



United Nations High Commissioner
for Refugees (UNHCR)
Chair Letter

DEAR DELEGATES,

Welcome to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees at CNYMUN 2025! At this conference, we will be discussing UNHCR's most immediate ongoing issues around the current refugee situations. Collaboration and debate are key skills at this conference, and we are looking forward to having a productive and valuable discussion about these topics. Your chairs for UNHCR are Meryem Sarimurat and Ayesha Rehman, with Avery Howe as their rapporteur.

ABOUT THE CHAIRS:

Ayesha Rehman is a junior at Fayetteville Manlius High school and has been part of MUN for 3 years. In her free time she loves baking, playing the violin, or shopping. She also works at the Kumon of Manlius and loves meeting new people.

Meryem Sarimurat is a junior at Fayetteville-Manlius High school. In her free time, she enjoys drawing, reading, and listening to Taylor Swift. This is her third year doing MUN, and her first time chairing.

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE:

Your topics for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees at CNYMUN 2025 will be:

1. Addressing the Ongoing Sudanese Refugee Crisis
2. Managing Relationships between NGOs and UN Refugee Camps

Initially, the UNHCR was established in the aftermath of WWII, but disbanded three years later. Years later, as there was a new refugee crisis unfolding, the UNHCR had its mandate extended many times in the 20th century until UNHCR's mandate was made permanent by the General Assembly in 2003. Today, the UNHCR is a global organization dedicated to protecting people forced to flee, and those left stateless. They lead international action to protect refugees, deliver life-saving assistance, help protect fundamental human rights, and ensure people have a safe place where they can build a future. The UNHCR also expanded their scope over the years to include: refugees returning

home, people forcibly displaced in their own country, and people left stateless.¹

The UNHCR centers its work around providing support and protection for refugee and Internally Displaced Person (IDP) crises across the world. A refugee is a person who has been forced to leave their country because of persecution, war, or violence. Ethnic, tribal, religious violence, and war are the leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries. An Internally Displaced person (IDP) is a person who is forced to flee their home, but never crosses the international border. This is the largest group that the UNHCR assists. Unlike refugees, IDPs are not protected by international law and aren't eligible to receive many types of aid because they are legally under the protection of their own government.² As of May 2024, there are 120 million people who are forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations.³ This session explores themes centering around relationships between refugee camps and organizations providing aid, as well as the complexities of ongoing refugee situations.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE:

Following CNYMUN tradition, the debate will be conducted in Harvard style, meaning delegates will not be allowed to use pre-written clauses and/or resolutions during committee. Doing so will make a delegate ineligible for awards.

To be eligible for awards, delegates must submit a 1-2 page position paper via email that addresses both topics before the start of the conference. Position papers should outline the stance of your delegation, and display an understanding of the topics, demonstrating research and knowledge of your organization's goals. When deciding on awards, the chairs will look favorably upon delegates who have put significant effort towards research/preparation,

¹ "History of UNHCR." *UNHCR*, 2 Sept. 1945, www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/history-unhcr.

² *What Is a Refugee? Definition and Meaning* | USA for UNHCR, www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/. Accessed 29 Aug. 2024.

³ *Refugee Statistics* | USA for UNHCR, www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/statistics/. Accessed 29 Aug. 2024.

collaborate with other delegates during committee sessions, stay within their nation's policies, and get their voice heard without being overbearing.

Furthermore, for the first time, CNYMUN is implementing a tiered structure of committees to ensure similar experience levels for all committee members. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is designated as an open committee, and we would like the debate to reflect that. In turn, the Best New Delegate Award will be offered to a first-time delegate in this committee.

Please share position papers before the conference begins. To contact your chairs about any research, position papers, committee inquiries, or other questions, our emails are listed below. We also encourage you to scan our lengthy delegate preparation resources – and award structure – on www.cnymun.org. We wish you luck, and look forward to what CNYMUN 2025 will bring!

