could pose as a threat to the rights of displaced persons is the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has deepened the already existing vulnerabilities of displaced persons. Borders are shut, hence it would be harder to escape conflict and seek asylum. Governments globally are also strained economically, hence it would be harder to provide aid. Delegates are encouraged to consider how this issue may be affected in a rapidly evolving world.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Syria:

The country with the highest population of internally displaced people is Syria. It is estimated that around 6.2 million people are internally displaced in Syria. The UNHCR looks over the "protection and community services, distribution of core relief items, shelter assistance, health-care services and educational support" of these internally displaced people in Syria. The root cause of displacement in Syria is violence. People continue to flee from Syria due to the Syrian Civil War which started off as protests. The Syrian government has currently not taken any action towards solving the issue of displacement and is successfully receiving guidance from the UNHCR to resolve this issue.

South Sudan:

From 76,000 to 2 million people being displaced within 6 years, South Sudan sees 1 in 3 people as internally displaced people. All this displacement started for similar reasons as other countries, conflict and war. Currently there are 4.3 million people who are displaced in South Sudan. With reference to the UNHCR, around 63% of these displaced people are children. South Sudan is also receiving constant help from the World Bank who have "issued a Country Engagement Note (CEN) to guide its

intervention in the country over a period of 24 months".

Afghanistan:

As of 2021, 4 million people have been displaced in Afghanistan. Commonly, the cause of this is the insecurity people face as well as the violent conflicts taking place in Afghanistan. The UNHCR has recognised that this repeating cycle of displacement in Afghanistan is seen with internally displaced people and they aim to control this issue so that displaced people can have easier, more efficient access to help since they are still in their own country. The UNHCR has also mentioned that the world should not take the displacement in Afghanistan due to the Civil War lightly, as it is a heavy ongoing crisis and can lead to various other problems. These various other problems involve a declining economy and social riots that could be an extra weight on Afghanistan to solve.

Colombia:

Despite the efforts of signing a peace agreement in Colombia in 2016, displacement still continues to be a prominent issue. A peace treaty is a treaty between two parties which indicates the end of war or conflict. With a peace treaty, Colombia intended to eradicate ongoing wars to prevent further displacement of civilians in Colombia. The UNHCR has said they will "support the local authorities and communities to address the protection risks they face, while supporting a comprehensive institutional response to the situation" in Colombia. The displacement in Colombia is due to the fighting by irregular armed groups and other forms of violence.

Turkey:

Conflicts between the Kurdish Workers Party and the Turkish military have brought on various cycles of displacement. Turkey is one of the largest sources and hosts of refugees. The UNHCR has declared that they have and will be working towards "coordinating between the UN agencies and Turkey, provide internal protection for people in need in Turkey, provide humanitarian aid to refugees in camps and in urban areas and increase activities for the strengthening of the national asylum system".

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Below are treaties, resolutions, and events by the United Nations and their relevant bodies that work towards protecting the rights of displaced persons:

- The 1951 Refugee Convention, an influential convention where the term 'refugee' was defined, and one of the first conventions where 149 member States identified and took significant steps towards addressing the issue (brief outline)
  - o This convention was very effective as it established the basis for many existing frameworks today on how to tackle and view this issue. While the solutions passed/proposed then may be irrelevant/unfeasible today due to changing eras, this convention was a starting point in international efforts to protect the rights of refugees, considering it was established as early as 70 years ago.
- Resolution adopted by the general assembly on the report of the Third Committee, 24th February 1995 (A/RES/49/169)
  - o It called upon countries to adjust frameworks to assist asylum seekers and to give them access to more basics in human needs and rights. This resolution had a lot of feasible and beneficial solutions, yet many of them weren't as effectively implemented. Delegates are encouraged to include ways to effectively enforce such solutions when making their own resolutions
- Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions, 16th December 2020 (A/RES/75/163)
  - o Emphasises that withholding the rights of refugees is the responsibility of the states, and proposes other key solutions that may be relevant in today's world and context (especially in the COVID 19 Pandemic). The efficacy of the resolution is yet to be determined as it was only published recently.
- The UN has been assisting in the fight to put an end to this. As of 2012, the then

secretary-general Ban-Ki Moon called for the world humanitarian summit to galvanize greater leadership to prevent and resolve conflict and reduce suffering. The UN has mainly deployed peacekeepers along with shelters in affected regions such as the Jordanian border, etc.

Possible Solutions

There have been many advancements in how the UN and many countries tackle the issue of displaced persons.

Nonetheless, it is clear, that there is much progress to be made as we have yet to face the answers of whether IDPs should be given their own legal classification as to be recognised and protected under international law? How the rights of displaced persons can be sustained in the process of migration wherein external aid is scarce?

Delegates may choose to refer to possible, actionable solutions that are listed below:

1) Implementing talks about refugees and internally displaced people in school curriculums
   a) This solution will help children understand the growing problems in their world and potentially in their country. Through this action, children will learn more about why these problems arise and what action they can do to support any displaced people
2) Conducting mandatory workshops/talks in the workplace about displaced people as a whole
   a) By conducting mandatory workshops and talks, older people (adults) would also gain a sense and knowledge of what happens to displaced people. This would also spread more awareness about the issue and potentially give rise to constructive actions by authorities to help these displaced people
3) Urge MEDCs (More Economically Developed Countries) to give x% of their GDP to LEDCs (Less Economically Developed Countries) to cater for the needs of displaced people

a) Due to the fact that MEDCs have more revenue in the form of GDP, they can give a certain amount (x%) of their GDP to LEDCs so that LEDCs can develop their services to care for displaced people that requires money

4) Conduct checks at refugee camps by government/agency officials every x months/weeks

a) By having people with authoritative power conduct checks in refugee camps, the basic standard of living is met. These people conducting checks can also supervise and see whether or not displaced people are being taken care of properly and are receiving their basic human rights

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Useful Links:

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