

Preface

What would you do if your country, your homeland, was suddenly sent into a whirlwind of political unrest, religious persecution, or war? Those who face these situations generally only have two choices; to escape their country and flee to another, or to stay, and risk the dangers occurring. A refugee is someone who chooses to ask to leave, who asks to escape the turmoil in their homeland. Refugees are in need of protection from their country, and therefore seek refuge in another in order to remain safe¹. The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as any person who: owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country². Due to these factors, the concept of “refugee” does not usually focus around an individual, but rather a group of people.

Typically, the need for asylum is centered around a war or some sort, again due to religious disputes, political conflicts, etc. A perfect example of this is World War II. After this war, there were large numbers of refugees fleeing Eastern Europe. This was one of the first times a large number of refugees were transported on a global scale³.

¹“Refugees”. [Citizenship and Immigration Canada](#). [Citizenship and Immigration Canada. 2010]

²Barry Stein: “Refugees and Mental Health”. [The Refugee Experience](#). [England]

³“Refugee”. [Wikipedia](#). [Wikipedia. 2010]

These refugees fled to many different parts of the world, and this will be discussed later on in the paper.

The majority of refugees who leave their country today typically seek asylum in neighbouring countries. This can be referred to as "resettlement", and it is when refugees are assisted in moving to a safe third world country, because they cannot return to their homeland. It is not ideal, however the refugees get to live in a safer, neighbouring country, and it is usually the only solution for most⁴.

Refugees can also be transported to different regions entirely. This can include Europe, Asia, and commonly, North America. Canada has a huge role in the relocation of refugees, and readily agrees to accept them. Canada is also popular because of the slightly easier regulations and applications in order to become a refugee. Until a person's request to become a refugee is accepted, these people are known as "asylum seekers". This status changes to refugee after they are accepted, and that person can enjoy living in refugee status⁵.

The determination on what qualifies those to be refugees is determined by each different government in specific countries. Some countries have difficulty recognizing asylum seekers as legitimate immigrants, and mistakenly refer to refugees as "illegal

⁴ "The UN Refugee Agency". [UNHCR](#). [UNHCR]

⁵ "Refugees", op.cit.

aliens". An illegal alien is another name for illegal immigration, which occurs when a person enters a country while violating that country immigration laws⁶.

Currently in the world, asylum seekers have filed applicants all over the globe, to places like the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, and to 38 different countries in Europe. "Iraq remains the top country of origin of the asylum applicants (13,200 claims) for the fourth consecutive year. Afghans (12,000 claims) and Somalis (11,000 claims) are the second and third largest groups as security conditions continue to deteriorate in large parts of their home countries. The other main countries of origin are China, Serbia (including Kosovo), the Russian Federation, Nigeria, Mexico, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. ⁷"

According to High Commissioner for UNHCR, Antonio Guterres "These statistics show that ongoing violence and instability in some parts of the world force increasing numbers of people to flee and seek protection in safe countries.⁸" From this statement, it is very clear to see that many asylum seekers still need to be addressed, and that the need of refugee status still grows. These people have no protection in their country, and it is their own government that wishes to persecute them. This is why countries need to help those in need. Helping them preserves their freedom, grants them rights, and ultimately, saves them from death.

⁶ "Illegal Immigrant". Legal Explanations. [Legal Explanations. 2007]

⁷ "The UN Refugee Agency", op.cit.

⁸ "The UN Refugee Agency", op.cit

Summary

Through this report, the importance of helping refugees will be addressed. It will also concentrate on why people should care, how this topic is a global issue, and possible solutions for this problem. The need of refugee status is important all through the world, for many different reasons. Every day, countries are faced with war, political problems, and religious conflicts. These situations happen all around the world every day, and many innocent people are affected by them. The vast majority of these people do not want a war in their country; however, they have no say in the matter. This is why it is important for there to be such a thing as refugee status, because without it, many of these people would lose their lives in a battle they did not want.

Background

The concept of refugee status is not just a recent issue; in fact, it has been going on for centuries. The first hint of the right to seek asylum can be traced all the way back to 600 A.D., and notably through Europe in the middle ages. The ancient Greeks and Egyptians also understood the concept that when a person fled to a holy place, they could not be harmed. In the late 18th century, nationalism became prevalent in Europe, and this created the concept that in order to cross borders, you must provide identification⁹.

If you consider the term refugee and how it is defined by the 1951 Convention, there are many times in history where conflicts have resulted in refugees. An example of this is in 1685 after the Edict of Fontainebleau made Protestantism in France illegal. Hundreds of thousands of these people fled to England, Switzerland, the Netherlands, South Africa, Germany, and at the time, Prussia¹⁰.

This continued to the Balkan Wars, which took place between 1912-1913. The first Balkan War broke out when Greece, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Serbia attacked the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire fell, and this later resulted in the Treaty of London. The second war broke out because Bulgaria was not satisfied with what it had gained, and therefore attacked its former allies, Serbia and Greece. While they attacked Bulgaria, the Romania and the Ottomans won back territory from Bulgaria. After the

⁹ "Refugee" op.cit.