Meryem Sarimurat
26msariumart@fmschools.org

Ayesha Rehman
26arehman@fmschools.org

TOPIC 1: ADDRESSING THE ONGOING SUDANESE REFUGEE CRISIS

Over the last 20 years, Sudan has made international headlines for ongoing political unrest.⁴ The Sudanese crisis first started in 2003, with the Darfur Conflict. The conflict was initiated by rebels protesting against the government's disregard for Sudan's western region and its non-Arab population. The government responded by supporting Arab militias known as "Janjaweed" to fight against the rebels in Darfur. The militias, however, terrorized citizens and prevented international aid organizations from providing much needed humanitarian aid to that region. By 2007, this conflict led to a resulting humanitarian crisis that left thousands dead and more than 2 million people internally and externally displaced.⁵ This violence led to the Sudanese president Omar Al-Bashir to be indicted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide. Al Bashir stepped down from office in 2019, marking the first change in the country's leadership in over 25 years. In 2021 a military coup dissolved the transitional civilian government, triggering more political and economic turmoil.⁶

Since the military coup of 2021, Sudan has been run by the army, with coup leader General Abdel Fattah Burhan as their de facto ruler. The RSF (Rapid Support Forces), run by General Mohammad Hamdan Dalago, has worked alongside the SAF (Sudanese Armed Forces) to help keep the military in power. By the end of 2023, Burhan promised a transition to civilian government - but neither Burhan nor Hamdan had any intention of giving up power. Tension arose around how RSF paramilitaries should be incorporated into the Sudanese army. This pressure escalated when the RAF deployed its members around the country without the permission of the SAF. These conflicts between the SAF and RAF power distribution turned violent on April 15,

⁴ "The Crisis in Sudan, Explained." *What You Need to Know, One Year In*, concernusa.org/news/sudan-crisis-explained/. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 27 Aug. 2024, www.britannica.com/place/Sudan/Conflict-in-Darfur.

⁶ "The Crisis in Sudan, Explained." *What You Need to Know, One Year In*, concernusa.org/news/sudan-crisis-explained/. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

2023. The fighting was majorly centered in the capital of Sudan, Khartoum, but has begun to spread across the country with Sudanese civilians being heavily impacted.⁷

The current conflict between the SAF and RSF has left over 25 million people (half of Sudan's population) in need. Many civilians have been forced to flee, leaving more than 12 million people displaced, with 10 million people who still remain in Sudan. Amidst the current displacement crisis, humanitarian aid and access to needs has been reduced due to extreme violence - making it hard for aid to reach vulnerable communities. With the current conflict reaching Al Jazirah State, which is the “breadbasket” of Sudan, there have been extreme food shortages throughout the country. This conflict has further destroyed Sudan’s public infrastructure, including healthcare systems. Currently, 70% of health facilities in Sudan are inoperable or closed.⁸ The displacement of civilians has also placed a strain on healthcare resources, such as water, sanitation, and hygiene. This has led to reported outbreaks in the region, including measles and cholera.⁹ In Ethiopian refugee camps, refugees were required to apply for government permission to leave the camps for medical care. The authorities did not always issue permits¹⁰. However, with high rates of malnutrition, lack of healthcare, and low immunization rates, disease outbreaks will continue to have catastrophic effects on civilians especially displaced children. As of August 2024, 18 million people (37% of Sudan’s population) are currently experiencing food

⁷ Tounsel Christopher Associate Professor of History, “Sudan Crisis Explained: What’s Behind the Latest Fighting and How It Fits Nation’s Troubled Past.” *The Conversation*, 8 May 2024, theconversation.com/sudan-crisis-explained-whats-behind-the-latest-fighting-and-how-it-fits-nations-troubled-past-203985.

⁸ “Crisis in Sudan: What Is Happening and How to Help.” *The IRC*,

⁹ “Crisis in Sudan: What Is Happening and How to Help.” *The IRC*,

¹⁰ Nashed, Mat. “Sudanese Refugees Hiding in Ethiopian Forest to Escape Bandits and Militias.” *Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 10 July 2024, www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/7/10/sudanese-refugees-dwell-in-ethiopian-forest-away-from-bandits-and-militias#:~:text=No%20c are%20 inside%2C%20 no%20access,area%20 endangered%20 hundreds%20of%20children.

insecurity.¹¹ Increased fighting has led to 50,000 IDPs in the Zamzam camp to face famine in the camps.¹²

Trauma from such events has also given rise to mental health issues among Sudanese refugees. A research study conducted in North Ugandan Refugee Camps showed that the most common trauma events among Sudanese refugees were forced isolation from others (94%), forced separation from family members (91%), and a lack of food and water (83%). 32% of adults also suffered PTSD, with 20% of children with chronic PTSD.¹³

