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BACKGROUND GUIDE Council on Displaced People

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By Mr. Ramin Sina, Summer Fellow in the 2015 NCUSAR Washington, DC Summer Internship Program, with contributions from the staff and volunteers at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations

Topic 1: Supporting the accessibility of humanitarian goods and education to refugees and internally displaced people in the region

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

Wars and turmoil in various member states of the Arab League have forced millions of people to leave their homes, migrating within or into another state. Those people are referred to as forcibly displaced people.¹ Internally displaced people (IDPs) refer to the coerced movement of people away from their home or home region migrating within the same country. Refugees refer to people who are outside their home country because they fear persecution or injury in their homeland. Many of these people suffer with poor access to basic human needs such as food, water, shelter, clothing, education, sanitation and healthcare.

“Accessibility of humanitarian goods and education” is the thrust of this topic, and should remain the goal of the Council. Refugees and IDPs have many needs, however, this topic only focuses on these two. The Council must also define the League’s role vis-à-vis aid from individual nations, from NGOs, and from large multilateral organizations. The UN Refugee Agency could be a role model in this respect.²

B. History of the Topic in the Muslim World

The issue of forcibly displaced people in the Muslim World is wide-spread. Palestinians, Lebanese, Kurdish, Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian, and Libyan are just some of the peoples who are currently displaced in large numbers. In 2014, the number of forcibly displaced worldwide was estimated at 51.2 million, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency.³ There were 16.7 million refugees and 33.3 million internally displaced people. The vast majority of these people are displaced in the Muslim World. Turkey and

¹ The United Nations, *Refugees and Forcibly Displaced Persons*, on: <http://www.un.org/en/events/refugeeday/background.shtml>

² J. CRISP, C. TALBOT, D.B. CIPOLLONE, *Learning for a future: Refugee education in developing countries*, 2001, on: <http://www.unhcr.org/4a1d5ba36.html>

³ The UN Refugee Agency, *Facts and Figures about Refugees*, Global Trends Report 2014, on: <http://www.unhcr.org.uk/about-us/key-facts-and-figures.html>

Pakistan host the largest number of refugees.⁴ Afghanistan and Syria make up the biggest sources of refugees. Syria has the highest amount of internally displaced people mainly because of the country's current crisis: "The fighting [in Syria] has (...) provoked massive displacement with more than 4 million people having sought refuge in neighboring countries, while a further 7.6 million are displaced within in Syria."⁵ Note that this is out of a total pre-war population of about 20 million, meaning over half of the population has been displaced in the past four years.⁶

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

Humanitarian aid has always been a topic of relevance for the Arab League. Especially Saudi Arabia, among other Gulf Arab states, has traditionally been a generous contributor of humanitarian aid to the Muslim World. In light of the 2011 Arab uprisings, the issue of forcibly displaced people has become even more urgent. Significant consideration must be afforded to how to mitigate the current suffering of all people displaced by the current crises in the Arab World, and how to provide for them in the future. For the present, concerns of basic supplies like food, clean water, shelter, and medicine must be addressed, along with solutions for long-term needs like education and employment training.

Further, the Arab League may elaborate on how it could assist those countries in the region which have made significant and admirable efforts to accommodate large numbers of refugees. International humanitarian law should be kept in mind at all times. Perhaps the most pressing issues for this topic are funding and delivery. Who will fund any new Arab League initiatives, and how can this aid be most effectively delivered to those who need it? The Council might also consider how its efforts can redirect, better coordinate, or otherwise amplify existing initiatives to assist displaced people.

⁴ DAILY SABAH, *Turkey hosts the most refugees in the world*, February 27, 2015, on: <http://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2015/02/27/un-turkey-hosts-the-most-refugees-in-the-world>

⁵ The UN News Centre, *Syrian Crisis 'worsening' amid humanitarian funding shortfall, warns top UN relief official*, March 26, 2015, on: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50436#.VXWo0VIYEXx>

⁶ The CIA's World Factbook, Syria, on: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sy.html>

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What has been done in the past at a supranational level in such cases? (Ex. UN Resolutions 2139 and 2165)
- How successful/effective have previous efforts been? What lessons can be learned?
- What resources (financial, logistic, political cover, etc.) can my country offer to address the suffering of forcibly displaced people?
- What programs for education, medical training, sanitation, etc. are successful in my respective country, and how might these be applied in the context of the topic?
- What history with refugees and internally displaced people does my country have?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What, if any, support may be offered to countries with significant refugee populations by the Arab League?
- Who should deliver humanitarian assistance to forcibly displaced people? How can it best be delivered? Is graft a concern?
- How can the League get assistance to people in or near areas of heavy fighting, or those areas controlled by extremist groups?

