

# UGAMUNC XXI

## General Assembly, Fourth Committee Background Guide



**UGAMUNC XXIII**  
**General Assembly, Fourth Committee**

Dear Delegates,

I'm thrilled to welcome all of you to UGA's 23rd Model UN conference, UGAMUNC XXIII. No matter what degree of skill you have or how many of our conferences you've attended before, we're excited to have you and I feel confident that you'll excel at this conference. During debate, you and your peers will have ample chances to discuss current global issues and the ideal solutions. As delegates for GA4, The Special Political and Decolonization Committee, you'll have the special privilege of drafting resolutions on a wide variety of topics such as supporting the world's most disadvantaged citizens and encouraging justice, liberty and equity... however your delegation defines that.

Before we get too engrossed in policy though, I should introduce myself. My name is Jay Bishop ([james.bishop25@uga.edu](mailto:james.bishop25@uga.edu)) and I'm a third-year economics major at UGA. I competed in Model UN for 3 semesters before transferring to UGA, and had the pleasure of representing both the Kingdom of Bahrain and Iraq at two separate conferences in Atlanta and Houston. While Model UN and schoolwork take up a large majority of my time, I also enjoy going on adventures with friends, reading non-fiction books, and playing video games, such as Rocket League and Overwatch. While I'm not yet sure what I want to do after college, I hope to use the skills I gain from Model UN for the rest of my life in a job that requires the same public speaking skills and rigorous attention to detail.

I also have the pleasure of introducing my Co-Chair, Abigail Walker. ([abigail.walker25@uga.edu](mailto:abigail.walker25@uga.edu)) Abigail is a third-year as well with majors in History and International Affairs and a minor in Classics. This is her first ever year in Model UN, but she's never felt more at home. She's also a member of the Phi Alpha Theta National History Honors Society, and enjoys running, painting and reading. One of Abigail's best college experiences so far was studying abroad in Rome for six weeks last summer, and she intends to spend another five weeks in Stellenbosch South Africa this coming summer.

Both of us are greatly looking forward to meeting all of you, and hearing the many unique ideas that you'll bring to the debate stage. If you have any questions at all about the background guide, your role or the conference in general, please don't hesitate to reach out to one of us. In the meantime, you should be researching your country, your topics and your positions on each of them. The more you prepare before the conference, the better you'll do in debate and the better chance you'll have at winning an award for your school. We hope you're all excited to begin debating, and once again – Welcome to UGAMUNC XXIII!

Sincerely,  
Jay Bishop  
Chair, GA 4

## **History of the UN General Assembly, Fourth Committee: Special Political and Decolonization**

In the aftermath of WWII, the General Assembly was established in order to discuss and exercise the provisions laid out in the United Nations Charter. The fourth committee was originally designed to handle decolonization in particular because 1945 saw the final stretch of the imperial age and many non-states were moving towards independence. After the 48<sup>th</sup> session, however, the fourth committee came to be known as the Special Political and Decolonization committee because decolonization became a smaller topic as a majority of colonies gained independence.<sup>1</sup> This expansion has designated the fourth committee to discuss not only decolonization but also a list of topics ranging between "...Palestinian refugees and human rights, peacekeeping, mine action, outer space, public information, atomic radiation and the so-called University for Peace."<sup>2</sup> However, this is not to discount decolonization as a topic. As of the opening of the most recent Special Committee on Decolonization in February of 2016, seventeen territories were still deemed as non-self-governing.<sup>3</sup>

Typically opened in late September, a General Debate is conducted and then delegates split up into the six different committees to discuss topics in more detail. The fourth committee is often a very contentious and heated meeting due to the controversial nature of its topics. Every single agenda item will be submitted to the plenary at the end of the session. Along with a "comprehensive review of peacekeeping operations," each report will include details on the meetings, votes, and sponsors pertaining to the topic. The report will also have a summary of the debate conducted about the topic and be turned into a final draft before it is voted on in the General Assembly.<sup>4</sup>

While the relative importance of the fourth committee varies amongst states and delegates, it is arguably one of the most versatile committees to be created since the conception of the United Nations seventy-one years ago. The Special Political aspects not only address recurring problems, such as refugees and peacekeeping, but also look towards the future as technology increasingly shapes the world and international policy. The responsibilities of this committee are vast; the various topics that this committee debates are split up into several, multi-faceted websites that include a plethora of information and resources.

Delegates are expected to take these responsibilities and many others into consideration when debating topics. The fourth committee and its topics are a perfect example of how issues are interconnected and can have unforeseen ramifications. The three following topics are each a culmination of past and current events that have very real, future consequences. The longevity of these issues, if not addressed, could potentially be detrimental to the world for generations to come. Therefore, the Fourth Committee has come to be of utmost importance.

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<sup>1</sup> "FEATURE: The UN General Assembly's Fourth Committee – Special Political and Decolonization Issues." UN News Center. Web. Oct 25, 2016. <http://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/committees>

<sup>2</sup> "United Nations, Main Body, Main Organs, General Assembly." UN NewsCenter. Web. Oct 25, 2016. <http://www.un.org/en/ga/fourth/>

<sup>3</sup> "Intensify Action-oriented Dialogue" Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. Web. Oct 25, 2016. <http://www.un.org/press/en/2016/gacol3285.doc.htm>

<sup>4</sup> See *supra* note 1.

