

# **OMUN V**



**United Nations High  
Commissioner for  
Refugees (UNHCR)**



## Letter from the Chair

Esteemed Delegates,

Welcome! My name is Rohun Nanda and I am ecstatic to be your chair, along with Fatima Fadel and Krishna Bambawale, for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at OMUN's fifth edition. This is my third year involved with Model United Nations where I have had the privilege of participating in several conferences such as the Secondary Schools United Nations Symposium 2019 at McGill University and Harvard Model United Nations 2020. Throughout my vibrant MUN adventures, I have been able to travel to the "Far, Far Away Galaxies" of Star Wars as Chewbacca as well as negotiate the athlete regulation at Commonwealth Games as Uganda. I encourage all of you to deeply immerse yourself in this topic as you will learn a lot and be able to engage in interesting negotiations and debate. I am really looking forward to this and hope you all enjoy your OMUN experience.

My name is Fatima Fadel and I am very excited to be co-chairing this committee. I started MUN in grade 11 when I attended The Hague International Model United Nations conference as the delegate of Iran in the General Assembly. I also recently attended SSUNS in the Commonwealth Games committee as the delegate of Scotland. My MUN career has fostered new friendships and ever-lasting memories. This weekend, I hope you all grow your passions for debate and world issues, and, equally as important, I hope you all have fun and use this wonderful opportunity to make new friends.

Hello all, my name is Krishna Bambawale and I am unequivocally euphoric to be one of the three chairs of this committee. OMUN V was the birth of my MUN experience where I first apprehended the value of building strong relationships, rooted in common interests for diplomacy, all-around interaction, and just a little bit of fun. This spring, I will be attending my first international conference at Berkeley MUN. Good luck to all of you in your endeavours this weekend and I wish you an unparalleled learning experience.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees committee is one of the cornerstones of the United Nations and indeed a staple of Model United Nations. There are many underlying as well as pressing issues set before you entering the first committee session of the UNHCR. In particular, the two topics that this committee will work to dissolve are divided by case study: the Syrian Refugee Crisis and the Northern Triangle. Both phenomena are modern instances of mass human migration, yet face the blind eye by some of the most powerful nations in the world. As devoted members of the UNHCR, you all will collaborate and combine your knowledge to engage in stimulating debate as well as mold innovative solutions.

Finally, I would like to take the time to remind you that position papers are due by the beginning of the first committee session on Saturday, April 4 in order to be eligible for awards. Position papers can be sent in PDF or Microsoft Word Document format to the committee email found below prior to the conference, but they can also be handed in as a hard copy at the beginning of the first committee session. If submitted electronically, the position papers should be titled "Country\_Name", (e.g.: Canada\_JohnDoe). If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Once again good luck and I am looking forward to a fantastic weekend of debate and finesse.

Best,  
Rohun Nanda  
Head Chair



## Introduction

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is an international body tasked with the protection of refugees and displaced persons. The type of aid given to people during its early stages has evolved to meet the demands presented by modern reasons for exodus such as gang violence and warfare. The UNHCR's mandate is to "provide international protection and humanitarian assistance, and to seek permanent solutions for persons within its core responsibilities". In its early years this mandate applied to only refugees, though it now includes returnees and stateless persons. In recent years, the world has seen a spike in severe refugee crises perpetuated by non-state actors. Non-state actors can be organizations ranging from NGOs and corporations to armed bodies and criminal organizations. According to the UNHCR, "From 2011 to 2016, the number of people from the Northern Triangle who have sought refuge in surrounding countries has increased by 2,249 percent". The outflow of refugees has not stopped as gangs, known as maras, continue to contribute to some of the highest global homicide rates, as well as sexual violence and extortion. When refugees arrive in other countries they are harassed and met with even more violence like Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Rohingya refugees in India experienced. Many of the countries that accept the most refugees due to proximity do not have enough resources for the sheer demand, while the countries with the most available resources have been historically strict with their borders. The UNHCR will be focusing on the role these groups have played in the creation of refugee crises in Syria and the Northern Triangle. The goal of this committee is to create a plan to alleviate the burdens of refugees on their life threatening journeys to safety and of the countries that choose to accept them.