Topic 2: Discussing the political, military, and logistical implications of creating humanitarian safe zones in Syria

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

With few signs of an imminent political solution to the Syrian crisis, the humanitarian condition of the people of Syria continues to deteriorate and host communities in Syria's neighboring countries have become overburdened. Around four million Syrians have fled the country.⁷ Most of them have been accommodated as refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, and Egypt, though these countries are overstretched and the situation grows more untenable by the day. For this reason, many are speaking about the necessity of creating safe zones within Syrian territory. Not surprisingly, government officials from Turkey are calling for the creation of safe zones.⁸ Several US officials have taken the same line.⁹

Humanitarian safe zones refer to demilitarized zones in an area of conflict. They are almost always accompanied with humanitarian corridors intended to allow the safe transit of humanitarian aid in, and/or refugees out of a crisis region. Political implications refer to the possible reactions of Arab League member states on an Arab League stance favoring the creation of safe zones. Whether member states would or would not pursue an Arab League resolution could have possible implications for the Arab League's legitimacy. Military implications refer to the impact such actions may have on the ongoing conflict in Syria (and beyond) as well as impacts on the national security of League member states. Logistical implications refer mainly to the coordination and management of the safe zones.

⁷ The UN News Centre, *Syrian Crisis 'worsening' amid humanitarian funding shortfall, warns top UN relief official*

⁸ AL-ARABIYA NEWS, *Turkey calls for long 'humanitarian' safe zone in Syria*, Istanbul, October 18, 2014, on: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/10/18/Turkey-calls-for-long-humanitarian-safe-zone-in-Syria-.html>

⁹ FOX NEWS, *Defense officials; Setting up humanitarian safe zone in Syria would be challenging*, May 6, 2015, on: <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2015/05/06/defense-officials-setting-up-humanitarian-safe-zone-in-syria-would-be/>

B. History of the Topic in the Muslim World

In practice, humanitarian corridors have at times been exploited to supply weapons into conflict zones. In Bosnia in the 1990s, the international community established several humanitarian safe zones in areas that had been liberated by the Bosnian civilian defense to protect them against the Serbian armed forces.¹⁰ In 1993, the United Nations Security Council created a safe zone in Srebrenica by issuing Resolution 819. However, the safe zones and the presence of UN peacekeepers did not secure long-lasting peace. In 1995, Srebrenica was overrun by the Yugoslav military and Serbian paramilitary units, leading to a massacre of more than 8000 Bosnians.¹¹

In February 2014 in Geneva, peace talks between the Syrian government and the Syrian opposition coalition determined the creation a humanitarian safe zone in Homs, Syria. However, the ceasefire was not stable and after several days it was broken. Nevertheless, the temporary ceasefire brought some relief as “more than 1000 people ha[d] escaped the city of Homs.”¹² Further, “some food ha[d] also been delivered.”¹³

Turkey has repeatedly called for more safe areas in its neighboring country.¹⁴ A UNSC resolution creating safe zones could be accompanied by UN soldiers securing the zone. However, there is a strong reluctance among many UN members regarding the deployment of ground troops into Syria, first and foremost the United States.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

The violence Syria has experienced in the past four years has resulted in an estimated 220,000 Syrians killed, according to the United Nations.¹⁵ More than 12.2 million people continue to require life-saving aid. In several of Syria’s provinces, millions of Syrians are

¹⁰ S. CAGAPTAY, A. J. TABLER, *Humanitarian Safe Havens; Bosnia’s Lessons for Syria*, February 7, 2012, on <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/humanitarian-safe-havens-bosnias-lessons-for-syria>

¹¹ M. SIMONS, *Mladic Arrives in The Hague*, May 31, 2011, on <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/01/world/europe/01serbia.html>

¹² BBC, *Syria crisis: Concern for Homs refugees*, February 14, 2014, on <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26198859>

¹³ I. BLACK, *Syria peace talks enter second round as Homs ceasefire extended*, February 10, 2014, on <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/10/syria-peace-talks-homs-ceasefire-extended>

¹⁴ B. ARIEL, *Carter: Syria Safe Zone Would Require ‘Combat Mission’*, on <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/185574#.VXHxtdJViko>

¹⁵ The UN News Centre, *Syrian Crisis ‘worsening’ amid humanitarian funding shortfall, warns top UN relief official*

denied access to water, electricity and food. Often, the warring parties are those who restrict the citizen's access to basic humanitarian needs, particularly as siege tactics have become the norm in many areas. Therefore, it is the Arab League's responsibility to decide whether the creation of humanitarian safe zones would benefit the local population and the region with consideration for the potential consequences of taking such a position. For instance the sending of Arab League peacekeepers could be approached, too. Other options of security measures such as the creation of military alliances specifically for humanitarian safe zones can be considered, as well.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research:

- In which conflicts have humanitarian safe zones been created in the past? Have they been successful?
- What lessons can the Arab League take from historic examples of humanitarian safe zones?
- What positive and negative implications accompanied humanitarian safe zones in the past? What about the specific situation of Syria would hinder or make succeed a policy for humanitarian safe zones?
- Has my country spoken in favor of humanitarian safe zones in the past?
- What would my country gain by supporting safe zones? What would it cost my country in terms of money, troops, credibility, and political capital?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer:

- Where in Syria could possible safe areas be created?
- Who would manage/protect the areas? Apart from peacekeeping units, should there be any military presence in the safe areas?
- How strong should the mandate for possible peacekeepers be to use force? Might peacekeepers return fire if attacked?
- How many peacekeepers would be needed for an effective safe zone? Is air power needed to protect the safe zones and corridors?
- Which role could individual Arab states play to help creating effective safe zones? Would international actors be included in protecting the safe zones? The United Nations?