¹⁰ J.H Robinson: "Edict of Fontainebleau" [Internet Modern History Sourcebook](#). [Paul Halsall. 2000]

war was over, the Treaty of Bucharest was put into place, and Bulgaria lost most of the land it had gained during the first Balkan War. This war caused about 800 000 people to leave their homeland and seek refuge. This meant that there were to be many different groups of people who were refugees in the beginning of World War I¹¹.

The first international coordination on refugee affairs was by the League of Nations High Commission for Refugees, and occurred in 1921. The Commission was led by Fridtjof Nansen, and the goal was to assist the approximate 1,500,000 people who had fled during the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the civil war, which occurred between 1917 and 1921. The Russian Revolution defined a series of revolutions which destroyed the Tsarist autocracy and led to the creation of the Soviet Union¹².

A well known account relating to refugees was when the Holocaust took place during World War II. At this time, many Jewish people were trying to flee Germany and neighbouring countries, in order to escape the horrors taking place. During this time, in 1924, the Immigration Act was put into place by the US, and was aimed at further restricting the immigration of Southern and Eastern Europeans (especially Jews), Italians and Slavs. This meant that most the refugees seeking asylum in the United States during World War II were denied. This caused there to be many desperate refugees during the time of World War II, and due to the rise of Nazism, many of these refugees were coming from Germany.

¹¹ "The Balkan Wars". Historical Settings. [GoGreece.com. 2004]

¹² Peter Litwin: "Introduction". The Russian Revolution. [2002]

World War II led to massive amounts of forced migration, because of all the conflict and disasters happening around the globe. By the end of the war, Europe had over 40 million refugees¹³. So, in 1943, the Allies created the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). It was created to provide aid to areas that had been liberated from Axis powers, which included parts of Europe and China. Over seven million refugees, or DP's (displaced persons), were returned to their country of origin. For those one million who refused to return (generally Jewish people), displaced persons camps were set up. The UNRRA was shut down in 1947, and was replaced by the International Refugee Organization, created by the United Nations¹⁴.

During the aftermath of World War II, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in the 1950's. It was created to help the Europeans who had been displaced by the war. This organization helped not only refugees, but those seeking asylum, stateless people, and internally displaced people (IDP's). An IDP is someone who flees their home, but does not reach another country. Unlike refugees, IDP's are not protected against international law, and therefore it is hard to provide them with assistance. UNHCR soon surpassed the International Refugee Organization, and also the UNRAA. In 1956, UNHCR faced its first major emergency when the Soviet forces crushed the Hungarian Revolution, which led to an outpouring of refugees. Not long after in the 1960's, the decolonization of Africa led to the continents first major refugee crisis. This crisis required the assistance of UNHCR in order to keep civilians safe, and to provide them with temporary homes. UNHCR was awarded the Nobel

¹³ Ken Polsson: "Chronology of World War II". [Time Line](#). [Ken Polsson. 2010]

¹⁴ "United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration". [Holocaust Encyclopedia](#). [2010]

Peace Prize in 1954 and 1981, because of the effort the organization put forth in order to help resolve the refugee problem around the world¹⁵.

The problems concerning refugees have always been an issue, as illustrated previously. Through history we have seen this problem grow, as wars come and go, and as other conflicts are unearthed. Anytime there is a conflict in a country, it can lead to refugees. Without an end to conflict, there can be no end to asylum seekers. The only way to prevent refugees is to solve the conflicts occurring in individual countries. It would be almost impossible to have every country in the world at peace at the same time; however, each conflict that comes to an end means a new beginning for all those who have been seeking asylum.

¹⁵ "The UN Refugee Agency", op.cit.

Expert

A well renowned expert on the issue of refugees is António Guterres, who is the 10th and current High Commissioner for Refugees for the organization UNHCR. Guterres was born on April 30, 1949, in Lisbon and educated at the Instituto Superior Técnico. Before his role in UNHCR, Guterres was a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe from 1981 to 1983. He was also a chairman of the Committee on Demography, Migration and Refugees. In addition, he has been active in Socialist International, a worldwide organization of social democratic political parties. He was the group's vice-president from 1992 to 1999 and president from 1999 until mid-2005.

Guterres spent more than 20 years in government and public service before joining UNHCR. He even served as Portuguese prime minister from 1995 to 2002, during which time he was heavily involved in the international effort to resolve the crisis in East Timor. He also founded the Portuguese Refugee Council in 1991 and was part of the Council of State of Portugal from 1991 to 2002. As president of the European Council in early 2000, he led the adoption of the Lisbon Agenda and co-chaired the first European Union-Africa summit.