## Overview of the Problem

A refugee is defined by the UNHCR as "all persons outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and who, as a result, require international protection". Refugee crises have persisted throughout our history, evolving in some ways as modern conflicts arise and remaining the same in others. The UNHCR has actively worked since its inception to ensure that refugees are given the necessary help as they attempt to reach stability and have expanded their reach globally and in terms of the people they assist. Violent non-state actors, groups that are not affiliated with the governing body of a country, have become the primary source of unrest leading to a series of critical refugee crises around the world. At present, some of the most relevant and large-scale waves of refugees have come from places like the Northern Triangle and Syria where gang violence and militant groups have made civilian life too dangerous to continue in their respective nations. The Northern Triangle is comprised of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador in Central America. This region suffered intense civil wars during the 1980s that have since ceased but did not eliminate the violence or weak institutions they left in their wake. These three countries are frequently listed as some of the most violent in the world, and in 2015 when El Salvador's homicide rate was brought up to 103 per hundred thousand by gang violence, it was named the most violent country not at war. The Honduran newspaper, La Prensa, discovered that a total estimated \$651 million are paid in extortion fees annually to organized crime groups mostly by the poor in exchange



for their lives in all three countries, with El Salvador ranking highest at \$390 million. As a result of rampant gang violence, extortion, drug trafficking, and corruption, there have been high numbers of mostly unaccompanied minors fleeing this part of the globe on dangerous and emotionally taxing journeys.

While Honduras did not have a civil war like El Salvador and Guatemala during the 80's, it was still affected by fighting between the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and the Contras, rightwing, US-supported rebels. The unrest in this part of the globe left hundreds of thousands dead and unemployed men armed. In Guatemala, clandestine security apparatuses came together from both government intelligence and the military. The criminal groups in the Northern Triangle can be linked to Mexican drug cartels and maras like Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and the Eighteenth Street Gang (M-18). The numbers for these last two international gangs are difficult to pin down precisely due to the illegal nature of their groups and the fact that they are so numerous and spread across the United States and Central America, but research estimates a total of 85,000.

In 2014, after a failed truce between MS-13 and M-18 led to double the number of killings, the Salvadoran government under President Ceren enacted a number of *mano dura* policies that allowed the police to use force without consequence. This helped El Salvador's homicide rate drop to about 25%, but it still remains incredibly high, giving its citizens another reason to seek out safer countries. The Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) from Vanderbilt University demonstrated in 2014 that despite the increased efforts on the part of the United States to make the journey and entrance into the country harder for people from the Northern Triangle, they were more likely to leave their country if they'd been a victim "of one or more crimes in the previous year". Another survey, of Hondurans only this time, by the same group revealed that most asylum-seekers are not deterred by the difficulties, perils, and higher chances of deportation that come with migration to the United States. Their knowledge of the highly restrictive campaigns in the United States in 2014 did not alter their decision to migrate or not. Efforts to deter migration by tightening borders and applying external pressures in addition to the pressures within countries of origin have, therefore, had little impact on whether or not refugees sought protection. This also highlights a much stronger connection between those fleeing the Northern Triangle due to crime and the characteristics of refugees than with immigrants seeking greater economic opportunity. These seemingly inconsequential efforts to deter people from searching for safety in other countries seem to have should be kept in mind as plans to both help and decrease the number of refugees in accordance with the mandate of the UNHCR are developed during committee sessions.

Another equally pressing humanitarian crisis has taken a toll on Syria, resulting in the displacement of millions of people, a significant number of which are children. Although the Syrian civil war began on 15 March 2011, it is important to understand this event in its global context. On 17 July 2000, Bashar al-Assad succeeded the position his father, President Hafiz al-Assad had held as an authoritarian ruler since 1971 with hopes of reform.

