



MODEL UNITED NATIONS

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DIRECTORS WELCOME LETTER:



Dear Delegates and Faculty Advisors,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the American University of Sharjah Model United Nations (AUSMUN) 2020. This conference has been the home of fruitful debate, practical resolutions, dedicated moderators, spectacular delegates, and diligent advisory and executive boards for the past twelve years and is continuing to do so for its thirteenth year. With 1000 delegates registered from more than 45 national and international educational institutions, this conference will be the biggest one yet!

This year's theme 'Embracing Diversity, Shaping the Future' has been designed to capture the essence of issues that surround our globalized society. Even though we have come this far in time, there has been little to no improvement in accepting diversity as portrayed by the latest atrocities in several countries around the world. However, the future can be successfully shaped for us, the youth, only by embracing diversity in every sector of life and we hope to draw attention to this.

This background guide has been formulated by our hard-working chairs and the research team to provide delegates with the starting point of their preparation for this three-day conference. The guide is initially divided into two sections based on the two topics and is further split into logical components. Firstly, the Summary and History section acts as an introduction to the issue by highlighting important events, terms, history, and global implications. Secondly, the Discourse on the Issue section establishes a link between the issue, its implications, significance, and the United Nations Charter. Lastly, the Past International Organization (IO) Actions and Latest Developments section elaborates on the previous action that has been taken and latest development in terms of the last actions taken with regards to the issue. At the end of each issue, delegates will find sections of Questions the Discussions and Resolutions Should Address and Suggestions for Further Research that aim to streamline the process of delegate's research. However, in order to grab a better understanding of the topic and be able to position yourself better to participate during the conference, it is advised to go beyond the background guide since this guide does not encapsulate enough information to be sufficient for every country and is only a brief introduction to the issues at hand. It is highly encouraged for delegates to view the 'Delegate Handbook' on the AUSMUN website and the 'How to Research' video on YouTube created by AUSMUN.

Finally, I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to all the contributors to this background guide. It is the collaborative work of the Moderators, AUSMUN Research Team, and the AUSMUN Media Team. On behalf of them all, I truly hope that this guide will be of great help to you.

All the very best for the conference and if you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at research@ausmun.com.

Sincerely,
Manaswi Madichetty
Director of Research
AUSMUN 2020

MODERATORS WELCOME LETTER:



Ali Nizar Soufi

Jana Aljamal

Sara Abu Iktish

Dear Delegates,

We are excited to commence the thirteenth annual AUSMUN, and we hope that it will be a memorable experience for each one of you. We hope that this conference enhances your debate skills, research skills and your knowledge on global affairs and security. The topic we will be discussing for three days are of crucial importance, as it discusses the human rights of Palestinians.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) is a United Nations (UN) body that promised to aid Palestinian refugees by providing peace, development and education. This committee aims to help Palestinian refugees find a shelter where they can live a normal, peaceful life. Hence, universal respect to one's culture, justice and human rights of individual freedom are encompassed. This year we will discuss two vital topics, addressing "the reformation of UNRWA and the displacement of Palestinians post Syrian conflict" and "Increasing funding to the UNRWA, to help support educating Palestinian children."

As the conference approaches, we would like to congratulate all delegates, novice or accomplished, for choosing to be here. You chose to make a difference in the world, but most importantly, you chose to enlighten yourself. We truly hope that this conference will not only help you in understanding the complexity of the Palestinian conflict, but also to find your own interest and cause to fight for. We look forward to meeting you all. If you have any inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact us at: ausmununrwa@gmail.com

Sincerely,
UNRWA Chairs



UNRWA

United Nations Relief and Works Agency

Topic I

The reformation of UNRWA and the displacement of Palestinians post the Syrian conflict.