On June 15, 2005, Guterres was elected by the UN General Assembly to a five-year term. In April 2010, the General Assembly re-elected Guterres to a second five-year term as the High Commissioner. As High Commissioner, he heads one of the world's foremost humanitarian organizations. UNHCR has twice won the Nobel Peace Prize, once in 1954, and again in 1981. UNHCR has more than 6,800 staff members

working in more than 120 countries, providing protection and aid to millions of refugees, internally displaced people, and stateless persons. UNHCR's needs-based budget for 2010 is just over US\$3 billion. Unfortunately, this budget rises every year, and is harder to meet each time.

An interesting characteristic about each new and previous High Commissioner is that they come from all over the globe. It is essential that the organization gets different opinions and views, because it makes the organization even more globally involved. The previous High Commissioners have come from all over the world, from places such as, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Iran, Denmark, Norway, Japan and now Portugal. This has given the organization all kinds of different views and opinions, which is vital to its success.

The rest of the UNHCR Executive Committee is composed of 78 members, who approve the agency's biennial programs, and the corresponding budget. These are presented by the High Commissioner, António Guterres, who is appointed by the UN General Assembly. As head of the organization, the High Commissioner is responsible for the direction and control of UNHCR. Guterres directs the work of UNHCR with the assistance of a Deputy High Commissioner and Assistant High Commissioners for Protection and Operations.

From the description given of, António Guterres, it is clear he is an expert in the field of refugees. He clearly knows how to assist and support refugees, because as the High Commissioner, he would have to know what to do in these situations. In order

to assist those in need, António Guterres and UNHCR have a list of solutions and ways to help, which include anything from assistance to fundraising. UNHCR's three main goals include: voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement to a third country in situations where it is impossible for a person to go back home or remain in the host country. António Guterres and his organization carry out these solutions in all parts of the world, to continents like Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. This solitary organization is changing the world for the better, one place at a time¹⁶.

¹⁶ "The UN Refugee Agency", op.cit.

Role of Control

The group who has the most control on the status of refugees is the government of that specific country. If the country is at peace, meaning no war or conflict, then it is most likely there would be no need for refugees, IDP's, etc. However, if there is conflict going on in a country, then usually it results in refugees. Generally, it is up to the government whether the need for refugees arises. This is because it is the government's responsibility to decide what is going on in their own country. If they choose a war, they choose to have refugees. However, this is not always true because sometimes conflicts occur that the government has no control over. An example of this would be the situation occurring in Sri Lanka, which will be mentioned later in the report.

Contrary to this, the group that deserves and needs the control of what happens in a country is the people living there. It should be up to the population whether their country goes to war, who their leader should be, what religion they choose to belong to, etc. The government shouldn't be allowed to run every aspect of the people lives for them, and they shouldn't get to choose what is right and wrong for each individual. No one should have to be frightened into a religion, or forced to listen to a government they did not choose. They shouldn't have to move unless that they want to.

The people, who care about refugees, stateless people, IDP's, etc, are those who are in organizations such as UNHCR. These are the people who want to help, who want

to make the world a better place. These people care about how these refugees end up, and if they are safe from the brutality of their country. These are the people who care. The ones who spend their time volunteering and working for organizations like these. Why else would they do it if they didn't care? There are people in the world who care a great deal about situations like these, and it is shown through kind acts, like the ones organizations are doing for people all around the globe.

Even though there are many who do care about refugees and those in need, there are many who do not. These people should care, for multiple reasons. Firstly, place yourself in their shoes. How would you feel, being forced to leave your homeland, and living in a place completely foreign to you? You would want and need peoples help, because it wouldn't be easy starting over with nothing. Secondly, different cultures and customs are what make countries interesting and unique. No country is alike because each one has a different and distinctive "melting pot". Lastly, immigration is the building block of what starts new countries. Without refugees and immigration, countries like Canada would not exist today.

Religious and Spiritual Views

One of the main reasons for refugees today is religious controversy, which occurs for different reasons in individual countries. In every country there are people with different religious views, and in some countries there are wars because of it. When a country experiences conflicts and violence because of different religion, it can eventually lead to war. War due to religious conflict it is known as a "holy war". Holy wars usually have three elements:

- The achievement of a religious goal
- Authorised by a religious leader
- A spiritual reward for those who take part¹⁷

An example of a holy war today would be the Jihad Holy War in Iraq. The purpose of this war is not to spread the Islamic faith, but to extend Muslim power over the world. Today, it is world's number one source for terrorism. There have been many deaths over Jihad, and it is a perfect example of why people would become refugees. Many innocent civilians are fleeing from Jihad, in order to escape to a safer country. Holy war today is one of the main reasons refugees, because personal safety and self being comes into question¹⁸.