## I. Climate Change and Sinking Nations

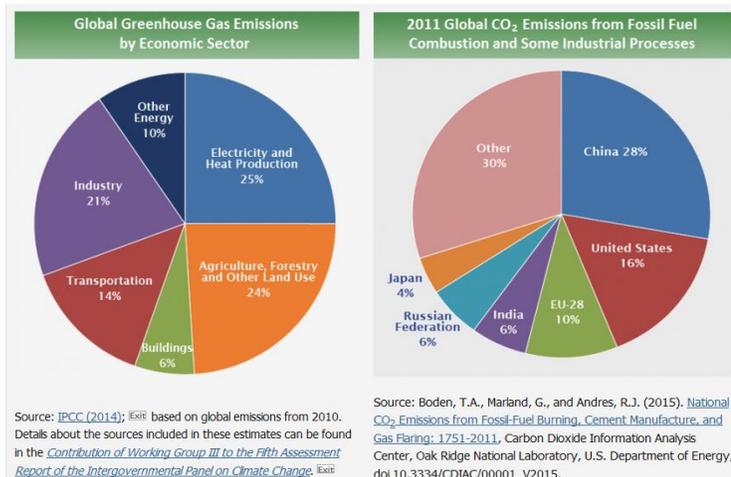
### Introduction

In a 2005 address to a United Nations conference on global climate change, President Tong of the Pacific atoll, Kiribati, stated that “deliberate acts by some to secure benefits at the cost of others could only be compared to an act of terrorism - eco-terrorism if you wish.”<sup>5</sup> This statement, while provocative, relies on conditions including anthropogenic (man-made) climate change, a deliberate “intent to harm” by the international community, and impending harm of nations such as Kiribati. Considering that “each of the last three decades has been successively warmer at the Earth’s surface than any preceding decade since 1850,” it is clear that climate change is occurring at an ever accelerating rate.<sup>6</sup> It is also *extremely likely* that more than half of observed increases in global temperatures are a result of human activities, including green-house gas (GHG) emissions.<sup>7</sup> However, proving the other two conditions and thereby validating president Tong’s statement is currently much more difficult.

Regardless of the truth behind President Tong’s statement, citizens of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are currently facing a likely danger to their wealth, culture and lives. As GHG emissions rise along with sea levels and global temperatures, island nations and their citizens are facing a significant risk. It will be necessary for these nations, and citizens of the entire world to make significant changes both in their government and daily lives to mitigate climate change before these nations are destroyed by the changing climate. Many experts even believe that a significant reversal of GHG emissions will be impossible before the devastating impact to these nations, and as a result, it is necessary for global bodies such as the UN to make

### Background

While all nations produce some amount of GHGs, it is primarily the top contributing nations that are doing the most harm to the global environment. SIDS only contribute an average of 4.9 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per capita while the United States contributed 16.39 metric tons per capita in 2013.<sup>8,9</sup> Unlike other types of pollution, GHGs affect all areas of the globe equally and immediately. A ton of carbon dioxide released over



<sup>5</sup> Kiribati accuses polluting countries of ‘eco-terrorism’. Space Daily. Web. Oct 25, 2016.

<http://www.spacedaily.com/2005/050113083110.lc5jiprp.html>

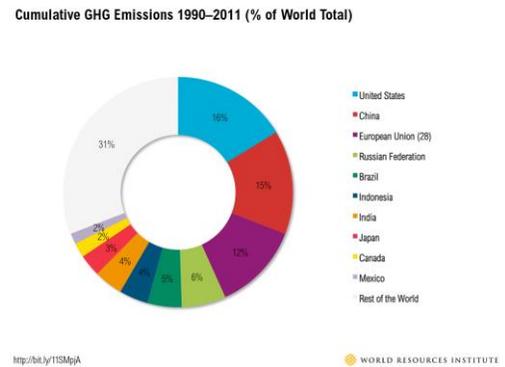
<sup>6</sup> *Climate Change 2014 Synthesis Report*. IPCC. Web. Oct 25, 2016. [http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR\\_AR5\\_FINAL\\_full.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>8</sup> *SIDS Statistics*. Web. Oct 25, 2016. <http://unohrrls.org/custom-content/uploads/2013/09/Small-Island-Developing-States-Factsheet-2013-.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> *Sinking Nations and Climate Change Adaptation Strategies*, Jarvis, Ryan. HeinOnline. Web. Oct 25, 2016 <http://www.heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/sjsj9&div=18&collection=journals>

Paris will have the same global effect as one released over Hong Kong, Moscow or Athens.<sup>10</sup> Because of this, smaller nations feel all of the same detriments of global climate change without any of the benefits of living in an industrialized nation. This imbalance of costs and benefits is one of the main reasons that SIDS feel betrayed by the global community at large, and was also President Tong's motivation for calling on "those countries which have reaped benefits from the destruction of the environment to assist those who now have to pay the price of these irreversible processes."<sup>11</sup>



Continued research suggests that the price of these irreversible processes may be extremely high. Prof Konrad Stefan of the University of Colorado stated in 2009 at a climate change summit that global sea levels were likely to rise by one meter or more by the year 2100, and this seemingly insignificant change would displace about 600 million people who currently inhabit the world's most vulnerable areas.<sup>12</sup> The effects of this change in sea levels can be further understood by comparing it to the world's least elevated SIDS. Kiribati's 32 atolls reach a maximum height of 3-4 meters above sea level, Tuvalu's peak elevation is 5 meters above sea level and the Maldives have a maximum elevation of only 2 meters. A one-meter increase in sea levels could submerge the majority of the Maldives, destroy 3% of Cuba's mangrove forests and cost Jamaica 19% of its annual GDP in damages.<sup>13</sup> This potential harm to SIDS is apparent, but almost a century away according to experts. However, fatal harm to these many small island nations may come even sooner due to the many other detriments of rising sea levels and climate change. Nations like Kiribati will likely become uninhabitable due to waning clean water supplies long before their landmasses completely disappear.<sup>14</sup> Most SIDS have limited water resources and arable land which means that even moderately rising sea levels could cause enough saltwater intrusion and soil salinization to devastate a country's ability to support its own population.<sup>15</sup> These residual effects of rising sea levels are a much less distant threat, and their effects can already be seen today. In 2000, Tuvalu's major airport runway was completely flooded for over five months, significantly limiting air travel.<sup>16</sup> It is now quite common for the airport's runway to be partly underwater for several months every year.<sup>17</sup> Alongside the nation's

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>11</sup> *See supra note 4.*

<sup>12</sup> *Sea level could rise more than a metre by 2100, say experts.* The Guardian. Web. Oct 25, 2016.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2009/mar/11/sea-level-rises-climate-change-copenhagen>

<sup>13</sup> *VULNERABILITY AND ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES.* UNFCCC. Web. Oct 25, 2016.

[https://unfccc.int/files/adaptation/adverse\\_effects\\_and\\_response\\_measures\\_art\\_48/application/pdf/200702\\_sids\\_adaptation\\_bg.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/adaptation/adverse_effects_and_response_measures_art_48/application/pdf/200702_sids_adaptation_bg.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> *A Nation Going Under: Legal Protection for "Climate Change Refugees".* Ni, Xing-Yi. EbscoHost. Oct 25, 2016.