1. Summary & History

Palestine refugees are defined as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict” (“Palestinian Refugees,” n.d.). Around 1.5 million Palestinian refugees live in 58 recognized Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, of which 560,000 are residing in Syria. Ever since the 1950s, UNRWA has been active in Syria with its field operations to assist Palestinian refugees. UNRWA has covered one-third of their daily caloric needs by providing food baskets to around 418,000 Palestinians. UNRWA has also provided all registered Palestine refugees in Syria basic healthcare as the agency provides 26 primary health facilities around the country. The Agency has educated more than 50,000 children across the country by the school programs provided in the camps. Moreover, the livelihoods of the Palestinians are maintained through the microfinance and cash programs (“Where we Work,” n.d.). In 2011, however, yet another predicament has occurred that profoundly affected the lives of the Palestinians refugees in Syria. With the beginning of the Syrian Civil War, the agency has endorsed its operations to guarantee that the necessities of life for the Palestinian refugees in the country are met. UNRWA has been the main provider of protection, humanitarian assistance, and basic services to around 438,000 Palestine refugees who remain in Syria, and who have been among those most affected by the civil war. On the other hand, many Palestinian refugees in Syria have sought refuge; almost 60 percent of Palestine refugees in Syria have been displaced at least once in their lifetime. Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, UNRWA approximated that 120,000 Palestine refugees have been displaced outside of Syria to neighboring countries (“Where we Work,” n.d.) Nearly 30,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) are also currently registered in Lebanon with UNRWA. Entry into Lebanese territory of PRS has become more problematic since May 2014. PRS have only been permitted to enter the Lebanese territories in restricted circumstances, making it tremendously tough for most PRS to enter the country to seek safety and shelter. For those who have managed to enter, PRS in Lebanon are the most vulnerable in the country, especially in the following sectors: economic, education, food, security, health, non-food items, shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene. The vast majority of the Palestinian refugees from Syria are now living in communities with host families or in rental premises. A small group of Palestinians, who arrived in Jordan early in the conflict, are held in what is called ‘Cyber City’, a government facility in Ramtha city. The number of Palestine refugees expatriated from Syria registering with UNRWA in Jordan reached up to 20,000 by 2014 (“PRS in Jordan,” n.d.).

2. Discourse on the Issue

Due to the long on-going human rights’ violations on the Palestinians, and the attempts of stripping them out of their land, it falls upon the hands of the neighboring countries to provide the necessary aid and shelter to those in need. According to the United Nations Charter, the United Nations is determined “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small” (United

Nations, 1945, p.2). For as long as the Palestinian conflict has been going on, civilians have lost their fundamental feeling of dignity, and it is quite necessary for stable countries to help restore their right. As it is one of the United Nations objectives to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all humans, disregarding their race, gender or ethnicity, it is every member's obligation to help Palestinians retain their safety and rights. Neighboring countries, such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, are affected the most with regards to the Palestinian refugees. As of 2019, it was estimated that 560,000 of the Palestinian refugees, who are registered with UNRWA, reside in Syria. The UNRWA has made sure to increase their operations post Syrian conflict to meet the needs of these refugees (United Nations Relief and Works Agency, n.d.). The United States has contributed a large amount of financial support; however, they have decided to stop funding the UNRWA as they deemed it to be a financial burden (Beaumont & Holmes, 2018). The lack of financial support from member countries has caused the UNRWA to start minimizing refugee support in Syria's Region. The reformation goals of the UNRWA also became harder to achieve as the budget continues to stay limited.

3. Past International Organization (IO) Actions & Latest Developments

During the Syrian crisis, UNRWA has been the main provider of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian refugees. The agency has provided assistance in the health, educational and monetary sector. Through the emergency response program, the agency provides Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon and Jordan with relief, social and protection services. The refugees have access to all UNRWA facilities and programs put in neighboring countries such as education and health services and the existing capacities of the agency as the number of displaced Palestinians grow. One of the largest cash programs in the world is run by UNRWA during an active conflict, where 400,000 Palestine refugees are provided with cash assistance ("Where we Work," n.d.). The cash program has profound effects on the poverty levels; 90 percent of the Palestinian refugees live in absolute poverty. The poverty level has dropped from 90 to 74 percent since the launch of the program. Regarding nutrition and health, the agency has provided 418,000 displaced Palestinians with food baskets as well as health facilities and checkpoints. Also, 103 schools are operated by UNRWA to provide 50,000 children access to education. Overall, UNRWA has employed a wide range of trained professionals to aid the operations carried out by the agency; 4,000 staff members have been employed by UNRWA including teachers, engineers and doctors that operate in 150 UNRWA programs ("Where we Work," n.d.). For the service provision in Syria that has been affected by the civil war, UNRWA currently lost access to two of the registered camps; the agency has access to 10 out of 12 camps in Syria. Multiple of the installations are still inaccessible or have been severely damage over the course of the conflict. Due to the conflict, around 40 percent of the UNRWA-provided schools and 25 percent of the health centers are currently non-functioning, unusable or damaged. However, the agency has compensated for the damages by establishing health care checkpoints and using government schools.

4. Questions the Discussions and Resolutions Should Address

- What steps should be taken to ensure the safety of Palestinian refugees in Syria?
- How can host countries contribute to integrating displaced Palestinians?
- Should host countries restrict the entree of the Palestinian? Why or why not?
- Since UNRWA has taken initiative to help Palestinian refugees, what are some other ways the agency can further facilitate humanitarian aid?

5. Suggestions for Further Research

- The current state of the Palestinian refugees in Syria.

- The contributions of neighboring countries.
- Physical and mental effects of living in a war-stricken country.