¹⁷ "The Holy War". [2008]

¹⁸ Daniel Pipes. "What is Jihad?". [Daniel Pipes](#). [New York: New York Post. 2002]

It is very hard for people just to give up on their religion just because someone says to. Even if they are threatened, they cannot change what they believe simply because someone demands it. "Assyrian Christians represent less than 5% of the total Iraqi population, they make up 40% of the refugees fleeing Iraq" stated António Guterres, High Commissioner for UNHCR. This shows just how drastic the situation has become in Iraq, when almost half the population of a religion wants to escape. This is because these people are facing violence and death, just because of the religion they practice. Also, in 1987, Christians used to make up for about 1.4 million of the population in Iraq. Today, it is estimated that it has slumped to about 500 000, significantly less than what it used to be¹⁹. This is because of the holy war that has been going on for years; civilians are threatened and forced into something they don't believe in.

¹⁹ "The UN Refugee Agency", op.cit.

Case Studies

Somalia:

In 2009, there were 2.1 million refugees, 6.3 million internally displaced people (IDP's), and about a hundred thousand stateless people in Africa. Since then, the number of refugees and IDP's are declining, but most are still in need of assistance. Somalia faces one of the most severe forced displacements in Africa, with more than 1.5 million IDP's. Somalia's neighbouring countries, Ethiopia and Kenya, are taking thousands of these refugees in, but the refugee camps are becoming very overcrowded.

The main reason for this issue is because of the fight between the Transitional Federal Government (TGF), and the Islamist Fundamentalist Insurgents of Al Shabaab and Hizbul Islam. The Al Shabaab and Hizbul Islam are some of the groups that the Islamic Court Union (ICU), split up into after their defeat against the TGF. These groups are considered very radical, and they oppose the Ethiopian military presence in Somalia (unlike the TGF)²⁰. The rebels from the Al Shabaab and Hizbul Islam have recently taken over Somalia's capital city Mogadishu, and the TGF control is shrinking. However, the TGF refuses to back down, and are retaliating with a lot of relentless attacks; with no plans on stopping until Al Shabaab is out of the capital²¹. This war is generally a power struggle over who gets to control the country. However, neither side

²⁰ "Wikipedia". War in Somalia. [2010]

²¹ Brian Smith: "World Socialist Web Site". Somalia: Conflict Rages in Mogadishu. [World Socialist Web Site. 2009]

seems to be stepping down, nor has there been any success in solving the issue²². In fact, the fight in Mogadishu has caused more than 270 000 citizens to become displaced, and it has exiled thousands more to neighbouring countries. The fighting in Somalia is getting so bad, that the UN agencies and NGO's set up in Somalia have been forced to relocate to safer places in order to avoid the violence taking place. This has made it very hard for humanitarian operations to take place, especially because a number of international aid workers have been kidnapped with ransom demands. Additional problems include the cycles of droughts and floods that occur, because they destroy crops and livestock, and this has caused food prices to increase.

The problem of refugees and IDP's in Somalia is expected to increase, and the need for aid is still enormous. An organization that is trying to help with this problem is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The main priority right now is to address the refugees in Somalia's neighbouring countries, and to try and aid them as best as possible²³. UNHCR has also come up with goals they would like to complete in Somalia in 2010. They are:

"- Authorities in "Somaliland" and "Puntland" are trained to protect the rights of refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs.

- Non-food items cover at least 80 per cent of all needs among IDPs.

²² "Wikipedia", op.cit.

²³ "The UN Refugee Agency", op.cit.

- Refugees and Somali returnees from neighboring countries receive protection and multi-sectoral assistance.
- Measures are put in place to help ensure an environment suitable to sustainable return in "Puntland" and "Somaliland".
- Community-based livelihood interventions target women and other vulnerable groups.
- Asylum claims and resettlement referrals are processed without delay.
- Activities in vocational training, income generation, crop production and livestock development alleviate the impact of the food crisis and mixed-migration movements.²⁴

Since this problem is becoming very severe, Somalia citizens have also been attempting to settle into Canada, but this seems to be failing. More needs to be done in order to insure their citizenship, and it needs to be done faster. Even though Canada has many different cultures and is fairly diverse, it seems as though this fight is an "uphill battle", because of who the Somalia people are. Ibrahim Absiye at the Canadian Council for Refugees thinks he knows the reason for this. "The Somalian community has more than three strikes. They are Muslim. They are black, from Africa. They are newcomers ... It's an uphill situation."²⁵ Absiye seems to know what he is talking about,

²⁴ "The UN Refugee Agency", op.cit.

²⁵ Dalson Chen: "The Windsor Star". Settling in Canada "Uphill Situation" for Somali Refugees.[The Windsor Star. 2009]

because he himself is a Somalia refugee, who fled the country in 1991. He says that many Somalia-Canadians still have family and loved ones who are in Somalia, and they are worried about their safety. Many of these Somali families just want to be reunited, and live in a country where there is no war and they can feel safe²⁶. Therefore, the needs of the Somali people need to be met, and something has to be done about their current situation. These refugees need a permanent residence to settle down in, because it doesn't seem like the war is going to end anytime soon. This means that aid needs to find a way to the Somali people, even if it is dangerous.

