

Analysis of the Role of the United Nations and Its Humanitarian Organizations in Solving the Human Rights Issues

–Taking the Syrian Refugees as an Example

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Abstract: In March, 2011, the ongoing Syrian civil war has commenced, resulted in massive displacement and created one of the most severe humanitarian crises of the 21st century. This paper explores the effectiveness of the United Nations and its humanitarian organizations in addressing the human rights issues of Syrian refugees. The paper thoroughly examines the various efforts undertaken by the UN and its humanitarian organizations to provide aid and support to the millions of Syrians displaced by the conflict. It discusses the strategies that have been put into place to meet both the immediate and long-term needs of the refugees, such as shelter, healthcare, education, and resettlement programs. However, despite these efforts, the paper illustrates the challenges encountered by the UN and its humanitarian organizations in effectively handling a crisis like this, including political restrictions and constrained resources. A detailed analysis is presented of how these obstacles impact the efficiency of international aid and the overall management of the crisis. Later on, the paper puts forth possible solutions towards the refugee crisis, suggesting methods like humanitarian visa schemes and the establishment of SEZs, which are designed to offer safer and more legal routes for refugees to protect their human rights.

Keywords: Syrian war, United Nations, humanitarian organizations, refugees solutions

1. Introduction

The Syrian War, also known as the Syrian civil war, is an armed conflict commenced in 2011 through a rebellion against the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad [1]. The ongoing conflict has escalated into a complex and devastating war that involves various actors, including the Syrian government, different rebel groups and many other countries that are participating in this situation, such as the USA, Russia, etc. The war has resulted in immense human suffering, including hundreds of thousands of deaths, millions of refugees, and extensive destruction of infrastructure. Creating one of the worst severe humanitarian crises of the 21st century. The United Nations (UN) is an international organization founded in 1945, aims to maintain peace and security, promoting human rights, fostering development, and providing humanitarian aid worldwide [2]. In

the case of Syrian refugees, the UN and its human rights organizations play a crucial role in providing aid and support to millions of Syrians who are in desperate needs for protection.

Taking the Syrian refugees as an example, this paper mainly discusses the role of the United Nations and its humanitarian organizations in solving the human rights issues, and talks about various reasons why the United Nations and its humanitarian organizations can't effectively solve the human rights issues of the refugees. There are several purposes which this paper hopes to achieve. First, studying this subject holds significant educational meaning and enhances comprehension of international law, human rights, and diplomacy among world wide, while emphasizing the impact of international politics on humanitarian matters, raises awareness on such issues. Second, to provide an understanding of the complex obstacles encountered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), including political constraints, limited resources, and differing opinions among member nations. This helps in acknowledging the limitations and capacities of international organizations in handling crises. Lastly, this paper attempt to provide possible solutions on the development of policies to address the urgent needs of refugees and address root causes of displacement such as war, persecution, and poverty.

2. Analysis of the role of the UNHCR in solving the Human Rights Issues

It is crucial to emphasize the refugee concern as delineated in the UN Charter, which underscores the importance of safeguarding human safety and well-being as a primary objective. As the war escalates, numbers of refugees keeps on raising, in 2024, it is projected that approximately 16.7 million individuals in Syria will require humanitarian assistance, marking a 9% rise from the preceding year, as reported by United Nations agencies [3]. In order to overcome this human rights issue of refugees, UNHCR has tried various ways to engage with it.

2.1. Methods UNHCR took to engage with Syrian refugees

Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the UNHCR has implemented a diverse range of strategies aimed at assisting Syrian refugees, addressing both their immediate requirements and long-term needs. Among the primary aims is the provision of basic necessities to refugees, with the UNHCR actively involved in the establishment of refugee camps in neighboring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, etc. According to statistics collected by UNHCR [4], these refugee camps serve as essential shelters, offering houses to ensure that refugees have a secure and respectable place to live. There are almost 1,200 staffs employed by 32 different UN agencies and NGOs working in the camp. Collaborating frequently with various other organizations, the UNHCR endeavors to deliver life-saving aid such as food, water, and medical services. There are currently Eight medical facilities provide free health care, and approximately 25,000 medical consultations are provided every month. Meanwhile, UNHCR has placed significant emphasis on the field of education and employment within the framework; temporary schools have been established, and educational projects for children and vocational training for adults have been actively promoted. For those identified as most vulnerable, the UNHCR arranges resettlement in third countries and addresses the needs of refugees facing serious risks due to medical conditions or safety threats. Moreover, the UNHCR has committed itself to enhancing global awareness regarding the challenges confronting Syrian refugees and advocating for supportive policies and increased international aid. And importantly, the agency extends its services to offer legal assistance and protection to help refugees understand their rights and support those encountering safety concerns or exploitation. Through the implementation of these comprehensive methods, the UNHCR not only strives to ease the difficulties experienced by Syrian refugees but also promotes long-term stability and integration within the communities.