Topic II

Increasing funding to the UNRWA, to help support educating Palestinian children

1. Summary & History

The UNRWA is currently facing one of the worst financial crises in its history. For a committee like the UNRWA, the main financial support system is the EU and the national governments in the USA. Over the past few years, funds supporting the organization have decreased greatly. The UNRWA (2019a) is now in need of around 1.2 billion dollars, as requested by the Commissioner-General.

The UNRWA requires appropriate funding for many reasons. Firstly, the funding is used to run the organization's initiatives. For example, in 2018, the biggest donor to the UNRWA cut their donations by 300 million dollars of their contribution. About 300 million dollars was required to fund Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Syria, the West Bank and Lebanon, all who live in refugee camps. The result decreasing funds resulted in many refugees not having access to electricity, water or even clothes. Because the fund cuts, the UNRWA is forced to reduce its spending from 32 USD to 23 USD per person. This creates a damaging impact on the refugees' healthcare, wellbeing and education; their development into society is put on hold because of budget cuts (United Nations, 2018).

The United States made a decision to cut off 6 months' worth of funding. While dealing with a total of 446 million funding gap from 2018 by June of 2019, the UNRWA was faced with a budget loss of 211 million dollars (Beaumont & Holmes, 2018). As the days go by, this amount will keep increasing, and the effects of that increasing need for money will be detrimental.

However, with all those decisions made that contribute negatively to the financial state of the UNRWA, countries like India come for the rescue. The usual annual funding that India contributes is 1.25 million dollars, and in order to help improve the financial state of the UNRWA, India decided to increase its donations from US 1.25 million dollars to US 5 million dollars (UNRWA, 2019b). Countries like India keep the UNRWA running and attempt to balance the lack of funds. The UNRWA is still suffering till this day and is seeking help.

2. Discourse on the Issue

To deny a person the right for education is a violation of a human right. According to article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages." (UN General Assembly, 1948, p.7). The UNRWA has struggled to provide education to many Palestinian children, mainly because the organization is operated by volunteerism and donations. Education is the foundation of human development, because it gives an individual access to better standards of living. Member countries are violating the United Nations Charter by not contributing to help provide education to Palestinian children. The United Nations (1945) have promised to "promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom" (p.2). Denying Palestinian children, the right for education restricts social progress. There are over 274 UNRWA operated schools in the

Gaza Strip, with 278,991 enrolled pupils (United Nations Relief and Works Agency, n.d.). The large number of pupils makes it difficult for schools to operate and meet the needs of every child, because it requires a huge amount of funding. Furthermore, more than half of UNRWA schools in Syria have stopped functioning due to armed conflict, such as the Syrian Civil War. Because of this, many of the UNRWA schools have turned into shelters for displaced families, since there is no place to accommodate for displaced families (Sherwood, 2016). These issues could be resolved if funding for UNRWA was increased to accommodate these unforeseeable changes. On a daily basis, Palestinian children lose more hope as they are not provided basic safety, let alone an education. The UNRWA calls upon countries to provide aid for Palestinian children and ensure that they have access to an education.

3. Past IO Actions and The Latest Developments

The UNRWA's top 5 donors are the EU, Germany, Saudi Arabia, the UK and Sweden. Even though the donors still provide some funds to UNRWA, projects like the Gaza Major Repair receive almost zero funding from almost all funders, with the exception of Germany and Saudi Arabia. Funding Gaza should be considered a priority for donors, as citizens of Gaza face terrorism almost daily.

Private individuals like the Islamic Relief Canada, Islamic relief USA foundation, Mercy USA Foundation, Real Madrid, Bank of Palestine, Alkhair Foundation and Muslim Aid Foundation collectively contribute to the funding that goes to all Palestinian refugees. Such funds have reached about 1.6 million USD yearly. However, these types of funds keep fluctuating, and depending on them can be risky as the UNRWA might not receive the amount needed. This would place them in a bad position, which is why the UNRWA tries to increase its relations with NGOs because funding can be more accurately predicted and will keep the risks lower (United Nations Relief and Works Agency, n.d.).

UNRWA is always on the hunt to make collaborations with businesses and other NGOs to help increase the funding. In 2018, the organization it made a successful collection of 64.45 million USD from external businesses and foundations that were previously mentioned (Real Madrid, TOMS, Islamic relief USA & Canada, etc.) (United Nations Relief and Works Agency, n.d.).

4. Questions The Discussions and The Resolutions Should Address

- How can UNRWA overcome its financial crisis?
- Who should fund the UNRWA? Where can the organization turn to for further funding?
- How can the UNRWA provide thousands of Palestinian refugees with health, education and other facilities while keeping a well-maintained budget?

5. Suggestions For Further Research

- Research other organizations that contribute to the funding of the UNRWA and the impact of their funding, whether it is enough or not and how is it being distributed.
- The role of other countries and their impact on the funding of the UNRWA.
- The reasons behind the decrease in budgets given to the UNRWA.

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