However in 2011, a sudden wave of protests that became known as the Arab Spring spread through Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Iraq, Jordan, Bahrain, and Oman after Tunisia's twenty-three year dictatorship under Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was overthrown by protestors. However, not all the uprisings in the rest of the Arab countries yielded the same results as the Tunisian Revolution, also known as the Jasmine Revolution. Since 2010, thousands of protesters have been met with torture, imprisonment, and death sentences. The death toll rose, and continues to rise, in part because of air strikes and the



ongoing civil wars in Libya, Syria, and Yemen. The prolonged and violent progression of the Arab Spring has prompted international opinion to turn from the initial hopeful and pro-democracy outlook it once held on to.

Despite a common desire for representation, there were too many unique factors in place within each of the countries that experienced unrest, so outcomes were vastly different. The perception that social media, bread riots, and the concentration of young people in the region were the underlying causes of the Arab Spring does not capture the whole picture. According to Garrett Brown, the most pertinent issues to the development of the Arab region's current state are economic failure, state repression, and geopolitical context. Arabic countries experienced high levels of unemployment and some of the highest poverty rates in 2010 as market liberalization and corruption further jeopardize the livelihoods of the majority of citizens. These conditions were only worsened by international policies enacted by the IMF and European Union and fueled by the incorrect perspective that Arab people are unable to adhere to proper governing. Other nations, including both Western countries and eastern, have also been lax with their support for protestors.

That same year, The Wall Street Journal asked if President Bashar al-Assad thought the string of successful anti-authoritarian protests in neighboring countries would affect Syria. President al-Assad believed his opposition of the United States and Israel's Western policies would prevent such reactions despite economic burdens. The graffiti that sparked the Syrian uprising along with the activist who wrote it, and slow reform eleven years after his rise to power in 2000. In those years, modernization in the form of political participation was short-lived as Assad reinforced the authoritarian levels of censorship, surveillance, and suppressive violence from his father's time in office. Although the president also helped the economy undergo economic liberalization, these changes catered to capitalists that had connections to his regime. This turmoil was only exacerbated by the country's most severe drought in modern times from 2006-2010 that spurred hundreds of thousands of agricultural families to move to more urban areas where they might find economic opportunity.

Just months after al-Assad's statement, however, fifteen boys were detained and tortured in the southern city of Daraa for their graffiti supporting the Arab Spring and denouncing the Assad administration. One 13 year old boy, Hamza alKhateeb, would not make it home to his parents alive. Their long and brutal capture culminated in peaceful protests demanding their release in addition to government reforms that took place during the month of March. The harsh and violent government responses to these protests gave 15 March 2011 the name "the day of rage". Hundreds of protestors were killed and many more were imprisoned during this tumultuous period.

In the first year of the civil war, most of the uprisings were not religiously motivated. However, once both sides of the altercations became armed, the conflicts began to shed light on deeper religious rifts within the country. Though the majority of Syrians are Sunni Muslims, the minority Alawi Muslims like Assad hold high amounts of power in government, economics, and security, which is arguably most important. With time, Assad fostered a fear mentality of the majority amongst minority Alawites by framing his opposition as Sunni Islamic extremists in the same vein as alQaeda that would enact serious violence upon those who did not align with the Sunni sect through propaganda. Despite the presence of some alliances, however weak, between resistance militias, Syria has been severely fractured. Seven military defectors started the Free Syrian Army in the summer of 2011. With no end in sight for the violence and a weakened



government, more and more armed groups began to rise up. In retaliation, Assad sent police and military operations out to important cities in an attempt to regain control. This resulted in the “Ramadan Massacre” on 31 July in which 142 people lost their lives. Four main factions control different parts of Syria through force now. They consist of Assad’s government and allies including Russia, Hezbollah, Iran, and Iraq; the Free Syrian Army and their allied Sunni rebels; the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF); the Salafi Jihadists (mostly the al-Nusra Front); and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, known as ISIS, Daesh, or ISIL.