However, the number of refugees is still rising. For Syria, the biggest reason for numbers of refugees is the war. The UN and its humanitarian organizations have taken fast action since the conflict outbreak in Syria. For instance, the Human Rights Council (HRC) requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) to promptly dispatch a mission to Syria for the purpose of examining violations of human rights. Additionally, the HRC urged the UNHCR to ascertain the details and contexts surrounding any instances of criminal activity, and to guarantee that those individuals who's responsible for such crimes are held accountable [5]. The resolution further called for the submission of reports by the UNHCR on human rights developments in Syria during its 17th and 18th assemblies [6]. Subsequently, a declaration concerning Syria was released on July 21, 2011 by the Special Advisers of the UN Secretary-General on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. This declaration demonstrated the scope and severity of the conflicts in Syria, while also highlighting the occurrence of potential crimes against humanity. Furthermore, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted a resolution on September 27, 2013, mandating, among other things, the initiation of the Geneva II peace talks in January 2014 and approving the formation of an interim governing entity in Syria with complete executive authority [7].

These efforts undertaken by the UN and its humanitarian organizations demonstrate a strong commitment to humanitarian principles and the well-being of the millions of Syrian refugees. Through a series of continuing diplomatic actions, such as the Geneva peace talks, the UN and its humanitarian organizations have consistently showcased their determination to pursue peaceful resolutions to conflicts, which is critical to addressing the root causes of the refugee problem. Moreover, the UN's efforts to maintain the Syrian crisis as a priority issue on the global agenda through regular reporting and conferences play a crucial role in ensuring a high level of international attention and support. This multifaceted approach, which combines diplomatic actions with comprehensive humanitarian aid, highlights the commitment of the UN to mitigating the human suffering caused by the Syrian civil war and its deep empathy and concern for Syrian refugees.

2.2. Challenges faced by UN and its humanitarian organizations

Finance is one of the intractable obstacles that the UN and its humanitarian organizations encounter when providing support to Syrian refugees. The UN and its humanitarian organizations are non-profit organizations, primarily obtain their financial support from contributions made by various donors, which enables the UN and its humanitarian organizations to deliver substantial financial assistance to Syrian refugees, USD 504.3 million was requested for the Syria Operation in 2023 [8]. Nevertheless, a significant deficit in funding persists, with the UN's reaction being notably lacking in financial support (only 37.5% funded for 2018) [9].

In addition, a large number of refugees resettled in neighboring countries have also put tremendous pressure on local governments. Examining the effects of Syrian refugees on Jordan serves as an example. The arrival of Syrian refugees in Jordan has had a significant impact on various sectors. From an economic perspective, refugees have strained Jordan's resources, resulting in highly increased public spending and a huge amount of public debt. The labor market has also been disrupted, with Syrian refugees often accepting lower wages, thus competing with local Jordanians for employment opportunities, potentially causing a decline in wages and an increase in local unemployment rates. Socially, refugees have led to tensions arising from competition for resources like jobs and housing. And for the environment, population growth has placed pressure on Jordan's limited water resources, leading to an escalation in pollution and environmental deterioration. The rapid population growth driven by refugees has additionally overwhelmed Jordan's infrastructure, particularly affecting essential services such as healthcare, education, and

water provision, thereby diminishing the quality and accessibility of services for all residents [10]. Jordan took in 1.2 million Syrian refugees amidst the ongoing crisis. According to data calculated by the Jordanian authorities, the financial burden of hosting Syrian refugees from 2011 to 2016 amounted to approximately \$4.2 billion [11]. Consequently, apprehensions regarding the sustainability of their border policy approach have been articulated by the Jordanian citizens.

Due to the negative impacts that Syrian refugees could potentially have on host countries, many countries have expressed their concerns and some have passed legislation to keep refugees from coming into their country. Hungary is among the nations that unequivocally demonstrated their stance against refugees seeking assistance in Europe. During the summer of 2015, Hungary constructed an anti-migrant border fence along its southern borders with Serbia and Croatia. Another fence, enhanced with alarms and thermal imaging technology, was completed along the Serbian border at the start of 2017 [12].

Ending the war is the most effective way to solve the refugee problem. However, because of the special characteristics of the UN and its humanitarian organizations as international organizations, they are restricted by the Charter, which limits their jurisdiction over the Syrian civil war, the principle enshrined in Paragraph 7 of Article 2 in the United Nations Charter delineates that the Charter does not grant the United Nations the authority to interfere in issues that primarily fall under the internal affairs of any sovereign State. Moreover, the involvement of numerous foreign countries in military operations has transformed an initially domestic political conflict into a regional confrontation, resulting in the continuation of the ongoing conflict. This conflict has evolved into a proxy war characterized by competing power factions vying for control over the prospective geopolitical landscape of the Middle Eastern region [13].