In addition to the current situation in Sudan, the climate change crisis is further exacerbating issues for Sudanese refugees and IDPs. Heavy rains and flooding during seasonal rains have led to injury, death, and further displacement. Flooding in the Darfur region is further impacting the ability for humanitarian aid to reach those in need. Flooded land also makes those displaced more vulnerable. People are unable to grow crops or raise livestock, adding to the food insecurity and hunger in these areas impacted by drought and conflict.¹⁴

The people most impacted by the Sudanese refugee crisis are women and girls¹⁵ 53% of IDPs are

¹¹ “Crisis in Sudan: What Is Happening and How to Help.” *The IRC*,

¹² “Crisis in Sudan: What Is Happening and How to Help.” *The IRC*, www.rescue.org/article/crisis-sudan-what-happening-and-how-help#:~:text=The%20brutal%20conflict%20since%20April,displacement%20crisis%20in%20the%20world. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

¹³ K., Peltzer. “Trauma and Mental Health Problems of Sudanese Refugees in Uganda.” *The Central African Journal of Medicine*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, [pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10746396/#:~:text=Results%3A%20The%20most%20common%20trauma,traumatic%20stress%20disorder%20\(PTSD\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10746396/#:~:text=Results%3A%20The%20most%20common%20trauma,traumatic%20stress%20disorder%20(PTSD)). Accessed 2 Sep. 2024.

¹⁴ “Sudan: Rainy Season Ushers in Severe Floods, Worsens Plight for Thousands Displaced by War.” *UNHCR US*, www.unhcr.org/us/news/briefing-notes/sudan-rainy-season-ushers-severe-floods-worsens-plight-thousands-displaced-war#:~:text=The%20conflict%20has%20already%20destroyed,affected%20by%20drought%20and%20conflict. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

¹⁵ 2024, 14 April. “A Year of Suffering for Sudanese Women and Girls.” *UN Women – Headquarters*, 14 Apr. 2024, www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/statement/2024/04/a-year-of-suffering-for-sudanese-women-and-girls.

currently women and girls. The displacement has led to more than 6.7 million people at the risk of gender-based violence, with survivors rarely having access to services or being able to report to authorities due to the conflict. The economic impact in Sudan has also pushed many women and girls to extreme measures and sexual exploitation/abuse as they seek to support their families in the midst of displacement and violence.¹⁶ The conflict has also deprived many children of a formal education, with more than 19 million children out of school. More than 7.4 million Sudanese adolescents do not have access to drinking water and nearly 2 million are in need of urgent life saving vaccines.¹⁷

With many of the countries that Sudanese refugees are fleeing to being occupied by their own conflicts, Sudanese refugees often are left with little to no protection or services in UN-administered camps. For example, more than 8,500 Sudanese refugees are settled in the UN administered camps at Awala and Kumer in the Amhara region of Ethiopia; this camp is located in the heart of the Ethiopian government and the Fano armed group conflict. Many refugees reported that the camps were often attacked by local bandits and militias. Between December 2023 and January 2024, 4 women and girls were reportedly raped by local armed groups at these camps. Around 3,000 refugees had left the Ethiopian camps, and escaped to the forest where they faced many immediate dangers like wild animals, disease, and lack of resources.¹⁸

As the current conflict unfolds, UNHCR is working together with humanitarian aid partners to produce the Regional Refugee Plan to coordinate actions and

¹⁶ 2024, 14 April. "A Year of Suffering for Sudanese Women and Girls." *UN Women – Headquarters*, 14 Apr. 2024, www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/statement/2024/04/a-year-of-suffering-for-sudanese-women-and-girls.

¹⁷ *Sudan Crisis Explained*, www.unrefugees.org/news/sudan-crisis-explained/. Accessed 31 Aug. 2024.

