



**Forum:** **Committee of the Right of the Child**  
**Question of:** **Reuniting families that have been separated while fleeing from war zones**  
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**Position:** **Main Chair**

## **I. Description of the Issue**

The problem of separation of families due to war is a pressing issue and plays a significant role in the well-being of refugees. The chaos of war tears families apart in unimaginable ways. Some members flee abroad in search of safety and a new beginning, while others remain behind for various reasons – to fight for their country, recover from injuries, or because they were simply lost in the chaos of evacuations, overcrowded refugee camps, or perilous migration routes. The emotional toll of such separations is profound, leaving individuals in a state of constant worry and anxiety over the fate of their loved ones. It is of utmost importance to facilitate safe and legal pathways for refugees to avoid the dangers associated with illegal routes. By doing so, we can significantly reduce the support for corrupt institutions, such as smuggling networks, that thrive on the desperation and misery of separated families. Smugglers exploit these vulnerable individuals, often subjecting them to further danger, abuse, and financial exploitation.

When families are united, they can process trauma better, support each other emotionally, and integrate more successfully into new societies. The presence of family members can be a crucial source of comfort and strength, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children, elderly people, and women. Children, in particular, benefit immensely from the presence of their parents or guardians, which helps them feel secure and loved. Elderly individuals, who may struggle with the physical and emotional challenges of displacement, find solace in the care and support of their family members. Similarly, women, who are often at greater risk of exploitation and violence in conflict zones and refugee situations, can find protection and reassurance within their family.



When refugees feel safe and supported, they are more likely to contribute positively to their new communities. This, in turn, benefits the host countries, creating more resilient societies. Therefore, addressing the issue of separated families in war zones is not only a moral imperative but also a practical necessity for the long-term well-being of refugees and the stability of global communities.

## **II. Definition of Key Terms**

### **Vulnerable Groups**

Individuals or communities at higher risk of harm or exploitation due to their circumstances, such as women, children and elderly people.

### **Smuggling Networks**

Organized groups that illegally transport people or goods across borders.

### **Migration Routes**

Paths taken by people moving across borders in search of safety or better opportunities, which can vary in safety and legality.

### **Displacement**

Forced movement of people from their homes due to conflict, persecution, or natural disasters.

### **Trauma Recovery**

The process of healing and regaining mental and emotional stability after experiencing traumatic events.

### **Refugee Camp**

Temporary settlement for people who have fled and left their homes due to conflict or persecution.



## **Evacuation**

Organized removal of people from a dangerous area to a safer location.

## **Resettlement Programs**

Initiatives designed to relocate refugees from an asylum country to a third country that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent residence.

## **Border Control**

Measures and policies used by a country to regulate and monitor its borders to prevent illegal crossing of goods or humans and ensure security.

## **Psychological distress**

Psychological distress refers to negative feelings and emotions that individuals experience in response to stressors or life events. It includes symptoms such as anxiety, depression, irritability, mood swings, and difficulty concentrating.

## **III. Background Information**

The separation of families in war zones is a multifaceted issue with deep social, political, and economic implications. Families provide safety, emotional support and a sense of unity and belonging. When families are being separated, the members might suffer from emotional and mental health issues, especially children can suffer under severe psychological distress and developmental challenges when separated from their parents.

In wars civilian populations are often a target for armed groups, which leads to mass evacuations and forced migrations and can get families separated in the chaos. Men are also being conscripted into military service, which causes family members to be dispersed across different regions. Furthermore the often disrupted communication networks, due to attacks for example, result in families not being able to communicate and locate each other.

Additionally displaced families lose their livelihood and have to face extreme poverty, so that relatives have to move somewhere else to seek for aid or work, which leads to further separation. There are also many cases where the family can not provide for leaving the war zones together.



After arriving at a safer destination, refugees often struggle with integrating into new communities, adapting to the new culture and have to face social isolation.

Various international organizations have recognized the urgency of the issue and are working towards reuniting separated families, e.g. the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), who are providing protection and support to refugees and facilitating family reunification or ICRC, who offer tracing services to help locate missing family members and reunite them.

The path to reuniting families separated by war is fraught with challenges. Firstly, proving family relationships can be difficult due to a lack of necessary documents, often lost or destroyed during the chaos of conflict. Secondly, restrictive immigration policies and strict border controls can make legal entry a huge obstacle. Perhaps the most dangerous challenge comes from the presence of smuggling networks and corrupt institutions. These exploit the desperation of separated families, charging exorbitant fees for perilous journeys that expose them to further dangers.

#### **IV. Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

##### **Countries:**

##### **Syria**

The Syrian Civil War, ongoing since 2011, has caused one of the largest refugee crises in recent history, resulting in widespread family separations. Leading to many Syrian families being displaced both internally and externally, with neighboring countries.