2.3. Possible solutions to manage Syrian refugees crisis

One possible solution could be to build an EU humanitarian visa scheme. Europe doesn't currently have a humanitarian visa scheme, if refugees want to seek a humanitarian visa, under the framework of the Common European Asylum System, individuals seeking asylum are required to submit their application within the the EU territory [14]. Therefore, refugees can only get into the EU illegally. Refugees attempting to enter Europe illegally often face dangerous journeys that expose them to significant risks. Report showing the last few years have witnessed loss of life on an unprecedented scale in the Mediterranean and Aegean, with 3,500 dying in 2014, 3,771 in 2015 and 2,510 up to the end of May 2016 [14]. Many refugees risk their lives by crossing the Mediterranean Sea on overcrowded, poorly equipped ships, or by traversing challenging routes through the Balkans, facing harsh environmental conditions. Besides these threats, refugees lacking legal protection are also extremely vulnerable to exploitation. Without proper legal status and safeguards, they become easy targets for labor and sexual exploitation, especially women and children who are particularly vulnerable to all kinds of abuses. The EU Humanitarian Visa Scheme plays a crucial role by offering a secure and lawful path for refugees in need of asylum to enter the EU, thereby avoiding dangerous journeys organized by human traffickers. The humanitarian visa is essentially for refugees to be able to request a European humanitarian visa directly at consulates and embassies of Member States. This scheme not only grants a safe and legal way for those facing significant risks from conflict, persecution, or natural disasters but it also significantly reduces the activities of human traffickers and smugglers. By reducing dependence on unsafe and irregular migration paths, humanitarian visa programs protect vulnerable individuals from exploitation and abuse. This strategy improves the safety and dignity of refugees' human rights while also helping to enhance border security and control.

Another possible solution would be to form a special economic zone within the host country [15]. As mentioned above, the significant increase in the number of refugees entering host countries has

led to numerous challenges, and worsen the resource scarcity in originally less wealthy nations. Special Economic Zones (SEZ) could be seen as a strategic response to solve the problems of Jordan and other countries affected by Syrian refugees. These SEZs are viewed as distinct areas within the host country with business and trade regulations that differ from the host country's national laws and are designed to attract investment and stimulate economic activity. Scholars like Alexander Betts and Paul Collier have studied this approach in depth, which seeks to enhance the economic integration of refugees through formal employment opportunities. By doing so, it alleviates the financial strain on both the host country and international donors. Moreover, SEZs play a crucial role in skills development among refugees by offering educational and training programs, thereby enhancing their employability and potential for higher incomes. Furthermore, these specialized zones are helping to attract both local and foreign investments, ultimately boosting the local economy. Countries like Jordan possess vast expanses of undeveloped land that can be transformed into SEZs, achieving a mutually beneficial situation through investments from both domestic and international sources. This strategy not only alleviates the economic burdens on the host country but also promotes its economic development. Additionally, the establishment of SEZs contributes to social stability by facilitating the integration of refugees into society through employment opportunities, subsequently easing tensions between refugees and local citizens.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Syrian Civil War has not only led to significant humanitarian suffering but has also brought to light the constraints and potential capabilities of the UN and its humanitarian organizations in addressing the refugee crisis. It is evident that, despite the collaborative efforts of the UN and its humanitarian organizations in implementing comprehensive aid programs and diplomatic strategies to alleviate the negative impacts of the conflict, there are still substantial obstacles to overcome. These obstacles arise from the complex nature of international diplomacy, the conflicting political agendas of member nations, and the constraints imposed by limited funding. The challenges faced by the UN and its humanitarian organizations in effectively managing such crises are not solely due to a lack of resources, but also due to the intricate political and legal limitations that govern their operations. As explored in this article, while the UN and its humanitarian organizations can cooperate and offer crucial support, their actions are inevitably influenced by the contributions and interests of their member states, highlighting the inherent conflict between humanitarian principles and political realities. Moreover, the potential solutions that have been deliberated upon point out the necessity for innovative strategies to tackle the refugee crisis, including the proposal of a humanitarian visa scheme and the creation of SEZs. These possible solutions aim not only to deliver short-term support but also to promote long lasting stability and integration of refugees within host communities, potentially transforming severe humanitarian crises into opportunities for economic development and social unity. Fundamentally, the Syrian refugee crisis serves as a sorrowful illustration of the limits and potentials of international humanitarian actions, it is the collision of ideals and reality. The ongoing struggles of Syrian refugees demand a collective response from all parties involved to reevaluate and enhance their dedication to reassess and strengthen their commitment to human dignity and international cooperation.

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