¹⁸ Nashed, Mat. "Sudanese Refugees Hiding in Ethiopian Forest to Escape Bandits and Militias." *Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 10 July 2024, www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/7/10/sudanese-refugees-dwell-in-ethiopian-forest-away-from-bandits-and-militias#:~:text=No%20c are%20 inside%2C%20 no%20access,area%20 endangered%20 hundreds%20of%20children.

highlight the needs for Sudanese refugees and IDPs. In the Central African Republic (CAR), there are nine spontaneous settlements with the government of CAR and UNHCR partnering to establish the Korsi settlement, where 2,800 Sudanese refugees had relocated by the end of 2023. In Chad, 217,000 new arrivals from Sudan were relocated from the border to new sites that provide greater security and more services. The UNHCR also provided psychological support to refugees coming into Chad. In Egypt, UNHCR partnered with the Egyptian Red Crescent to provide life-saving aid at the borders, as well as emergency cash assistance to refugees. The Ethiopian government issued guidelines enabling the registration of all arrivals from Sudan in need of international protection. The UNHCR operates protection desks in Ethiopia to identify people requiring immediate aid and referrals. The UNHCR's emergency response in South Sudan includes focusing on life-saving assistance at the border and transit, especially for returnees who originally fled to Sudan due to conflict in South Sudan. So far, refugee-hosting governments agreed to create integrated settlements with shared social services for refugees and hosts. Assistance is also required to stabilize areas where their own citizens are returning, like South Sudan.¹⁹

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What can be done to increase vulnerable communities' access to aid amidst violence?
2. In what ways can the UNHCR create relations between Sudan and NGO's to provide humanitarian aid to civilians?
3. How can governments actively help reduce the impacts of the Sudanese refugee crisis?
4. In what ways can UNHCR help protect women and children who are at the risk of gender-violence and sexual exploitation?
5. In what ways can countries help lessen the impact of climate change induced struggles in refugee camps, which are further worsening the current situation?

¹⁹ "Sudan Situation." *Global Focus*, reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/sudan-situation. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

HELPFUL SOURCES:

“Sudan crisis explained: What's behind the latest fighting and how it fits nations' troubled past.”

<https://theconversation.com/sudan-crisis-explained-whats-behind-the-latest-fighting-and-how-it-fits-nations-troubled-past-203985>

“Sudan Situation- Global Focus”

<https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/sudan-situation>

<https://www.queensjournal.ca/the-history-of-indigenous-representation-in-film-and-television/>

“What is the Extent to Sudan's Humanitarian Crisis”

<https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/what-extent-sudans-humanitarian-crisis>

TOPIC 2: MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN NGOS AND UN REFUGEE CAMPS

In order to provide resources such as food, water, and shelter to refugee camps, the United Nations has maintained partnerships with hundreds of non-governmental organizations, or ‘NGOs.’ Collaborations between the UNHCR and non-governmental organizations started in the 1950s. As refugee crises increased in the later 1900s, the connections grew. The UNHCR now works with over 900 NGOs, and spends 40% of their annual spending on facilitating relationships with NGOs to ensure safe and accessible aid to refugees. Retaining this relationship is crucial to the quality of refugee aid, and as a result, the UNHCR has implemented a number of agreements and programs. In 2007, they adopted the *Principles of Partnership*, which was then added to their framework on relationships with other groups. This document outlines values such as transparency, and it's meant to facilitate interactions between groups to go smoothly and produce ideal outcomes without issues. UNHCR also hosts a yearly consultation with the NGOs they collaborate with in order to assess the productivity of the collaborations, provide more resources, and assure a straightforward relationship that ensures success in refugee aid programs.²⁰

The UNHCR depends on NGOs for their ability to quickly deploy humanitarian responses and supply necessities like shelter and food. NGO volunteers play a major role in providing and administering these necessities, setting up and managing refugee camps, and offering medical help, among other things. The organization works with different NGOs depending on the situation at hand, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross for help with refugee safety and IDPs, and the International Organization for Migration which works towards resettlement. This dependence means that the relationship between NGOs and the UNHCR directly influences the quality of the United Nations refugee camps. The UNHCR defines refugee camps as

²⁰ Dr. Van Heuven Goedhart, The first High Commissioner for Refugees. “Non-Governmental Organizations.” *UNHCR*, www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/our-partners/non-governmental-organizations. Accessed 31 Aug. 2024.

“temporary facilities built to provide immediate protection and assistance to people who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, persecution or violence.” They host hundreds of refugees and internally displaced people in many countries who are dependent on the aid provided by the UNHCR and these NGOs.