##### **Afghanistan**

Decades of conflict have led to massive displacement and separation of families. Leading to many Afghans having to look for refuge in neighboring countries and beyond, often facing challenges in reuniting with family members.

##### **South Sudan**

The civil war and ongoing conflicts in South Sudan have displaced millions, causing severe family separations.



## Ukraine

The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to significant displacement, both internally and externally. Families have been separated as they flee to different parts of Ukraine or other countries in Europe.

## Yemen

The Yemeni Civil War has caused large-scale displacement and family separations. Humanitarian crises in Yemen have led to severe challenges in reuniting families.

## Organizations:

### United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UNHCR plays a crucial role in providing protection, shelter, and support to refugees. The organization facilitates family reunification through various programs and legal aid services, helping refugees navigate the complex processes required to reunite with their families.

### International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

ICRC is instrumental in tracing and reuniting family members separated by conflict. They offer tracing services, family messaging, and travel assistance to ensure families can reconnect and reunite.

## V. Timeline of Events

When	What
1951	United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees: Establishes the legal framework for the protection of refugees and the role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in assisting displaced families.



2011	Syrian Civil War: The outbreak of the Syrian Civil War leads to one of the largest refugee crises in modern history.
2015	European Migration Crisis: Increased movement of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and other conflict zones into Europe. European nations, alongside international organizations, work to manage the influx and facilitate family reunifications.
2018	Global Compact on Refugees: Adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees by the UN General Assembly emphasizes the importance of family reunification as part of comprehensive refugee responses.
2022	Russia-Ukraine Conflict: The invasion of Ukraine leads to a significant displacement of civilians, with families being separated as they flee the conflict.
2024	Ongoing Efforts: Despite progress, challenges remain in reuniting families due to ongoing conflicts in regions such as Yemen, Afghanistan, and South Sudan.

## VI. Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The UNHCR published the “UNHCR Guidelines on Reunification of Refugee Families” in 1983, in which it defined what kind of families are getting support and defined special cases, e.g. the reunification of unaccompanied minor children with their parents and siblings, which is clearly a priority among other cases mentioned in the report. The report also states that



family members arriving in different countries of permanent settlement or temporary asylum, can cause delays and in the case of members being in different countries of permanent settlement especially, the reunification has to be approved by the countries and often will be rejected, due to the different asylum and immigration policies, so approval for reunification needs to come from both countries involved.

There have also been efforts to solve the issue by the ICRC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, with their organization Restoring Family Links (RFL), which aims at the reunion of family members who have been separated due to war and trying to find the still missing members. The ICRC additionally provides a sort of accompaniment, which aims to support families who have to deal with missing relatives and help them recover from their loss.

## **VII. Possible Solutions**

1. Establishing the same asylum and immigration guidelines across countries to evade the long process of the reunification of separated families
2. Creating a more efficient system for tracking missing family members and facilitating communication. The UNHCR and other organizations could be given more resources to assist with these efforts.
3. Utilizing secure online platforms for refugees to register and search for family members.
4. Encouraging local communities to welcome and support refugee families can help with integration and rebuilding lives.
5. The trauma of separation and war can have a lasting impact. Providing mental health support services for both refugees and their families is crucial for healing and reintegration.

## **VIII. Questions Delegates Should Consider During Research**

What is your country's opinion towards refugees and how can it further support them?

What kind of asylum and immigration policies does your country have?



How can international cooperation be strengthened to improve communication and information sharing between countries on family reunification cases?

What additional resources are needed to support organizations working on family reunification efforts?

### **IX. How to prepare as a delegate**

As a delegate you have to write at least one draft resolution and a minimum of two position papers- preferably three, so that you are well informed about all topics.

The deadline for both position paper and draft resolution is on 21.09.24. We will not correct late documents and they will not be considered when it comes to the decision-making of the awards.

Additionally, while you inform yourself about your own country we advise you to also do some research regarding other countries and try to find possible allies beforehand.

Questions to research beforehand are for example:

- How is your country affected by migration?
- Which actions has your country taken so far?
- Which international agreements has your country signed?
- Is there a current political development within your country affecting this topic?
- What does your country plan to solve the problem?

### **X. Useful Links and Sources**

Global Compact on Refugees – booklet:

<https://www.unhcr.org/media/global-compact-refugees-booklet>

Restoring family links:

<https://www.icrc.org/en/what-we-do/restoring-family-links>





Guidelines on reunification of refugee families:

<https://www.unhcr.org/media/unhcr-guidelines-reunification-refugee-families>

The 1951 Refugee Convention:

<https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention>

The global compact on refugees:

<https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/global-compact-refugees>