<http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?sid=a3681ef4-53d2-4575-8ba5-cd6f90a12430%40sessionmgr4006&vid=0&hid=4102&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmU%3d#AN=102870047&db=lgh>

<sup>15</sup> *See supra note 9, 450.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 453.

<sup>17</sup> *Tuvalu: Flooding, Global Warming, and Media Coverage.* Moya K. Mason. Web. Oct 25, 2016  
<http://www.moyak.com/papers/tuvalu-climate-change.html>

airport, rising tides have taken over the islands main burial ground, and as a result, citizens have resorted to integrating graves into their homes.<sup>18</sup> On the Marshall Islands, annual king tides are wreaking havoc and continuing to grow with each passing year, and in 2014 a King Tide combined with a chance storm swept over the Majuro atoll and flowed through the streets of the capital.<sup>19</sup>

While these natural disasters continue to occur, many citizens of SIDS around the world have recognized the impending danger, and are now seeking migration to more stable regions. However, only the wealthiest and most fortunate have been able to escape the sinking islands. One particular migrant, Mr. Ioane Teitota moved to New Zealand on a work visa, but refused to return to his home country, Kiribati, when his visa expired. Instead he filed for refugee status, claiming that climate change was the deadly force which prevented his return. This argument was struck down by both the High Court of New Zealand and the Court of Appeals citing that Teitota did not fit the legal criteria for refugee status under New Zealand law.<sup>20</sup> The standard definition of a refugee under the Geneva Convention, and by extension, New Zealand law is

A 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 country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”<sup>21</sup>

Given that Teitota was not being persecuted on the basis of race, religion, nationality etc. the court was unable to grant him refugee status and stated instead that this matter could only be addressed by a change in legislature.<sup>22</sup> While no countries currently have an explicit law granting refugee status to those affected by climate change, there are approximately seventy to eighty nations that have expanded their definition beyond the convention, and could potentially set a judicial precedent for climate change refugees in the future.<sup>23</sup> However, setting such a precedent may not be in any countries best interest as the New Zealand court “expressed concern that deciding in favor of Teitota would open the floodgates to millions of others facing similar hardships caused by climate change.”<sup>24</sup>

On top of the resistance by developed nations to accept “climate change refugees,” many benefactors are skeptical about the idea as well. Kiribati’s foreign secretary, Tessie Eria Lambourne said “[w]e do not want to be called refugees because that is very painful for both the people involved and those who are seeking help... [the term evokes] a sense of helplessness and a lack of dignity which contradicts the very strong sense of Pacific pride.”<sup>25</sup> President Tong

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<sup>18</sup> See *supra* note 9, 453.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Disaster after disaster’ hits Marshall Islands as climate change kicks in. Lewis, Renee. Web. Oct 25, 2016. <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/5/18/disaster-after-disaster-in-low-lying-marshall-islands.html>

<sup>20</sup> See *supra* note 9.

<sup>21</sup> *Protecting Refugees - Questions & Answers*. UNHCR. Web. Oct 25, 2016 <http://unhcr.org/ua/en/who-we-help/2011-08-26-06-55-36>

<sup>22</sup> See *supra* note 9.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*

made a comparable appeal when he stated in an interview that the term refugees “[puts] the stigma on the victims, not the offenders.”<sup>26</sup> With opposition on both sides of the fight to establish and accept “climate change refugees,” this solution may not be the best for all parties, and many other solutions will have to continue to be considered.

### **Mitigation Strategies**

Due to the high potential for global devastation caused by climate change, many nations and organizations have already begun implementing strategies to mitigate its most detrimental effects. In 2005, many leaders from the Pacific Islands Forum endorsed a plan (PIFACC) seeking to bolster the resilience of Pacific Island Countries and Territories to the negative effects of climate change by improving understanding and awareness of climate change, guiding adaptation measures and providing a framework for measurements of progress.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, many SIDS collaborated in 1990 to create the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), which allows for member coastal countries to share concerns and development strategies. The alliance acts mostly as a lobby and is a major negotiating voice for SIDS within the UN.<sup>28</sup> While these large bodies have collaborated to seek a better future for all of them, other SIDS have committed to internal solutions. The Maldives for example in 2009 committed to being the first ever carbon neutral nation in only ten years’ time.<sup>29</sup> They are also seeking to create a carbon neutral manual that would allow other similar nations to replicate their hopeful success.<sup>30</sup> While these efforts are greatly beneficial and important to these many nations, it is still unclear as to whether or not it will be enough to save these states.

Some nations outside of SIDS have also taken it upon themselves to lend assistance. New Zealand for example carved out a special category in their immigration policy which allows up to 400 able-bodied immigrants between 18 and 45 to migrate from the countries of Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga or Tuvalu each year.<sup>31</sup> However, given that Fiji’s population alone is over 880,000, it is extremely unlikely that this program alone will provide any significant assistance.<sup>32</sup> It would require nearly every capable nation to begin an even more extensive program immediately to make any significant progress with this method. Other nations have been slower to act than New Zealand, but the governing party of Australia, the Labor Party, did at least concede in their policy paper “Our Drowning Neighbors” that there is a great need for a ‘Pacific Climate Change Strategy.’<sup>33</sup> The Rudd government also promised \$150 million dollars to the World Bank for its Climate Investment Funds. However, it is unclear how much of this money will be used for broad research, and how much will actually serve to assist Pacific Islanders in need.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>27</sup> *Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change*. Web. Oct 25, 2016.

<http://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/PIFACC-ref.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> *SIDSNET*. Web. Oct 25, 2016. <http://www.sidsnet.org/aosis/>

<sup>29</sup> *Statement by his Excellency Mohamed Nasheed*. Web. Oct 25, 2016.

[http://www.un.org/ga/64/generaldebate/pdf/MV\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/ga/64/generaldebate/pdf/MV_en.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>31</sup> *See supra note 9*, 463.