Topic 3: Establishing a basic common code of the ethics and legal rights with regards to the treatment of migrant and expatriate workers in Arab League states

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

Migrant and expatriate workers refer to those workers which are not citizens of the state in which they work. Article 2 (1) of the International Convention on Migrant Workers defines a migrant worker as “a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national.”¹⁶

Following the Second World War, Western European countries heavily relied on the concept of a migrant and expatriate labor force. The issue of how to treat those foreign workers and which legal rights they acquired was central in Germany (regarding especially Turkish workers) and France (North African workers). In the Arab World, foreign labor forces and the accompanying issues of their legal and humanitarian rights is a newer phenomenon.

Every Arab League member state has foreign workers residing in it, and some are exporters of labor. The Gulf States, in particular, import expatriate laborers largely from South and Southeast Asia. The Arab League lacks a common doctrine on the ethical and legal rights regarding the treatment of migrant and expatriate workers. A basic common code of the ethics and legal rights refers to uniform rules the Arab League could declare or implement for the member states to have a clear reference point on how to address the issue. In that way, employers could be kept accountable, and migrant workers could rely on a supranational document. Nevertheless, some countries would oppose this as an affront to their national sovereignty.

B. History of the Topic in the Arab World

A migrant labor force is a phenomenon especially common in the Gulf States. In the 20th Century, the oil boom in the Gulf region (UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain which comprise the Gulf Cooperation Council), created an unprecedented

¹⁶ THE UNITED NATIONS, *The International Convention on Migrant Workers and its Committee*, New York/Geneva, 2005, on: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FactSheet24rev.1en.pdf>

demand for labor in the oil, construction and industrial sectors.¹⁷ Development demanded a labor force. Foreign workers met this demand, primarily those from the Arab states early on, with a later shift to workers from Asian countries.¹⁸ A rise in the standards of living for some citizens of Middle Eastern countries also created a demand for domestic workers in the home.

Since the 1970s, foreign workers have become a large percentage of the population in most nations in the Gulf region. Growing competition with nations in the job sector along with complaints regarding the treatment of foreign workers have led to rising tensions between the national and foreign populations in these nations.

Foreign workers migrate to several Middle Eastern countries as contract workers using the kafala, or 'sponsorship' system. Not all states in the region have the kafala. However, those "countries receiving large numbers of migrant workers, namely the GCC states, as well as Lebanon and Jordan in the Mashreq region, (...) all have variants of the *kafala*."¹⁹ Human rights organizations have criticized this system for creating easy opportunities for the exploitation of workers.²⁰ International media attention increased after Qatar was named the host of the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

The Arab League may choose to work toward implementing a broad policy, or guidelines, that will affect all member states. The legal rights of migrant workers vis-a-vis their employers in the Arab states today are minimal. When being exploited or abused, foreign workers find it very hard even impossible to ask for their rights before national courts. While certain countries have announced reform efforts, critics say the pace of change is too slow. This topic challenges the League to consider whether a

¹⁷ M. ABELLA, *Asian migrant and contract workers in the Middle East*, in R. COHEN, *Cambridge Survey of world migration*, Cambridge, Cambridge Press, 1995, pp. 418-423.

¹⁸ A. KAPISZEWSKI, *Arab versus Asian migrant workers in the GCC countries*, at the UN Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region, on: http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/EGM_Ittmig_Arab/P02_Kapiszewski.pdf

¹⁹ A. KHAN, H. HARROFF-TAVEL, *Reforming the Kafala; Challenges and Opportunities in moving Forward*, in *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, Vol. 20, No 3-4, 2011, on: http://www.smc.org.ph/administrator/uploads/apmj_pdf/APMJ2011N3-4ART2.pdf

²⁰ J. MONTAGUE, *Desert heat: World Cup hosts Qatar face scrutiny over 'slavery' accusations*, May 1, 2013 on <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/04/30/sport/football/football-qatar-world-cup-2022-worker-rights>

common code of ethics and legal rights for the treatment of foreign workers is preferential or even possible.

Resolutions of this topic could enumerate specific rights each migrant worker should have in Arab League states. Further, the League might consider exploring the issue of migrant recruiting agencies, too. Resolutions could approach the legality of Arab employers in working with migrant agencies, as well.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What laws in my country inhibit the rights of foreign workers in my country?
- What steps, if any, has my government taken to protect the rights of expatriate workers?
- How easy/difficult is the access to courts for migrant workers in my country?
- Does my country export labor, or import labor? Both?
- What lessons can be learned from expatriate labor laws in other countries around the world?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How should the Arab League approach the increase in the number of migrant workers living in the Arab world?
- What can be done to promote awareness of those exploited and abused and their rights?
- How should the Arab League approach the cooperation between domestic employers and recruitment agencies in sending countries?
- How can the Arab League ensure the basic needs of these members of society will be met, and their rights will be upheld?