“Peace and security remain fragile in significant parts of Africa. This makes the delivery of protection and assistance challenging, complicated and frequently dangerous. Instability, conflict and lack of security provoke new displacement, in particular in the Horn of Africa, and prevent the voluntary return home of many people. They also restrict humanitarian access.²⁷”

²⁶ “The Windsor Star”, op.cit

²⁷ “The UN Refugee Agency”, op.cit.

Sri Lanka:

In South Asia, the government of the country of Sri Lanka has just recently declared the end to the military operations in the north end of the country, which forecloses the 26 year long conflict that took place in Sri Lanka. This means that many IDP's and refugees are starting to return voluntarily, and are ecstatic to be able to return to their homeland. Currently, there are about 260 000 displaced people in northern Sri Lanka, in addition to 300 000 IDP's. Some of them have even been displaced since 1990, and are looking forward to returning to their country. There are some obstacles, however, as the government needs to re-establish many public and private structures. Along with this is the breakdown of the economy, which includes fisheries and agriculture as decaying productions.

The civil war fought in Sri Lanka was due to the conflict between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE or Tamil Tigers). The war began in 1983, and continued until the Sri Lankan military defeated the Tamil Tigers in 2009. For over 25 years this rebel group caused many hardships for the citizens of Sri Lanka, with over 80 000 people listed as killed. During the years, there were three separate attempts at peace talks, however each time failed. This included the assistance of the Indian Peace Keeping Force that took place during 1987-1990. When a cease fire was declared in 2001, it seemed things would start to settle down, but the Tamil Tigers became hostile again in 2005, and the conflict escalated. The government then ordered a series of major military action against the Tamil Tigers, which drove them out of the

whole Eastern side of the island. The LTTE then declared that they would try to keep the freedom in order to achieve statehood, even though it is said they had violated peace agreements over 10 000 times. So in 2008, the government withdrew from the ceasefire agreement and began to destroy a large number of smuggling vessels that belonged to the Tamil Tigers, which stopped their funding. This allowed the government to take control of all the land the LTTE had taken over, including their main military base camp. This finally led the Tamil Tigers admitting defeat on May, 17 2009, and the end of the 26 year long conflict²⁸.

Now that the war is over, many citizens will be looking forward to returning to their homeland. However, most of these IDP's and refugees will not start to return until later in 2010, and so for now remain with their host families. Getting the citizens returned to their homeland quickly is the biggest concern now that the war is over, and this will be directed by international organizations. When many refugees return, they will likely find their homes and other buildings damaged, and therefore will require assistance in order to get another shelter up and running. Protection is also needed while the refugees are re-entering the country, because the war has only just ended. One organization that is greatly helping with this is UNHCR (as previously mentioned), and they have a list of goals for the people returning in 2010 that include:

“- IDPs benefit from greater physical security and freedom of movement in return areas, in camps and among host families.

²⁸ “Wikipedia”. [Sri Lankan Civil War](#). [2010]

- The provision of shelter assistance and distribution of relief items is effectively coordinated with the authorities and partners in camps and return areas.
- Returnees and host communities are supported with quick-impact projects.
- IDPs have civil documentation and access to national protection mechanisms, including free legal aid.
- Protection interventions and advocacy assist individuals with specific needs.
- Protection risks and human-rights abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence, are identified and reported.
- Workshops and trainings provide information on human rights, the guiding principles on internal displacement, and good governance to the authorities, security forces, NGOs, IDPs and returnees.
- Confidence-building and stabilization measures ensure communities, government institutions and security forces gain more trust in each other.
- The facilitation of voluntary repatriation from India.
- Asylum-seekers have access to fair and efficient refugee status determination (RSD), and refugees receive care and maintenance and assistance in resettlement procedures.²⁹

²⁹ "The UN Refugee Agency", op.cit.

These goals are a great start to getting the island of Sri Lanka back on its feet; however it will take a very long time to get everything back to normal. Since the war went on for such an extraordinarily long time and was very destructive, it will probably take many years to get building rebuilt, the economy back in place, and to successfully transport refugees and IDP's back into the country. Fortunately, the Tamil Tigers reign of terror is finally over, and Sri Lanka can start to rebuild and heal. As the refugees are allowed to return to their country, many things are being done, as stated previously. This will help to restore the country of Sri Lanka, and it will also help to restore the population's faith.

Columbia:

Right now, there are thousands of refugees being hosted by Latin-America countries. Most of these refugees, IDP's, and asylum seekers are from Columbia, which has one of the biggest populations of internally displaced persons in the world. The humanitarian situation in Columbia has left more than 3 million people displaced in the country, while hundreds of thousands have sought after refuge in other surrounding countries. Most of this displacement is caused by the long lasting conflicts, extreme violence and the illegal production of coca³⁰.

