



Forum: Human Rights Council

Question of: Ensuring human rights for child refugees in times of conflict

Student Officer: Amelie Schoenrock

Position: Vice Chair

Email: humanrightscouncil@gym-meiendorf.de

I. Description of the Issue

“During violent conflicts, natural disasters and other emergencies, children are the first victims.” (Protecting children in humanitarian action | UNICEF)

Armed conflicts in many countries around the world are endangering people and forcing them to leave their homes. While fleeing and hoping for safety and better lives, refugees become vulnerable to many threats such as smuggling which can lead to human trafficking and result in child labor and gender based violence. Families can get separated which causes immense psychological issues for refugee children and leaves them even more vulnerable. Even after arriving at their goal destination or a refugee camp there are still challenges and dangers (child) refugees have to face. They are still vulnerable to gender-based violence and other often occurring problems such as not receiving education, poor medical care or malnutrition. Fleeing often causes psychological and physical damages that can affect the children their whole life.

II. Definition of Key Terms

Refugee

A refugee is defined as a person who has to fear dangers such as persecution or armed conflict which forces them to leave their country. With being a refugee there are several rights including rights of education, work, medical care or safe asylum.

Internally displaced persons

People remaining in their home countries but were forced to leave their homes for different reasons like armed conflict or climate change.



Human rights

1948 officially internationally declared rights for every human being. They include rights such as living free and safe, seeking asylum, social security, medical care, food or education. The Article 25 2. especially mentions protecting children

Gender based violence

Psychological, sexual or physical violence against a person based on the person's gender, mainly against women but can include all genders.

Human trafficking

Human trafficking or modern slavery aims to exploit people in different ways including but not limited to: forced labor, forced begging or prostitution. People living in poverty are especially threatened by being tricked into human trafficking by false promises and depts.

Malnutrition

Being malnourished means not being provided with certain nutrients needed for a healthy life. Malnutrition can occur in refugee camps. Especially very young children are in danger of starving due to malnutrition. Constant Malnutrition can disable healthy growth processes of children leading to lifelong mal-developments and disabilities as long-term consequences. Short term consequences can be an extended vulnerability to infectious diseases.

III. Background Information

Education

Despite its importance for living a healthy and successful life, many child refugees do not have access to education, especially secondary education is hard to access. Often there are not enough teachers qualified to teach refugees or there are not enough materials to learn properly. Not having an ID or other required documents can make accessing education even harder. Xenophobia can be another obstacle which makes the access to education more difficult.

Human trafficking



The desperate situation refugees are in makes them vulnerable to human trafficking. As human trafficking especially targets people in desperate situations child refugees who were separated from their families or disabled children are especially endangered. In areas of conflict, children are recruited as child soldiers. Gender based violence such as sexual abuse an often-occurring problem. Social norms among families and communities can lead to (female) victims being blamed for being abused sexually.

Lack of medical care

Different factors including unsafe drinking water, bad air quality, limited access to sanitation or a lack of food can contribute to health issues among refugees. Despite their need for it, medical care is often hard to assess for (child) refugees. They are often not included in a country's national health programs and face barriers such as not being able to afford healthcare, being discriminated against because of xenophobia or not speaking the country's language.

Mental health

Child refugees face multiple traumatic experiences while fleeing including seeing violence or being hurt physically. Crisis, emergencies and conflict can tear families apart. Children who are forced to grow up without their parents are especially threatened by not being able to access education or medical care, (sexual) violence and abuse. A separation from their family can lead to psychological and mental health problems which makes them easy targets to be abused and exploited. Psychological problems can effect a person their whole life leading to harmful behaviors such as substance abuse or even suicide.

IV. Major Countries and Organizations Involved

UNICEF

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. Works internationally to protect and support children. This can include providing access to education, safe drinking water or medication and healthcare.



Sudan

Even before Sudan became an area of armed conflict between the SAF and the RSF there were many refugees from countries around Sudan. People are internally displaced or had to leave their country. Over 450000 children had to leave their homes. UNICEF is working on giving child refugees access to food, water, medical care and education. The situation leads to a high child mortality. Other dangers are not being able to attend school or malnutrition.

Syria

Syria has faced many problems: years of war, cholera, and heavy earthquakes. Almost half of the Syrian refugees are under 18. Through years of war and malnutrition children not only have psychological issues but also physical disabilities. Being disabled even worsens problems Syrian child refugees are already facing: accessing education gets even harder than it already is. The threat of abuse, violence, and health problems is even bigger for them than it is for healthy refugees.

Ukraine

The threats of war and destruction caused many people to flee from their homes. Over a thousand children have been injured or killed since Russia started a war on Ukraine in 2022. Millions of people fled to Europe, mainly to Poland or are internally displaced.

Yemen

After years of war the economic situation in Yemen is problematic. Electricity is hard to access, many people are not getting paid their regular salaries, healthcare is hard to access. People are threatened by malnutrition, sanitation and drinking water are not properly accessible for millions of children which leads to regular outbreaks of multiple diseases. Women and children became especially vulnerable to human trafficking.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan has been an Area of conflict for many years. Violence and instability such as poverty and hunger force people to flee from their homes. Many Afghan refugees are internally displaced or live in neighboring countries. The Taliban taking control again worsened the situation.