In 2015, the Islamic State coordinated a number of terrorist attacks on European countries, prompting the United States, the United Kingdom, and France backed by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab countries to incorporate Syria in their aerial attacks on Iraq. More than eleven thousand attacks have been made on the Islamic state in Syria as a result, while these countries offer the Syrian Democratic Forces support with their work on the ground. Turkey has had its forces fighting on the ground against the Islamic State since 2016 and been involved in combat against Kurdish groups in Syria. In September of 2015, Russia began its own aerial attacks on supposed Islamic State targets for the Syrian government which was able to then take back the city of Palmyra. The Syrian government and its allies have since been able to reclaim more and more territory, which includes the stronghold in Aleppo in 2016, despite accusations of using chemical weapons and the subsequent international fallout. The opposition has control over Idlib, northwestern Syria, and on the border between Iraq and Syria.

These issues are difficult to manage because of the financial burdens they place on the international community, the question of how much countries can and should interfere, and the inherently disorganized nature of fleeing your home country. Negotiations to improve country conditions are complicated by the role of non-state actors since these violent groups do not hold the law in particularly high esteem and historically, agreements have been frail and short-lived. Governments in nations that produce refugees are also ill-equipped and generally not strong enough to effectively combat the increased crime and violence that non-state actors produce themselves. In some cases, repressive governments have perpetuated the problem further by acting as another source of danger for citizens to flee the country from, as is the case with Syria. At the same time, refugees are unlikely to allow the strenuous and life-threatening pressures of migration to deter them from leaving their countries in large numbers. This leaves the UNHCR the particularly arduous task of both decreasing the damage of gang violence and armed groups and helping eliminate the strains placed on the refugees from these areas.



## Case Study 1: The Northern Triangle (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras)

Mara Salvatrucha and the Eighteenth Street Gang gained traction in El Salvador in the period after its civil war, which lasted from 1980 to 1992, when the established Salvadoran gangs dissolved or joined demobilization efforts. The civil war “prompted an estimated one million Salvadorans to flee their country and seek shelter...particularly in the already impoverished, over-crowded, and gang-affected neighborhoods of East and South Central Los Angeles”. Ronald Reagan’s policies on asylum left many Salvadorans without refugee status and forced them to live with high economic and social burdens. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 allowed the government to increase their deportations of Salvadorans that had come as a result of the spike in American xenophobia by adding less serious offenses to the list of deportable aggravated felonies.

Some of the deported youth introduced the young people that had stayed to the American gang lifestyles they’d found in LA. They slowly began to identify with MS-13 or the Eighteenth Street Gang, and “[b]y 1996, a survey found that 86 percent of participants were affiliated with one of these groups and only 14 percent belonged to other gangs”. This wave did not develop because of invigorated recruitment or force, but rather because El Salvador and its neighbors had become a place where gangs could thrive. In fact, most deportees were not criminals and even less (0.97% of a 2004 survey’s responders) were deported for gang affiliation. Therefore, the increase in crime requires more research and the influence of deportees on El Salvador’s current criminal environment is still unclear. However, early studies did explain some of the main contributors of gang involvement, finding the emotional and social gains to be incentives for joining rather than money or drugs. These priorities shifted in the early 2000’s and seemed to provide greater fodder for criminal violence.

From 2003 to 2012, El Salvador experienced an intentional homicide rate of about 103 per 100,000 of its people. For reference, a yearly rate of above 10 is seen as an epidemic in most circumstances. In fact, “official statistics suggest that around two-thirds of the many homicides registered in 2015 were committed by gang members”. The Salvadoran Minister of Defense estimated the amount of active mara members in just El Salvador outnumbers the total police and army population of the country by 10,000. Members are concentrated in low-income urban areas, though some are moving to more rural areas, and fight for control over what territories they will rule with violence. Resistors are killed, drug deals are brokered, and assassins are hired, but most of their revenue comes from extortion. In many ways, their habits and methods of control are very similar to those of non-state actors in armed conflicts, such as in Syria. The maras in the Northern Triangle have even moved from homemade weapons and knives to more industrial instruments of war such as assault rifles. Mara Salvatrucha has also begun to orchestrate scattered assassinations of the police and military.