The purpose of these camps vary throughout different situations. In the first 72 hours after an emergency, the UN mobilizes response teams and works with authorities to guarantee safety for the refugees. For areas where a mass displacement issue is ongoing for more than five years, the UN will provide more durable and semi-permanent shelters where refugees are allowed to stay for extended amounts of time, and are even provided with education. Some of the biggest refugee camps are located in Bangladesh, Uganda, Kenya, Jordan, Tanzania, and Ethiopia. The UNHCR and their partners have to facilitate smooth relationships between the refugees' place of origin and the location of the camps in order to provide sufficient aid and resources and ensure the safety of the workers, volunteers, and the refugees.²¹

Unfortunately, refugee camps are the site of a multitude of problems. Many camps are overcrowded to the point where it becomes a threat to the safety of the refugees. This overcrowding also leads to sanitation and hygiene complications, and a lack of clean water. The residents of these camps are often exposed to or victims of violence within the camps²², and disasters like fires, such as one at a camp in Bangladesh that left almost 7000 Rohingya refugees homeless²³. There also tends to be an abundance of internal unrest stemming from the chaotic nature of these situations, and also the pressure of external

²¹ “What Is a Refugee Camp? Definition and Statistics | USA for UNHCR.” *What Is a Refugee Camp?*, www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/camps/. Accessed 31 Aug. 2024.

²² “What Are the Dangers in Refugee Camps?” *PCRF*, www.pcrf.net/information-you-should-know/what-are-the-dangers-in-refugee-camps.html. Accessed 31 Aug. 2024.

²³ “Nearly 7,000 Rohingya Refugees Homeless as Fire Blazes through Camp in Cox’s Bazar.” *UNHCR Thailand*, www.unhcr.org/th/en/49309-nearly-7000-rohingya-refugees-homeless-as-fire-blazes-through-camp-in-coxs-bazar.html. Accessed 31 Aug. 2024.

factors such as the reactions of the locals in the area, which can be violent and harmful.

In addition to problems in the refugee camps that demand solutions, relationships between the UNHCR and NGOs are further complicated by the threats volunteers face daily. In September of 2023, 4 volunteer aid workers in Ukraine were hit by a Russian attack in eastern Ukraine. Two of the “Road to Relief” volunteers were killed, while two were badly injured due to shrapnel. A spokesperson from the NGO said that they were caught in the crossfire while headed to assess the needs of locals and suffered a direct hit. This NGO was employed in helping evacuate Ukrainian civilians from the front lines, and the volunteers were entirely focused on helping civilians. The UN has said that aid work in areas such as Ukraine has become increasingly dangerous as attacks on aid distribution have become more frequent. A report from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs showed that in 2022, only 4 aid workers were killed on duty in Ukraine, in comparison to 16 workers in 2023.²⁴ Similar attacks have happened in Palestine, with volunteers being killed regardless of safe zones, causing the NGOs to rethink their involvement in the area. This is directly affecting the amount of aid that is able to reach refugees across UNHCR camps as NGOs have to consider the safety of their workers in the area. There are organizations such as the International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO) dedicated to ensuring the safety of humanitarian aid workers.

There also exists the issue of NGO security. In the past, NGOs have had security problems with budgets, workers, and other resources which would directly threaten the safety and security of the refugee camps. There have been reports of groups such as the Taliban utilizing security issues within these NGOs to access their budgets, which poses a problem since most of the funding for aid and resources in Afghanistan

²⁴ Baker, Graeme. “Ukraine War: Two Foreign Aid Workers Die in Russian Missile Strike.” *BBC News*, BBC, 10 Sep. 2023, www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-66768351.

comes from the UN or UN affiliated NGOs.²⁵ Add more here

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What can the UNHCR do to ensure safety for volunteers?
2. Is there a way to help Indigenous populations that have been displaced or have had their lifestyles drastically changed due to territorial encroachment?
3. In what ways can the UN help to establish set rules and laws that benefit both state governments and Indigenous populations?
4. In what ways can culture and land be preserved and is there a better solution other than land reservations that can help incorporate this preservation?
5. In what ways can mistakes from earlier attempts to prevent displacement provide insight for future attempts?

HELPFUL SOURCES:

“What is a refugee camp?”

<https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/camps/>

“Global Consultations with NGOs”

<https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/our-partners/non-governmental-organizations/global-consultations-ngos>

“Our Partners”

<https://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/our-partners>

“International NGO Safety Organisation”

<https://ngosafety.org>

²⁵Runde, Daniel, et al. *The Future of Assistance for Afghanistan: A Dilemma*. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2024. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep60894>. Accessed 11 Oct. 2024.