<sup>32</sup> *Fiji Population*. Web. Oct 25, 2016. <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/fiji-population/>

<sup>33</sup> *Our Drowning Neighbors*. Tranter, Kellie. Web. Oct 25, 2016. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-06-17/31114>

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*

## **UN Involvement**

The first attempt by the UN to address climate change occurred with the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which was drafted at the 1992 Rio summit.<sup>35</sup> In 2010, an ad hoc group under the UNFCCC negotiated the Cancun Adaptation Framework with the understanding that current international law lacks protections for climate induced migrants. This was the first UNFCCC framework to explicitly recognize climate migration, and it encourages parties to enhance understanding of climate change induced displacement and coordinate planned relocation at all levels of government.<sup>36</sup> The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also called for coordination by member nations to “encourage cross-ministry policy approaches to tackle complex issues like migration and displacement.”<sup>37</sup> For the first 20 years of the UNFCCC’s existence, many recommendations and endorsements like these were made, but no *binding* agreements were made addressing climate change. However, the first ever binding agreement by the UNFCCC, the Paris Agreements, which was signed by 191 UN member nations and as of October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016 has been ratified by 86 of 197 Parties to the Convention will take effect on November 4<sup>th</sup> of 2016.<sup>38</sup> This agreement will require all member nations to take conscious deliberate steps towards reducing GHG emissions and help developing nations to integrate their own sustainable practices.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the agreement calls for a strict cap on global temperatures to two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels with a strong encouragement to keep the change below 1.5 degrees.<sup>40</sup> While the emergence of a binding resolution affecting all UN member states is generally seen as a step in the right direction, there are still many critics of the agreement. President Nasheed of the Maldives once stated that “temperature rises above 1.5 degrees, will submerge my country, dissolve our coral reefs, turn our oceans to acid, and destabilize the planet’s climate. Anyone who says that agreeing [with] these numbers is impossible is also saying it is impossible to save my nation.”<sup>41</sup>

## **Future Strategies**

Mitigation of climate change and the possible reversal of it and its detrimental effects will have to continue to be worked towards. However, considering the immediate problem of sinking nations, there is considerably less consensus and ~~an infinite number of potential solutions to the problem of sinking nations,~~ most proponents argue tend to fall into one of three major schools of thought- adaptation, migration or annexation.

The idea of adaptation involves programs by SIDS and developed nations to bolster the ability of island nations and their citizens to combat and protect themselves from the dangers of climate change. One such example is the town of Playa Rosario, Cuba, which moved its entire

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<sup>35</sup> See *supra* note 9, 456.

<sup>36</sup> *Framework Convention on Climate Change*. Web. Oct 25, 2016.

<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/cop16/eng/07a01.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> *LEGAL AND PROTECTION POLICY RESEARCH SERIES*. UNHCR. Web. Oct 25, 2016.

<http://www.unhcr.org/4df9cc309.html>

<sup>38</sup> *The Paris Agreement*. UNFCCC. Web. Oct 25, 2016. [http://unfccc.int/paris\\_agreement/items/9485.php](http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php)

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 2-3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>41</sup> *Statement by President Nasheed to the Joint High-level segment of COP15 and CMP5 in Copenhagen*. Web. Oct 25, 2016. <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=12&dcid=1783>

population 5 kilometers inland to avoid the encroaching coastal erosion.<sup>42</sup> Other such adaptations include the development of new water storage technologies, investment in flood and drought resistant crops and many other innovations.<sup>43</sup> However, not all SIDS are made equal and while larger countries such as Cuba have the advantage of moving inland, smaller nations like the Maldives have less infrastructure, less support and significantly less mobility. While adaptation is an important and viable strategy in many cases, it is far from being a guaranteed solution.

The second camp for the benefit and rescue of so-called ‘climate change refugees’ is the notion of mass-migration from sinking nations to land masses that are more capable of adapting to the effects of climate change. Because citizens of SIDS with dangerously low elevations cannot simply move to higher grounds of their own nation, it will likely eventually become necessary for them to migrate to another country. While there are some current migration policies in place, such as New Zealand’s, these policies are inadequate to address a mass-migration and by breaking up families and draining the top performing members of SIDS, can even be destructive.<sup>44</sup> Because the politics of such a migration would be incredibly complex and nuanced, it is not currently possible to propose a likely resolution without first seeing extensive negotiations on the global debate stage. However, one equitable proposal is for migrant ‘refugees’ to be equally divided among the world’s top climate change contributors, so that they may reap the benefits of an industrialized society rather than simply paying the costs.<sup>45</sup> However, people are rarely as easy to move as money, and such a migration would surely have a massive impact on the culture of both migrants and their host nations.

The final popular proposal for sinking SIDS involves the purchase of land by an island nation from another sovereign state. In 2008, President Nasheed of the Maldives, fearing rising sea levels, began putting away a portion of the country’s annual tourist revenue for the purchase of buying his nation a new homeland.<sup>46</sup> While Nasheed is preparing for the worst, many SIDS argue that forcing a country to pay for their own relocation would be a severe injustice. Similar to the migration strategy, proponents of annexation argue that it should be the responsibility of those nations who have caused the greatest detriment to purchase the new land of affected populations. However, this solution does not come without problems as negotiating the migration of a population would essentially allow for the determination of that population by the global community. Details such as climate, landmass, natural resources and many others all contribute to the population’s ability to thrive in the new territory and would ultimately decide the fate of that nation.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the proposed solutions to SIDS’ sinking landmasses, and the many programs already enacted to offer assistance, SIDS continues to fear the likely threat of global climate change. Without quick and thoughtful action on behalf of SIDS by all nations and citizens of the world, it is hard to say what will become of these people, their cultures and their homes.

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<sup>42</sup> See *supra* note 13, 17.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> See *supra* note 9, 463.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 465.

<sup>46</sup> *Paradise almost lost: Maldives seek to buy a new homeland*. The Guardian. Web. Oct 25, 2016.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2008/nov/10/maldives-climate-change>

<sup>47</sup> See *supra* note 9, 474-475

### **Questions to Consider**

1. What happens to the laws, culture, language etc. of a group of people without a homeland?
2. Can the international community be considered a persecutor? What about an eco-terrorist group?
3. What short-term and long-term solutions can be implemented to assist the citizens of sinking nations?
4. How important is establishing equity? Should those nations that have reaped the largest benefits from greenhouse-gas emissions pay the highest costs?
5. What are some problems of intervening in SIDS? Similarly, what problems arise from doing nothing?