One conflict in particular that has been going on for over 4 decades is the Columbian Civil War or the Columbian Armed Conflict, which began in 1964. It is a conflict between the Columbian Administrations and the rebel groups known as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). These groups were created from the result of a previous conflict known as La Violencia (The Violence). This was a war between members from the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party in Columbia. During this time, more than 200 000 lives were taken throughout the country, especially in rural areas. Eventually, La Violencia started to wind down, and the Liberal Party supporters demobilized. However, some former Liberal units along with active Communist groups created one of the largest guerrilla groups, which is the FARC. It was not formal until 1966, and this is also when the ELN group was created, which was heavily backed by Cuba. The government then organized

³⁰ "The UN Refugee Agency", op.cit.

several counter campaigns to these guerrilla groups; however it had mixed results and eventually discontinued. Later in 1974, another change occurred due to the 19th of April Movement (M-19), which was when a guerrilla group was founded in response to the fraud election of Misael Borrero. In 1982, Belisario Betancur was elected, and he negotiated a peace fire with the FARC and also the M-19, but not ELN. During this time, the drug trade was also increasing, which led to drug lords and this led to wealthy drug cartel family members being kidnapped by the guerrillas. This created the Muerte a Secuestradores or MAS (meaning "Death to Kidnappers") death squad. Later in 1985, the cease fire with M-19 came to an end, the guerrillas resumed fighting, and two short years later the cease fire ended with FARC as well. In 1998, Andres Arango was sworn in as the president of Columbia, and he created a program to bring peace to Columbia, and end the long withstanding conflict. He also cooperated fully with the United States to fight against the trafficking of illegal drugs. A year later, the Columbian Military attacked a stationed FARC rebel group, they were forced to flee, and this was considered a small victory for the government³¹.

Today, the FARC is still an active guerrilla group, and it continues to cause destruction and conflicts in Columbia. However, the conflict has moved to more remote, unpopulated areas, such as jungles and border regions. The most difficult part of the conflict is to provide protection for the citizens, whether they are displaced or not. The area mostly affected by IDP's is the Pacific Coast, and this is where security remains the most difficult. However, the national response to this issue is starting to increase, and

³¹ "Wikipedia". [Columbian Armed Conflict](#). [2010]

there are more funds to improve safety. However, there is not a lot of space for IDP's and stateless people to go to, and this is also a problem. Luckily, UNHCR has come up with some solutions to this problem, and they would like to carry out these goals in 2010. They include:

"- Some 80 percent of the Government resources assigned for displacement issues in 2010 are utilized.

- Fifteen action plans for IDPs or communities at risk of displacement are developed. At least half of them are implemented, benefiting at least 7,000 people.

- Guidelines on integrating displaced children, youth, people with disabilities and older people into Government programs are published by four ministries and implemented at the national and local levels.

- Some 300,000 hectares of land belonging to displaced people or those at risk of displacement are protected.

- Approximately 100,000 displaced Colombians or those at risk of displacement receive national identification documents, including at least 40 per cent indigenous or Afro-Colombian IDPs.

- Action plans to ensure that displaced children have access to the education system are implemented in at least five regions. More than 50,000 displaced children are newly integrated into the education system.
- Concepts related to the prevention of displacement and the protection of displaced people are incorporated into the training for armed forces and tested for at least 500 officers.
- Ten prevention and protection plans for indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities at risk of displacement are prepared at the national and local levels.
- A regional border strategy, including 10 bi-national initiatives, benefits at least 5,000 people.³²”

Even with these goals, it is very unlikely that all of Columbia’s problems can be solved. There are still many guerrilla groups, including the FARC, rampaging in Columbia, and they are causing much citizen unrest. However, these goals help the people affected by the conflict, and will help them to live better and safer lives while they wait for the conflict to be over.

³² “The UN Refugee Agency”, op.cit.

Organizations

Illegal immigration is still an issue that affects the world today, and because of this issue, there are international organizations that have been put in place in order to deal with this concern. A particular organization that is trying to deal with this issue is the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This organization is important because illegal immigration is an issue that affects all parts of the world, and it is vital to have an international organization in order to deal with this problem globally. IOM's mission is to show the world that humane and orderly migration can benefit society, if done by the right means. In order to do this, they act with their partners in the international community to:

- “- Assist in meeting the growing operational challenges of migration management.
- Advance understanding of migration issues.
- Encourage social and economic development through migration.
- Uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.³³”

The International Organization of Migration is not new. In fact, it was first installed in 1951 after World War II, and was known as the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME). The organizations goal was to help citizens who had been displaced and uprooted from the war, and transport them to resettled countries. Over the next half century, the

³³ “International Organization for Migration”. [The Migration Agency](#).

organization changed its name many times; however its values did not. During this time, IOM continued to address this problem when man-made and natural disasters occurred. Today, the International Organization of Migration has many different immigration projects happening in all places of the world. Some of the issues that are being addressed in order to prevent illegal immigration are: passport and visa systems, immigration systems, border management systems, refugee protection, and global disasters³⁴. The organization helps to deal with these problems all over the world when the need arises.