Turkey

Over three Millions of refugees from Syria and other countries are living in Türkiye which makes Türkiye the country hosting most refugees in the world. A heavy earthquake in 2023 worsened their situation by destroying buildings and killing people. Access to education and healthcare for refugees are enabled by law.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia has multiple refugee camps hosting people from different African countries. In addition to that there are over three million people displaced internally.

V. Timeline of Events

1951	Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
1967	Expansion of the Convention relating to the Status of refugees to include refugees worldwide
2011	Start of an armed conflict in Syria
2017	Over 600 children killed in Syria
2020	Armed conflict in Ethiopia
2021	Kabul is taken over by the Taliban
2022	War on/in Ukraine
2023	Earthquake in Syria and Turkey

VI. Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and 1967 Protocol



The Second World war created a convention that includes the definition of a refugee and how refugees are supposed to be treated. While it first only included European refugees it was expanded on refugees worldwide in 1967. The convention mentions the importance of protecting child refugees. Today 164 countries are part of it.

VII. Possible Solutions

In order to improve the situation of child refugees there can be steps taken by hosting countries such as simplifying the access to education and learning materials. Educating people about the dangers of Xenophobia in order to avoid as much discrimination as possible. Further cooperating with organizations such as UNICEF can provide nutrition, healthcare, sanitation and psychological support of child refugees. Financial support could cover the living costs of refugees.

VIII. Questions Delegates Should Consider during Research

Are internally displaced persons in my country?

Is my country hosting refugees?

Is my country an area of armed conflict that forces people to flee?

Which problems are (child) refugees in my country facing?

Has my country taken any measures to protect child refugees?

IX. Relevant UN Treaties and Events

[N1824447.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

[N2135075.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/AdvisoryCom/A-HRC-RES-22-16_en.pdf

X. Useful Links



<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights>

<https://www.unicef.org/children-uprooted/six-actions-refugee-children>

<https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>

https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/HR_in_armed_conflict.pdf

XI. Sources

General information about child refugees

<https://www.unicef.org/children-uprooted/six-actions-refugee-children>

<https://www.unicef.org/protection/protecting-children-in-humanitarian-action>

<https://www.unicef.org/migrant-refugee-internally-displaced-children>

https://www.who.int/health-topics/refugee-and-migrant-health#tab=tab_1

Key Terms

<https://www.unhcr.org/media/malnutrition-protracted-refugee-situations-global-strategy-joint-unhcr-and-wfp-review>

<https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/malnutrition-emergencies-and-disasters>

<https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/malnutrition>

<https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>

<https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/publications/protecting-refugees-questions-and-answers>

UNHCR

<https://www.dw.com/en/why-modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking-still-exist-world/a-52853992>

<https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>

<https://www.unocha.org/themes/internal-displacement>

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>



https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-based-violence/what-gender-based-violence_en

https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/Conflict_Ukraine_TIP_2022.pdf

Education

<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/five-key-facts-about-refugee-children-s-education/>

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/news-releases/refugee-education-crisis-more-half-worlds-school-age-refugee-children-do-not-get>

Human trafficking and gender based violence

<https://www.unhcr.org/media/sexual-and-gender-based-violence-against-refugees-returnees-and-internally-displaced-persons>

<https://www.unicef.org/protection/gender-based-violence-in-emergencies>

<https://www.unicef.org/protection/children-recruited-by-armed-forces>

Medical care

https://www.who.int/health-topics/refugee-and-migrant-health#tab=tab_2

<https://apps.who.int/iris/rest/bitstreams/1451966/retrieve>

Family separation and mental health

<https://www.unicef.org/protection/family-separation-during-crisis>

<https://www.unicef.org/protection/mental-health-psychosocial-support-in-emergencies>

About UNICEF

<https://www.unicef.org/what-we-do>

<https://www.unicef.org/about-unicef/frequently-asked-questions#3>

<https://www.unicef.org/about-unicef>

Sudan

[https://www.unicef.org/media/131721/file/2023-HAC-Sudan\(1\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/131721/file/2023-HAC-Sudan(1).pdf)

<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/sudan-violence-forces-least-450000-children-flee-their-homes>



<https://www.unhcr.org/countries/sudan>

Syria

<https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/syrian-crisis>

<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/>

<https://www.unicef.ie/stories/timeline-syrian-war-refugee-crisis/>

<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/lebanon>

<https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/syrian-crisis>

Ukraine

<https://www.unicef.org/appeals/ukraine>

<https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/ukraine-emergency>

<https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/ukraine/>

Yemen

<https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/yemen/>

<https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/yemen-crisis>

Afghanistan

<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-explained/>

Türkiye

<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/>

<https://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/overview-2>

<https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/displacement/>

<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/>

Ethiopia

<https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/ethiopia/>

<https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/ethiopia/>

<https://www.unhcr.org/countries/ethiopia>



1951 convention

<https://www.unhcr.org/media/28185>