### **Further Readings**

Sinking Nations and Climate Change Adaptation Strategies:

<http://www.heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/sjsj9&div=18&collection=journals>

A Nation Going Under: Legal Protection for “Climate Change Refugees”:

<http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?sid=a3681ef4-53d2-4575-8ba5-cd6f90a12430%40sessionmgr4006&vid=0&hid=4102&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmU%3d#AN=102870047&db=lgh> or <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-AoYvxr41adNC1FWnpzV0o1V0E/view?usp=sharing>

Countries considered SIDS, and background:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Small\\_Island\\_Developing\\_States#List\\_of\\_SIDS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Small_Island_Developing_States#List_of_SIDS)

The Paris Agreements:

[http://unfccc.int/files/essential\\_background/convention/application/pdf/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf)

IPCC Climate Change Synthesis Report (useful for statistics):

[http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR\\_AR5\\_FINAL\\_full.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full.pdf)

PIFACC Plan [http://www.sprep.org/climate\\_change/pycc/documents/PIFACC.pdf](http://www.sprep.org/climate_change/pycc/documents/PIFACC.pdf)

AOSIS members <http://aosis.org/about/members/>

## II. Self-Determination of Puerto Rico

### Introduction

Chapter 1, Article 1 of the United Nations Charter states that a purpose of the United Nations is “to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples.”<sup>48</sup> While this seems to make it clear that there is widespread support for self-determination by all citizens of the world, the definitions of self-determination and the peoples who make those decision are often contextual, and as a result debates concerning the independent action of non-self-governing territories becomes significantly more complex. One broad definition, supported by the Atlantic Charter and signed by Roosevelt and Churchill is “respect[ing] the right of all peoples to choose the form of Government under which they will live; and [a] wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.”<sup>49</sup> A further interpretation of this would be that “nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and fair equality of opportunity have the right to freely choose their sovereignty and international political status with no external compulsion or interference.”<sup>50</sup> While this is the popular definition of self-determination, and the UN has made it a purpose to uphold it, it is not always enforced by the UN according to this same principle.<sup>51</sup> The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is one such example.

### Puerto Rico – A Brief History

Puerto Rico was first discovered on Columbus’ second voyage in 1493, and would from then on be a hot commodity of the many developed nations seeking to expand their territory. The island was originally claimed by Columbus for the Kingdom of Spain, and it would remain under Spain’s control for four centuries afterwards. It wasn’t until 1898, during the Spanish-American war, that a rival nation would successfully invade the island and Puerto Rico would officially be annexed by the US under the Treaty of Paris.<sup>52</sup>

Puerto Rico has undergone many changes during a century of American rule and has gained many privileges and liberties. However, for a multitude of reasons, it still remains a US territory. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Puerto Rico was primarily controlled by the US military and officials including a governor appointed by the president. However, the Foraker Act of 1900 gave civilian control to Puerto Rico and allowed for the election of a House of Representatives.<sup>53</sup> However, despite the new representation of Puerto Ricans, the majority of the power, both in the executive branch and upper congress was maintained by the US government. In 1917, US Congress once again changed the dynamic of their relationship by granting US citizenship to

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<sup>48</sup> *UN Charter*. UN.org. Web. Oct 25, 2016. <http://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/index.html>

<sup>49</sup> *The Atlantic Charter*. Web. Oct 25, 2016. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_16912.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_16912.htm)

<sup>50</sup> *The Right Of People To Self-Determination And The Principle Of Non-Interference In The Domestic Affairs Of States* | 148. Web. Oct 25, 2016. <http://www.commonlii.org/in/journals/NALSARLawRw/2013/10.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> *Puerto Rico at the United Nations*. Web. Oct 25, 2016. <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/eds/detail/detail?sid=5951907d-1ccd-41bb-8770-a866991af68c%40sessionmgr4008&vid=1&hid=4113&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmU%3d#AN=27439645&d b=poh>

<sup>52</sup> *Treaty of Paris*. Web. Oct 25, 2016. [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/sp1898.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/sp1898.asp)

<sup>53</sup> *Foraker Act*. Web. Oct 25, 2016. <https://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/foraker.html>

Puerto Ricans via the Jones-Shafroth Act.<sup>54</sup> This act gave the same protections and liberties of US citizens to Puerto Rican citizens. However, many opponents of the act believed that it was a tool by the US government to involve Puerto Rican men in the draft as President Wilson signed the Selective Service Act of 1917 in the same year which drafted 20,000 Puerto Rican men into World War I.<sup>56,57</sup> Despite Puerto Rico's new citizenship, the U.S. retained many of its government controls.

The first proposal for Puerto Rican independence from the U.S. was drafted in a 1936 bill by Millard Tydings, a U.S. House Representative, but it was fatally opposed by an influential Puerto Rican native, Luis Muñoz Marín who would, in 1948, become the country's first popularly elected governor.<sup>58</sup> In 1938, the US congress approved a law that would allow Puerto Rico to democratically assemble and determine whether or not they would write their own independent constitution.<sup>59</sup> In 1952, the Constitution of Puerto Rico was approved, modified and ratified by the US Congress and finally signed by President Truman.<sup>60</sup> It was at this time that Puerto Rico took on the title of Commonwealth and that it was recognized as a commonwealth by the UN, much to the disapproval of the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico.

Meanwhile, movements towards total independence were being shot down at every opportunity, sometimes literally. In 1948, Law 53, otherwise known as the Gag Law was passed which forbid the displaying of a Puerto Rican flag, campaigning for or even speaking of independence from the US. This law was later repealed in 1957 for its clear violation of the 1<sup>st</sup> amendment freedom of speech, but marginalized and silenced a large number of people during its decade of enforcement.<sup>61</sup> In October of 1950, Puerto Rican nationalists, who believed in a free and independent Puerto Rico, led revolts in cities across the nation- most notably Utuado and Juyuya. During the 'Juyuya Uprising' as it was later named, nationalists were attacked with infantry, artillery and bombers under the control of Puerto Rican military. In response, nationalists attempted an assassination of President Truman in November of 1950 and wounded five US senators in a 1954 shooting on the senate floor.<sup>62</sup>

While certain nationalist groups, namely the Partido Nacionalista Puertorriqueño, the Macheteros and their supporters have gone to extreme lengths to show their distaste with the territory's commonwealth status, many other Puerto Ricans have been satisfied with the change. The country's domestic agriculture and exports have largely increased as a result of the U.S.'s monetary system being applied and issues of foreign exchange balances and convertibility being

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<sup>54</sup> *Puerto Ricans granted U.S. citizenship March 2, 1917*. Politico. Web. Oct 25, 2016.