The response of most of the governments in the Northern Triangle to increased gang violence has been *mano dura*, or firm hand, policies allowing equally harsh retaliation by government officials. Such policies have been deemed inadequate and even incentivized further gang organization. Salvadoran prisons have segregated the Mara Salvatrucha and Barrio-18 which has resulted in their transformation into communication hubs for imprisoned members. The extent of their power is not impeded by government officials in the Northern Triangle due to corruption and gang members infiltrating their ranks. As a result, citizens have very little faith in the police, and victims of extortion and violence do not report crimes out of



fear of retribution. Consequently, there have been waves of displacement both within the country and outside of it.

The refugee crisis produced by the violence in the Northern Triangle has only recently been given the attention it merits by international and local communities. In fact, Honduras is the only country with official data on its 174,000 displaced persons (as of 2014) within 20 surveyed municipalities. As of 2016, El Salvador, despite having a more pronounced gang violence problem, still did not have any official data on the refugees it has been producing. The UNHCR expects 539,500 Central Americans to be displaced at the close of 2019. The educational system has also taken a hit from the violence in the region. In 2018, 49,000 Salvadoran children stopped going to school. In Guatemala and Honduras, the number of children that have dropped out is over 2 million. Once out of school, the children are frequently put to work, forced to stay at home, recruited by gangs through force or coercion, or seek refuge in other parts of the country and/or globe. Most refugees attempt to reach Mexico and the United States for safety, but once outside the borders of their home countries, the violence continues from other criminal organizations that at times have silent approval from national authorities and experience theft, torture, rape, and other horrors. The train that many refugees take through Mexico to the US is known as La Bestia (The Beast) or el tren de la muerte (The Train of Death), and since people sit atop the train, dismemberment and death is common.

Access to resources on their journeys is almost non-existent and when confronted by authorities that are legally expected to provide protection, they are systematically met with detention in harsh environments or deportation back to the dangers they are fleeing. For example, between January 2013 and December of 2016, Doctors Without Borders could access only 33,593 people from the Northern Triangle for consultations in mobile health clinics, migrant centers, and hostels (albergues) throughout Mexico. This pool included both migrants and refugees. In a 2015 Doctors Without Borders Survey of 467 randomly sampled migrants and refugees “nearly one-third of the women surveyed had been sexually abused during their journey”, 68% of those entering Mexico for the US had been victims of violence, and the acts against these people had been committed by gang or criminal organization members and Mexican security officers meant to be giving them aid. The experiences of citizens of the Northern Triangle countries bear a strong resemblance to those of people in war zones where Doctors Without Borders has been stationed for much longer amounts of time. In spite of all this violence, very few applications for asylum are actually being accepted by the US and Mexico. Instead of being taken in as refugees, victims of systematic crimes are being treated as economic migrants. In fact, “less than 4,000 people fleeing El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala were granted asylum status in 2016”. Only 9,401 refugee or asylum statuses were given by the US since the 2011 fiscal year.



## Case Study 2: Syria

Since the start of the civil war in Syria, points of access to medical care, education, basic utilities, and water have either been impaired or broken. Over 5 million Syrians are refugees, while 6.2 are internally displaced. Half are children. In 2012, most Syrians escaped the conflict to Lebanon and the originally temporary Za'atari camp was opened in Jordan. In April of 2013, President Assad was accused of using chemical attacks on his people. The next year, the amount of refugees in Lebanon was estimated to make up 25% of its population, and refugees began to make it to Europe. In order to prevent them from making it, however, Hungary created a border wall and closed its borders to Serbia in 2015. Furthermore, refugees in Jordan and Lebanon had their rations from the World Food program cut because of a lack of funding. That same year, Greece received a daily inflow of refugees in the thousands. The next year, Jordan closed its border due to a car bombing, creating a no man's land where 40,000 refugees still reside in 2019. At the end of 2018, US President Donald Trump decided to withdraw the 2,000 US troops still stationed in Syria. However, the United States still leads the international coalition and provides aid to SDF. Flooding this year in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan has ruined tent settlements and displaced refugees once more.