The International Organization of Migration is tightly woven into the United Nations, and they have a long standing relationship. The United Nations was also created after World War II, and it consists of 51 countries. Also established at this time was the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, also known as UNHCR. It is governed by the UN General Assembly and Economic and Social Council. "Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country. It also has a mandate to help stateless people"³⁵. Generally, this organization is to help those who are forced to flee their home, and help them find safety in another country (usually neighboring ones). Those who are forced to flee usually have very little, and this organization helps to give these people the necessities. Most of these include clean water, shelter, food, health supplies, etc. UNHCR also assists in getting

³⁴ "International Organization for Migration", op.cit.

³⁵ "The UN Refugee Agency", op.cit.

these refugees back to their homeland by providing air, sea and land travel. This organization is helping to deal with the issue of refugees in more than 110 countries in some of the most remote and desperate places on the Earth.

Since this organization began, it has been receiving more donations every year from the public and private sectors. In 2009, UNHCR had a record 2.3 billion dollars as the annual budget, and therefore could provide more aid in the world. The budget for 2010 is expected to be over 3 billion dollars, and this will go to displaced people, refugees, and others who have been forced to leave their country. What is especially great about this organization is that it helps all the different regions of the world, including: Africa, Asia, Europe, and Middle East and North Africa. It provides assistance to the countries in these regions in many different ways. Most commonly, this includes stateless people, refugees, IDP's, etc. It is an organization that is dedicated to helping all countries of the world, especially in times of natural and man-made disasters³⁶.

³⁶ "The UN Refugee Agency", op.cit.

Significance in Canada

Refugees are very significant to Canada, because some of those who are forced to leave their country come to Canada for a better quality of life. The reason for this is because in Canada, there is no war going on inside the country, it has many job opportunities, and the quality of life is high. Since Canada, the United States, and countries in Europe are stable and generally safe, many of these refugees want to live in one of these established countries. In fact, Canada is one of the countries that have received the highest number of resettled refugees in the world³⁷. Many of these refugees are coming from countries like Hungary, Mexico, Costa Rica, Central America, Easter Europe, etc³⁸.

Becoming a citizen of Canada is fairly easy because our citizen process is pretty fair, and quick compared too many other countries. In order to apply for citizenship into Canada you must:

- “- Meet the age requirements
- You must have a permanent resident status in Canada
- Adults need to live in Canada for three years before applying
- You need to be able to adequately speak one of the two official languages
- You cannot have a criminal history (probation)

³⁷ “The UN Refugee Agency”, op.cit.

³⁸ “Enzine Articles”, op.cit.

- You must have knowledge of Canada
- Also, you must fill in an application sheet and pay the fees³⁹”

There are also three classes that people can choose from in order to immigrate to Canada, and they are: economic immigrants, family class, and refugees. In keeping with its humanitarian tradition and international obligations, Canada provides protection to thousands of people every year. Canada offers refugee protection to people in Canada who fear persecution, or whose removal from Canada would subject them to a danger of torture, a risk to their life or a risk of cruel treatment or punishment. Groups and individuals can sponsor refugees from abroad who qualify to come to Canada⁴⁰.

Refugees affect Canada in both a positive and negative way. On the positive side, the economy remains balanced because the need for more workers is fulfilled. Other affects with the economy include contribution to the tax systems, banking systems, financial loans, etc. Also, most importantly, their quality of life is increased and they are given freedom they have likely never known before. However, there are some negatives when accepting refugees. Areas can become overcrowded, and they can become a burden on public transportation, parks, etc. Also, crime rate generally increases, partly due to the fact that so many different ethnic and religious groups are living in the same country. In relation to helping the economy, it can also backfire, because local citizens may lose out on job opportunities. This is because the more people there are, the fewer jobs there are and this could mean that people miss out for

³⁹ “Citizenship and Immigration Canada”. [2010]

⁴⁰ “Citizenship and Immigration Canada”, op.cit.

jobs. Therefore, refugees can affect Canada in a number of ways, either positively or in a negative way⁴¹.

Canada has a very important role to play in accepting refugees. Canada provides refugees, IDO's, and illegal immigrants with a "safe haven", and protects them from the conflicts occurring in their own country. It is part of Canada's job to help those around the world that need help, along with other countries that have the resources and means to help. It is those countries responsibilities to take people out of desperate and severe situations and give them a better quality of life. Immigration is what Canada was built upon, so it should have a role in continuing the growth and diversity of itself. Canada has done a fairly good job of fulfilling its role; however there are some things that could be enhanced. Canada should try to straighten out a few concepts, such as finding the right balance between legitimate security concerns and the principles of refugee protection. Also, even though Canada has the most liberal migration laws, it should speed up the process when it concerns refugees. It can sometimes take a very long time for a refugee to get through, and speeding this process up would allow the citizen to reach safety faster and more efficiently⁴².

⁴¹ "Intelligent Life on the Web". Illegal Immigration Pros and Cons. [Buzzle.com. 2009]

⁴² "The UN Refugee Agency", op.cit.