<http://www.politico.com/story/2008/03/puerto-ricans-granted-us-citizenship-march-2-1917-008771>

<sup>56</sup> *Selective Service Act of 1917*. Web. Nov 6, 2016. <http://www.legisworks.org/congress/65/publaw-12.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> *Puerto Ricans become U.S. citizens, are recruited for war effort*. Web. Nov, 6, 2016 <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/puerto-ricans-become-u-s-citizens-are-recruited-for-war-effort>.

<sup>58</sup> *Independence Rejected: Puerto Rico and the Tydings Bill of 1936*. Web. Oct 25, 2016.

[http://www.jstor.org/stable/2510353?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2510353?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

<sup>59</sup> *Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico*. Web. Oct 25, 2016.

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Constitution\\_of\\_the\\_Commonwealth\\_of\\_Puerto\\_Rico#ARTICLE\\_II\\_BILL\\_OF\\_RIGHTS](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Constitution_of_the_Commonwealth_of_Puerto_Rico#ARTICLE_II_BILL_OF_RIGHTS)

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>61</sup> *Puerto Rico's History*. Web. Oct 25, 2016. <http://www.topuertorico.org/history5.shtml>

<sup>62</sup> *Puerto Rico and the United States*. Web. Oct 25, 2016. <http://proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=khh&AN=16779376&site=eds-live>

eliminated.<sup>63</sup> Between 1950 and 1963 Puerto Rico's GDP more than doubled and resulted in a boom for Puerto Rico and its citizens.<sup>64</sup> Though Puerto Rico's commonwealth status improved its situation, it is also reasonable to assume that Puerto Rico would have received many of the same benefits with statehood.

Since 1952, Puerto Rico has continued to operate under its constitution and commonwealth status, but not all citizens agree on the benefit of the status. Three political parties have emerged, the pro-statehood party (PNP), pro-commonwealth party (PPD) and the much less significant Pro-Independence Party (PIP). A 2012 referendum to determine the preferred political status of Puerto Rican citizens found that 61.16% supported statehood, 33.34% supported free association (similar to commonwealth status) and only 5.49% favored complete independence.<sup>65</sup> Despite the large public support for statehood, Puerto Rico remains a commonwealth of the US, and without legislation from U.S. congress, will retain the status.<sup>66</sup>

### **United Nations and Puerto Rico**

Despite being a frequent subject of UN resolutions, Puerto Rico currently has no representation in the UN, and instead is allowed to sit as a non-participating observer. However, whether as a result or by coincidence, Puerto Rico has been a frequent subject of the UN specifically in regards to its colony status. Puerto Rico was first recognized by the UN in 1946 in Resolution 66 which classified it as a non-autonomous territory. Then in 1953, due to pressure from the US, Puerto Rico was later reclassified in resolution 748 as a Commonwealth. The resolutions noted that "Puerto Rican people had exercised their self-determination" and the country "had achieved attributes of political sovereignty."<sup>67</sup> In 1960, the UN General Assembly ratified Resolution 1514 which "solemnly proclaims the need to remedy immediately and unconditionally the colonial situation in all its forms and manifestations" and led to the creation of the Special Decolonization Committee.<sup>68</sup> From 1972 to 1978, the Special Decolonization committee issued several resolutions focusing on Puerto Rico's status, and in 1978 decided unanimously that a colonial relationship was present and had to be addressed.<sup>69</sup> The Special Decolonization Committee took a long break from Puerto Rico after this resolution and only again addressed the commonwealth when calling upon the US navy to vacate its military operations on the Puerto Rican island municipality of Vieques.<sup>70</sup> This was followed by another long hiatus until 2013 when the Special Decolonization committee once again called on the US to release the island of Vieques as well as two political prisoners whose crimes were support for Puerto Rican independence. The draft resolution further called on the US to allow complete self-

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<sup>63</sup> *Development and Trade Dependence: The Case of Puerto Rico, 1948-1963* | 470. Jstor. Web. Nov 6, 2016. [http://www.jstor.org.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/stable/1935907?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/stable/1935907?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>65</sup> *Puerto Ricans opt for statehood in referendum*. Web. Nov 6, 2016.

<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2012/11/07/puerto-ricans-opt-for-statehood-in-referendum.html>

<sup>66</sup> *Puerto Rico Belongs to Congress*. Web. Nov 6, 2016. <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/06/puerto-rico-news-ruling-promesa/486392/>

<sup>67</sup> *See supra note 51*.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*

determination of Puerto Rican government without any outside interference.<sup>71</sup> Whether or not the US will accept these pleadings is still yet to be determined.

### **Questions to Consider**

- Does Puerto Rico have the capability for self-determination under its current government. If so, has it already practiced its self-determination?
- What group of peoples is most important in making a self-determination? Puerto Rican citizens, their representatives or someone else?
- What role should the United Nations play in a debate between Puerto Rico and the US?
- Would a decision by the GA4 committee set a precedent for other non-self-governing territories? What about inaction?
- Does marginalization in Puerto Rico's history by US officials contribute to its current governing body? If so, should it be taken into account when considering future actions?
- How would a decision affect Puerto Rico's economy and that of member nations?