From October 2011 to December 2016, the United States allowed 18,000 Syrians into the country, while much smaller and less wealthy countries such as Turkey have admitted 3.6 million. Syrian children are affected by diseases without proper care and malnutrition. The lack of effective or any sanitation in some areas has resulted in the development of diseases such as cholera. Due to the lack of income, children are also forced to work to help support their families and have been recruited by the armed forces in Syria to fight and serve as shields. Sexual violence and abuse is also abundant within the cramped camps and parents have sometimes been forced to arrange marriages for girls as young as 13 in order to support themselves and protect them from molestation. Many Syrian children do not go to school and many schools have stopped teaching classes due to damages from the fighting.

### Past and Ongoing Action

The UNHCR as well as other organizations and governments have made attempts to combat the effects of non-state actors in the Northern Triangle and Syria. In December of 2014, the UNHCR and representatives from 28 Latin American and Caribbean countries and 3 territories met to discuss a plan for internal displacement and to end statelessness by 2024. This was also made on the anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, which expanded the definition of a refugee within Latin America. The meeting in 2014 was the culmination of the "Cartagena +30", entailing consultations in Argentina, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and the Cayman Islands with governments, organizations, and other authorities. It was determined that borders needed to be strengthened by identifying asylum seekers and others that require protection in an efficient manner and upholding non-refoulement obligations, which state that refugees or asylum seekers not be returned where they will be persecuted. This took form in the Quality Asylum Programme and called for a consolidation of status determination systems and methods to implement free representation for asylum-seekers and refugees.



The US Department of State created the Central American Minors Refugee/Parole Program in November 2014 allowing minors in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala to undergo consideration for refugee resettlement or parole if their parents were present lawfully and the child was unmarried and under 21. It went into effect on December 1, 2014 and expanded November 2016 to include other relatives. Those who were able to enroll in the program but couldn't apply for refugee status were then transferred to review for parole into the US. This allows people to enter the US, remain for a certain amount of time, and apply for work authorization. However, in 2017 Trump created executive order Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements, ordering the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to make sure that parole was only granted on a case-by-case basis when there was an individual with very urgent humanitarian needs or a "significant public benefit". In August of that year, the DHS Secretary, Elaine Duke, ended the parole portion of the program. So, if children in the Northern Triangle were denied refugee status they would not be considered for parole instead. Then in November, new applications for the refugee portion of the program were no longer accepted and interviews stopped in January of the next year. In 2018, the settlement of court case *S.A. et al v. Trump* meant that United States Citizenship and Immigration Services would reopen and continue with specific CAM parole cases.

In the 2016 Eligibility Report for El Salvador the UNHCR explained since maras in the region exert almost total control over all aspects of life of those living in the areas gang control, applications for people who are escaping gang-related persecution should be analyzed on grounds of political opinion in many cases. Therefore, in the context of El Salvador and countries like it in the Northern Triangle, "expressing objections to the activities of gangs may be considered as amounting to an opinion that is critical of the methods and policies of those in control, and thus, constitute a "political opinion" within the meaning of the refugee definition". This document explains some of the cases specific to El Salvador and its neighbors and contextualizes them within the definitions of a refugee under the 1951 Convention, the UNHCR's Broader Mandate, the Cartagena Declaration, and other grounds.

The World Food Programme has been sending food to refugees outside of Syria and within on a monthly basis since the civil war's inception in 2011. It reaches more than 300 million people each month with its 50 local and international partners. A total of 4,600 trucks "deliver emergency food assistance to 900 distribution points in all 14 governorates". In the more difficult to access areas with acute needs for aid, the Programme utilizes a combination of airlifts, airdrops, and convoys to send food. Other deliveries are made from Jordan and Turkey to the northern and southern portions of Syria held by opposing forces. As a result of a lack of funding, calories have been reduced in the deliveries and should financial assistance not be increased, the amount of recipients may be lessened.

In 2017, the fifth update on the UNHCR's International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic provided an overview of the developments since 2016 and contextualized the application of the refugee definition within Syria. Like with the situation in the Northern Triangle, people who oppose the government or any groups that are in locations where other armed groups are in control are deemed to be likely in need of international protection. In this case, however, the opposition or support can be aimed at three different fronts and still put people in danger, since the Syrian government is one of the armed forces at play. Furthermore, deserters of the Armed Forces and members of the media are also in danger and likely to need international support. In Syria, the opposing groups



attribute political opinions to other groups of people that can put them at risk of further action by other groups, and even if they aren't real perceptions, the threat is still incredibly serious.

