

HISAR SCHOOL

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**“Globalization: Creating a Common Language”**

**Special Assembly 5 - Urbanization Committee**

*Reducing the negative effects of urbanization on  
immigrants and refugees*



**RESEARCH  
REPORT**

Recommended by:



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# RESEARCH REPORT

**Forum:** Urbanization

**Issue:** Reducing the negative effects of urbanization on immigrants and refugees

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## Introduction

Around the world, the number of refugees has risen to 24.5 million and according to the UNHCR, almost half of this population now resides in cities and towns rather than living in camps. Camps provide a lifestyle with many restrictions, poor security, and limited aid. As a result, refugees move to urban areas to find better job opportunities and a less restricted life. However, they end up facing threats of arrest and detention, exploitation, harassment, discrimination and inadequate shelter. They may also become vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence, diseases such as HIV-AIDS, human smuggling, and trafficking.

In this year's Hisar JMUN, under the theme "Globalization: Creating a Common Language", delegates of the Urbanization Committee will investigate solutions to protect refugees from negative effects of urbanization. They will try to see the world from refugees' perspective and come up with solutions empathetically. Ultimately, they will help integrate these people into society by creating a common language between refugees and locals of host countries.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Urban:** "Built-up and populated area that includes a municipality and, generally, has a population of 5000 or more"(What).

**Immigrant:** "a person who comes to a country to take up permanent residence"(Immigrant).

**Refugee:** "a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster"(Refugee).

**Urban refugee:** "A refugee who decided or was obliged to settle in an urban area rather than in a refugee camp in the country or territory that they fled to"(Urban).

**UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees):** "UNHCR is primarily mandated to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance, and to seek permanent solutions for persons within its core mandate responsibilities"(United). It battles the refugee crisis by relocating refugees, providing humanitarian aid, ensuring refugees' safety, and providing guidance and technical assistance.

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## General Overview

In almost every region that hosts huge numbers of refugees there is a refugee camp, however “more than 60% of the world's refugee population and 80% of internally displaced persons (IDP) under UNHCR mandate live in urban environments”(UNHCR). The reason immigrants and refugees prefer urban areas is that these areas offer lots of job opportunities, better living conditions, higher quality of education, and also accessible resources. Refugee camps usually cannot provide such services and lack in security. At times, immigrants and refugees prefer to not live within the limits of humanitarian aid and to seek jobs with higher incomes. However, in urban areas, “refugees may be vulnerable to exploitation, arrest or detention, and can be forced to compete with the poorest local workers for the worst jobs” (United). Even though urban areas offer more job options, the process to get a good job is more competitive because there are lots of candidates from all over the country. In these cases, even if immigrants are qualified enough, employers of high-paying jobs tend to choose citizens of their own country. This behavior is caused by xenophobia and prejudice against foreigners. This situation leaves immigrants who are well-educated and who earlier had jobs in their countries to compete for jobs that lack insurance, have inadequate working conditions, and low pays. On the other hand, the situation for refugees is different because it is forbidden for them to move to cities from refugee camps. Even if they move without being caught, they don't have right to work, therefore they can only work in jobs illegally and this makes them open to exploitation.

The lingual differences are also a disadvantage when getting into a job but they are also problematic in terms of integration into the society. Usually, children of refugees cannot get an education in their native languages and therefore cannot continue their education.

While there are negative effects of urbanization on immigrants and refugees, these groups also make the urbanization process harder in some areas. For example, overcrowding and the sprawl of slums built by refugees challenge long term urban planning in cities. Slums are unhygienic and not resistant to natural disasters, therefore they constitute danger to human life. In order to eliminate these negative effects, slums should be demolished. However, this solution would bring the burden of finding a new shelter for refugees with it, which requires a new budget.

In the past, refugees living in urban areas were mostly men with abilities to survive on their own. However, in time the number of women and children refugees increased in urban areas. These groups have more needs while also being more dependent and more vulnerable. Unfortunately, women and children refugees are the groups that locals see the most on streets, begging and starving since women usually don't have jobs to continue or have to look after their children and/or the children cannot continue their education. The UNHCR and other aid agencies cannot ensure that these groups' vital needs of security, shelter, etc. are fulfilled since they cannot keep track of them in urban areas as much as in camps.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### Syria

According BBC news, “The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights have recorded that around 354,000 people have lost their lives, including 106,000 ordinary people who aren't even soldiers or meant to be involved in

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the fighting. This figure doesn't include people who are missing or who aren't recorded though, so the actual number is thought to be much higher“ (What's) Approximately 11 million Syrians have fled their home and moved to neighbor countries since the outbreak of the civil war in 2011. 13.5 million people are still in need of humanitarian assistance within the country.

### **Turkey**

Turkey currently hosts more than 3.5 million registered Syrian refugees along with 365,000 persons of concern that are not registered yet. 90% of this refugee population lives in urban and peri-urban areas. Even though Turkey has spent 25 billion dollars for their settlement and needs, their integration to the society is problematic. Turkey recently gave refugees the work permit however only 1% of the working-age population is issued. 500,000 others have entered Turkey's shadow economy where they have faced exploitation.

### **Kenya**

Kenya is a host country for refugees who are mainly from Somalia or South Sudan. Currently, 45,000-100,000 refugees live in the capital, Nairobi. Many of them fled camps in Kakuma and Dadaab because of insecurity and lack of employment opportunities. Unfortunately, in urban areas, they faced other problems. Refugees are charged more for public health services and education fees and often pay higher rents than Kenyans in urban settlements.

## **Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

The 1951 Geneva Convention is the main international instrument of refugee law. This document defines a refugee, specifies their rights, and specifies the assistance that a country which signs the document is required to provide to refugees. Starting with refugees from Europe in 1967, the Convention's scope expanded to displaced people from all around the world.

The UNHCR pays close attention to urban refugees and has adopted a 'Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas'. This policy is based on two key principles: to ensure urban areas as legitimate places for refugees to reside in and to maximize the protection space and humanitarian organizations for urban refugees.

Despite these conventions and policies, urban refugees still face discrimination while fulfilling their needs in areas such as housing, health, and education. Also, in urban areas, it is harder to provide humanitarian aid to them since they usually settle among other vulnerable and poor communities, that includes immigrants and rejected asylum seekers, with critical needs. Tension raises quickly when aid is directed at only one group.

## **Possible Solutions**

Delegates may evaluate this case from various perspectives and find diverse solutions. Firstly, providing legal expertise to immigrants and refugees during their registration and documentation will teach them their legal rights. As a result, they will also be able to advocate for themselves against a host country's government when accessing government services such as health and education. Secondly, providing vocational training courses

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to immigrants and refugees will help incorporate them into the national economy as well as integrating them into society. Language courses for all age groups will also help in almost all areas of their lives. Delegates may also come up with more creative and specific ideas, similar to those of “URBAN REFUGEES”, which is an organization working closely with urban refugees. They provide programs that aim to help urban refugees initiate projects and startups so that they can start their own small businesses.

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