### **Further Readings**

Puerto Rican History: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zz830ga1dUs>

Puerto Rico and the United States <http://proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=khh&AN=16779376&site=eds-live>

Puerto Rico in the United Nations: [http://www.jstor.org.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/stable/25612765?Search=yes&resultItemClick=true&searchText=sn:00086533&searchText=AND&searchText=sp:44&searchText=AND&searchText=vo:16&searchText=AND&searchText=year:1976&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dsn%253A00086533%2BAND%2Bsp%253A44%2BAND%2Bvo%253A16%2BAND%2Byear%253A1976%26amp%3Bmod%3DYour%2Binbound%2Blink%2Bdid%2Bnot%2Bhave%2Ban%2Bexact%2Bmatch%2Bin%2Bour%2Bdatabase.%2BBut%2Bbased%2Bon%2Bthe%2Belements%2Bwe%2Bcould%2Bmatch%252C%2Bwe%2Bhave%2Breturned%2Bthe%2Bfollowing%2Bresults.&seq=7#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/stable/25612765?Search=yes&resultItemClick=true&searchText=sn:00086533&searchText=AND&searchText=sp:44&searchText=AND&searchText=vo:16&searchText=AND&searchText=year:1976&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dsn%253A00086533%2BAND%2Bsp%253A44%2BAND%2Bvo%253A16%2BAND%2Byear%253A1976%26amp%3Bmod%3DYour%2Binbound%2Blink%2Bdid%2Bnot%2Bhave%2Ban%2Bexact%2Bmatch%2Bin%2Bour%2Bdatabase.%2BBut%2Bbased%2Bon%2Bthe%2Belements%2Bwe%2Bcould%2Bmatch%252C%2Bwe%2Bhave%2Breturned%2Bthe%2Bfollowing%2Bresults.&seq=7#page_scan_tab_contents)

Special Committee on Decolonization Approves Text Calling upon United States to Initiate Self-determination Process for Puerto Rico: <http://www.un.org/press/en/2013/gacol3255.doc.htm>

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<sup>71</sup> *Special Committee on Decolonization Approves Text Calling upon United States to Initiate Self-determination Process for Puerto Rico*. Web. Oct 25, 2016. <http://www.un.org/press/en/2013/gacol3255.doc.htm>

### III. Imminent dispersal of Syrian refugees-When will enough be enough?

#### Introduction

“Whereas Member States [of the Charter] have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms...”, universal would seem to exclude Syrian refugees.<sup>72</sup> Five years after the civil war began, the United Nations projected a staggering 470,000 deaths, which had to be estimated by an envoy due to lack of confidence in their own data.<sup>73</sup> Syria itself being a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), many examples are readily available of how al-Assad’s regime has been violating human rights for years. In Odai Alzoubi’s words, these abuses include but are not limited to “sowing fear among people by kidnapping and torturing activists, besieging cities, and intimidating rebels’ families,” and many other testimonials include imprisonment for political action.<sup>74</sup> To complicate the plight of Syria further, extremist groups such as the Islamic State (ISIS) and Hezbollah have begun to participate on either side of the conflict, adding to not only the suffering experienced by civilians but also to the number of groups vying for power.<sup>75</sup> The involvement of other states, such as the United States and Russia, has not seemed to have any impact on the brutality experienced on the ground, and the world at large has not been enthusiastic about evacuating civilians from these conditions.

Relying on pre-existing international norms and obligations, states have had a conveniently “difficult” time of accepting refugees, whether it be due to negative public opinion or provisions such as the Dublin Treaty, for example, that traps asylum seekers in the first state that they land in within Europe.<sup>76</sup> These provisions have allowed developed countries to escape obligations such as Article 2 in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which requires capable states to ensure these rights to all humans regardless of political or national status.<sup>77</sup>

According to a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees report, there are currently 4,794,613 registered Syrian refugees, with an estimated 8,700,000 displaced persons within Syria. The same report estimates that in addition to the \$1,822,158,755 acquired to help relief efforts, a sum of \$2,717,183,581 is still needed to reach appeal goals. Out of the 1,151,865 asylum applications in Europe, 64% of them are handled by Germany and Serbia, with Sweden, Hungary, Austria, the Netherlands, and Denmark accounting for 24% and a mere 11% scattered across the rest of Europe.<sup>78</sup> A BBC report indicated that a rough estimate of 4,570 refugees died in 2015 trying to cross the Mediterranean and Aegean seas. However, countries such as Jordan,

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<sup>72</sup> "Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations." UN News Center. <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>

<sup>73</sup> John Hudson. "U.N. Envoy Revises Syria Death Toll to 400,000." Foreign Policy UN Envoy Revises Syria Death Toll to 400000 Comments. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/22/u-n-envoy-revises-syria-death-toll-to-400000/>

<sup>74</sup> Asaad Al-Saleh. Voices of the Arab Spring: Personal Stories from the Arab Revolutions., 211.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 199.

<sup>76</sup>"The Dublin III Regulation." EU Immigration and Asylum Law (Text and Commentary): Second Revised Edition <http://www.unhcr.org/4a9d13d59.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights." International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>, Article 2.

<sup>78</sup>"UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response." UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response. [http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php#\\_ga=1.260699341.1539279948.1477362566](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php#_ga=1.260699341.1539279948.1477362566)

Lebanon, Turkey, and other Northern African states seem to be taking in most of the asylum seekers.<sup>79</sup>

### **Brief History**

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011, a group of elementary children was arrested and tortured for writing an anti-government slogan in graffiti, leading to the humiliation of their families and causing an uproar of protests that were not uncommon to the Middle East during what is known as the Arab Spring.<sup>80</sup> Al-Assad, the standing dictator, responded brutally, at first using the military and then hiring brutish gangs known as *shabiha* to quell protests.<sup>81</sup> This action caused many local officials to defect and create an official group known as the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which began launching major attacks in Damascus the following year.<sup>82</sup> The FSA eventually began to face issues with organization, and Islamic extremist groups such as Hezbollah, Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS started vying for control, and some of their connections with al-Qaeda gave the United States and other major European countries pause over helping the effort.<sup>83</sup> Despite several attempts at ceasefire and peace negotiations, the fighting and brutality has reached a disturbing level and continues today nearly six years later.

With the falling of oil prices over the past few years, Middle Eastern governments are expecting to “cut spending, raise taxes and increase borrowing” which will undoubtedly cause a strain on their ability to take in more people.<sup>84</sup> Countries such as Italy and Greece, which have been experiencing an alarming economic downturn for the past decade, have been stuck with an overwhelming number of refugees due to their proximity to Syria.<sup>85</sup> This is in large part due to the Dublin Agreement, which contends that asylum applications must be processed by the country in which the asylum seeker first lands.<sup>86</sup> However, this provision is undermined by the Schengen Agreement, which basically established a relaxed coming and going across the inter-borders of member states once a migrant passes entrance requirements upon initially entering the “Schengen Zone.”<sup>87</sup> Many people fear that the Syrian refugee crisis will cause the Schengen Agreement to fall apart, as it has been regarded as a positive agreement for commerce and tourism. Moreover, Europe has recently been criticized of xenophobia as historically homogenous cultures are integrating these Middle Eastern groups. This criticism is well demonstrated in a New York Times article that claims Brexit might be a direct result of the immigration crisis as well as an encouragement for other xenophobic nations to also abandon the European Union.<sup>88</sup> While the African Union has provisions for refugees, not much media

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<sup>79</sup>“Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe Explained in Seven Charts.” BBC News. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>

<sup>80</sup> Al-Saleh, 198-199.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 199.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 199-200.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 200.