## **Proposed Actions**

Government officials and international organizations have attempted to understand the situation in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras through various studies and reports in order to most effectively combat the violence and extortion in the area. However, Clifford Gyves explained that given the wide array of public and private groups affected by the work of maras in the Northern Triangle of Central America, intelligence should be expanded to include schools, civil services, hospitals, realtors, citizens, government, and police as contributors. This expansion would provide valuable insights into the ways gangs operate in more areas of life, and should provide the many people with serious stakes in the activities of maras with the intelligence to both defend themselves and actively contribute to diminishing the gang problem. The problem with this idea is that it goes against Syrian refugee children arriving at a camp for the internally displaced traditional intelligence methods, given that raw data and then analysis would be shared with non government groups of people, as well as foreign partners. A solution could be the use of tearlines, which provide only the necessary details to specific parties. For example, while the police may need to know the addresses of gang leaders, a missionary would only need to know what specific gang and crimes occur in their own neighborhood. Expanding the chain of intelligence may also help dilute the problem of corruption within the Northern Triangle governments. A long term solution would likely need a cultural shift in terms of the common perception of intelligence sharing to truly impact the issue.

By looking at the maras as a system, disruption strategies can also be developed by authorities. Inputs such as drugs, the chemicals used to create narcotics, weapons, money, victims of human trafficking are meant to be used in the mara's activities like drug dealing, smuggling, extortion, kidnapping, murder, assault, and recruitment, whereas recruits and money are used to sustain the gang itself. The outputs of a gang consist of drugs, prostitution, smuggling, contract killing, and some investments. By studying these outputs and their characteristics like increased graffiti tags to mark territory, the types of drugs being used in an area, and the amount of complaints made to police (including both spikes and drops) authorities and international partners can create comprehensive laws, action plans, and information for public use to lessen the power of maras. Since these gangs are also international and stretch across Mexico and the United States, when these countries deport imprisoned gang members that have served their sentences they should inform authorities in the country of origin of the crimes that have been committed. When the United States returned gang members who had committed crimes, they adhered to cultural privacy norms and state officials were left unaware and unprepared.

Countries closest to the fighting in Syria have opened their borders and accepted refugees into their urban areas despite having less space and resources than more industrialized countries that take in less refugees. Although large, western countries have provided large sources of funding, they accept less refugees and are less likely to offer adequate protection. More comprehensive measures need to be taken in order to properly account for resettlement of refugees and other methods of admittance into more



prepared countries. Almost all refugees are being cared for by a handful of countries closest to the borders. The burden of care and space should be more evenly distributed across North American, European, and Asian Pacific nations that are more politically and financially stable. To achieve this, countries may collaborate and agree to quotas, devise more inclusive plans for admission such as “humanitarian visas, private sponsorship, academic scholarships, labor mobility schemes, and medical evacuation”. Rather than making refugees take the incredibly difficult journey overseas or across land in order to apply for asylum when the answer could very likely be negative, systems should be enacted so that it is possible to apply through embassies in surrounding states. There is also a discrepancy in funding at play and other developed countries need to make plans to even the amounts of financial assistance given to the countries that hold the most refugees. Furthermore, within the refugee camps, more training should be offered for the volunteers and staffs on the ground to recognize and adequately respond to situations of sexual assault.

### **Guiding Questions**

- To what extent should other countries be involved in the process of decreasing the violence produced by non-state actors in the nations they operate in?
- What would systems to decrease and eventually eliminate the control gangs and armed forces have over the livelihoods of civilians look like?
- How can refugees be protected on their paths to safe countries?
- What resources are still lacking in countries that have accepted the bulk of refugees?
- What actions can be taken to improve resettlement for refugees?
- What can be done to provide unaccompanied minors with adequate protection and education both on their travels and when reaching safety?



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