Solutions

There are many different ways how refugees can receive help; even so, the need for the refugee system will never end. This is because no matter how many laws are in place, or what the consequences are, dire times call for desperate situations, and people will do whatever they have to do in order to protect themselves and the ones they love. Countries will never end every conflict they face, and if they do, a new one comes along shortly. Therefore, the outpouring of refugees will likely never cease. However, there are a few solutions that would help those living as refugees, by providing them aid, support, etc. These are only a few solutions that help to deal with refugees, and more should be done on the government's part. The following is a list of possible solutions:

Provide "Fast Track" Citizenships: People who are facing especially dangerous and desperate situations should be accepted into a country more quickly. If a country is in a desperate situation (such as a war, political unrest, etc), the people should be fast tracked into surrounding countries in order to insure their safety. This would help greatly because then the citizens are out of harm's way faster, and they can start to settle down quicker. However, in order for this to happen, neighbouring countries and other accepting countries would have to agree on letting many foreigners into their country. This solution has slightly been tested, but not on a very large scale. It would be very difficult to get something like this in place, and many countries would be

apprehensive about it. Therefore, it could work if it was only a fairly small amount of refugees at a time, but it might fail if you attempted to move almost an entire country.

Improving the protection of the environment that the refugees and other displaced people are in is another solution. If the refugees are in a safer and more secure environment, they have a better chance of staying alive, and returning to their home country. It is up to the organizations and especially the authorities in the country to make this happen. While living as refugees, it should be up to the authorities and government to keep the refugees safe while they stay in their country. This is important to them because it is their neighbouring country, and they probably depend greatly on it. To make this happen, partnerships with governments and non government organizations are crucial. Safety and security has been put in place, and attempting to make it better in certain situations is being put into progress.

Another solution is ensuring fair, efficient and non-discriminatory treatment and the provision of adequate documentation. Organizations, like UNHCR, are continuing its efforts to make sure that people of concern are registered or profiled in a manner that enhances protection. This includes that all people are individually registered. UNHCR is working with national authorities in order to strengthen their capacity to register and document refugees, and others of concern. This is important because it would help to move refugees more quickly and easier than before. With legal papers, moving across borders would be much faster, and the refugees would get to return home more quickly than usual. In order to make this happen, organizations and authorities must team up in order for this to occur. The legal papers for these types of countries are currently

being sorted out, but it will be a while before all refugees have them. This is a good idea because it makes it easier to move people in times of disaster, and they are removed from danger quicker.

This solution is quite simple, which is addressing basic needs and providing essential services. This includes all the basic needs, such as sufficient food, drinking water, adequate housing, basic household and hygiene items, proper sanitation, and primary health care. Services include teaching about HIV and AIDS prevention, and providing primary education to displaced boys and girls, while promoting safe learning. All these things are very important, because they are the basic essentials people need. While they are living as refugees, people need a way of getting food, water and shelter. This is why this solution is a good one, as it also provides education for boys and girls. The only thing needed to make this happen is the work of organizations, and maybe some cooperation with the government. Organizations have already been providing these things for years, so it is successful. Now it's just about stepping up to make sure that everyone is cared and provided for.

Finally, another solution is to guarantee age, gender and diversity perspectives in operations. This mean diversity between all human beings, no matter who they are, and where they live. This could include multiple things, but mainly the focus is on the treatment of women and children in certain places. Child protection is a priority in Afghanistan, where children often face forced labor, smuggling, human trafficking or early marriage. Violence against women and girls continues to be one of the most serious protection problems in these countries. UNHCR states that they will continue to

support safe houses for them, and also expand education opportunities for girls. So it up to organizations to help, and also cooperation from the government would help. This is important because it is essential for people who are living in the same country to get along. Without diversity, there is only more conflict, and people will be refugees forever⁴³.

These are just a few of the solutions needed to help those living as refugees, displaces persons, stateless people, etc. These are a good start, but more needs to be done around the globe. Millions are still living as refugees, and it is up to others to help them out, simply because they need it. It is essential that the world helps one another, because without a little help sometimes, countries would sink into chaos.

⁴³ "The UN Refugee Agency", op.cit

Conclusion

In conclusion, refugees are an issue affecting every part of the world today. Usually, refugees occur when a country is facing a natural or man-made disaster, and citizens are seeking relief. The outcome can have either negative or positive effects on a country; it all depends on the situation the refugees are in. There are a few solutions to help refugees; however this issue can never really be solved, and these solutions can only help to control and prevent the issue.

Countries today have a really important job of trying to get their citizens to accept new immigrant life styles, cultures and ethnics. People have to learn to live with immigrants, whether they are their citizens or refugees. In today's world, almost every country has gone through immigration of some sort, and some are a real "mixing pot" of ethnics. Therefore, refugees should try to not always be viewed as a bad thing, but rather as a positive way on how they affect the culture and customs of certain countries. With a little help from around the globe, conflicts can be solved, and refugees can be given the chance to return to their homeland.

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