<sup>84</sup> R. Thompson. *Adjusting to the region's new reality*.

<sup>85</sup> “Italy vs Greece.” Find the Data. <http://country-facts.findthedata.com/compare/11-143/Italy-vs-Greece>

<sup>86</sup> “Dublin III Regulation”

<sup>87</sup> “EUR-Lex Access to European Union Law.” EUR-Lex. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3A133020>

<sup>88</sup> Dan Bilefsky, “As Migrants Face Abuse, Fear That ‘Brexit’ Has Given License to Xenophobia.” The New York Times. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/28/world/europe/as-migrants-face-abuse-fear-that-brexit-has-given-license-to-xenophobia.html>

attention has been given as to how African nations have responded.<sup>89</sup> The United States and Canada have accepted refugees at disappointingly low levels.

### **International Implications**

Large scale migration not only has economic consequences but it also has political and cultural effects as well. As ideal as democracies are in regards to respecting human rights within their own borders, they can also harm human rights internationally depending on what the public opinion is. In this case, recent and increasing terrorist attacks by ISIS have led many citizens in the developed West to fear Syrian refugees as “guises” for potential terrorists. This in turn can actually inspire radicalism in an otherwise peaceful youth as their feelings of abandonment in the international community grow with each passing year. States’ policies on accepting refugees might also be incredibly complicated and heavily vetted, thus making the expediency of this effort moot. Not every country has the economic capabilities to take in refugees, which is why poor planning in distribution could potentially be detrimental to relief success and have unforeseen negative ramifications. Pressure on nations to pitch in on the effort will undoubtedly bring up arguments regarding sovereignty.

### **Precedence**

As the death toll continues to climb in Syria, it is important to look back on a previous example of how the UN failed the people of Rwanda in the 1990s. Ethnic conflict between Tutsis and Hutus predating the genocide had led to the establishment of “...the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) with a mandate encompassing peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and general support for the peace process.”<sup>90</sup> The genocide itself is widely believed to have been sparked by a plane crash on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1994 that killed the Hutu president that was attributed to Tutsis by a Hutu extremist radio show.<sup>91</sup> The conflict that ensued led to the rape of over 150,000 women and the deaths of about 1,000,000 people in approximately 100 days, Tutsi and Hutu alike. As UN peacekeepers were withdrawn along with every other non-Rwandan, the international community grew increasingly austere about the crisis despite knowing full well the atrocities that were being committed.<sup>92</sup> Interviews with US and UN officials following the end of the crisis not only express regret over not becoming involved sooner, but also reluctance to categorize the mass killings as genocide.<sup>93</sup> Additionally, a controversial BBC documentary called *Rwanda: the Untold Story* came out in October, 2014, suggesting that now-standing President Kagame and his Tutsi forces that put a stop to the killings might also have been complicit in mass-murdering Hutus, and also showing that any Rwandan that disagrees with the state-sanctioned story on what happened in 1994 is thrown in jail as a “genocide-denier.”<sup>94</sup> While the ratio of people killed to the length of time is

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<sup>89</sup> "African Union Refugee Definition." Rights in Exile Programme.

<http://www.refugeelaidinformation.org/african-union-refugee-definition>

<sup>90</sup> "Rwanda, Genocide, Hutu, Tutsi, Mass Execution, Ethnic Cleansing, Massacre, Human Rights, Victim Remembrance, Education, Africa." UN News Center.

<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/education/rwandagenocide.shtml>

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> "GHOST OF RWANDA." YouTube. <https://youtu.be/VJAuyIRfYIM>

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> "Rwanda's Untold Story Documentary." Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/107867605>

comparatively worse than the Syrian Civil War, it stands as the best worst-case scenario of what happens when the UN washes its hands of responsibility.

### **Action vs. Inaction**

Consequences will follow every decision that states make regarding what to do about the Syrian refugees. If delegates make choices against the opinion of the constituency which they represent, they may not be able to fulfill those promises and could potentially increase negative sentiments towards Syria. Involvement might also incite anger from ISIS and its affiliates. On the other hand, delegates should also consider the risks of not getting involved at all, such as not fulfilling their obligations to international provisions such as the UDHR and ICESCR and giving peaceful Syrian youth a general sense of abandonment. States should also consider how their economic capacity might affect their decisions and potentially play a positive role in progressing the situation however possible.

Additionally, European Union members *especially* will have to consider how their actions are constrained by treaties they are already party to. African Union, North American, Latin American, South American, East Asian and Pacific nations are strongly encouraged to look into how they can do more to alleviate the pressure that the refugee crisis has put on Europe as well as Syria's Middle Eastern neighbors.

### **Questions to Consider**

1. How do the most accommodating economies in the world currently compare with the levels of xenophobia that pertain to those areas?
2. How binding is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Do states who are party to human rights law have an obligation to protect even those that are not within their borders?
3. Should refugees have to pay their way or are they entitled to asylum regardless?
4. Do certain nations need to increase/decrease their vetting processes for refugees? How do these provisions hurt refugees and how do they also help them (in regards to reputation and assimilation)?
5. For democracies, what is your country's opinion on refugees? Should your recommendations be influenced by the opinions of your constituents, or are you taking a more universalist approach?
6. What are ways in which states can help if they are not directly receiving refugees?

### **Further Reading**

Official European Union statement on humanitarian aid and civil protection:  
[https://europa.eu/european-union/topics/humanitarian-aid-civil-protection\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/topics/humanitarian-aid-civil-protection_en)

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

African Union on refugees: <http://www.refugeelaidinformation.org/african-union-refugee-definition>

Helpful links from the Migration Policy Institute:

General: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/dependence-self-reliance-changing-paradigm-protracted-refugee-situations>

On children: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/educational-and-mental-health-needs-syrian-refugee-children>

Interactive Asylum application map: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/asylum-applications-euefta-country-2008-2016-q1>