



UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY 3 STUDY GUIDE



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Third General Assembly

MANDATE

The Third Committee, a subsidiary body of the U.N. General Assembly (GA), was established in 1945 along with the establishment of the U.N. The mandate of the Third Committee is set out in articles 10 through 14 of the U.N. Charter, it provides a forum for the GA to address human rights, humanitarian concerns and social development, to make recommendations, and adopt resolutions to help ensure that all people enjoy the same human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Third Committee serves as GA's primary body responsible for dealing with issues related to humanitarians and social needs. It is concerned with the humanitarian crises, protection of civilians, refugees and social justice for all individuals; with a special emphasis on those groups that are particularly vulnerable, including women, children and minorities; as well as displaced persons, particularly those who live in areas of conflict or post-conflict. Although the Third Committee does not have any enforcement mechanisms, its resolutions establish and sustain international legal norms, and guide the activities performed by other U.N. agencies, such as UNHCR, UNICEF, OHCHR, etc. Through the work done by all U.N. member states in the Third Committee via debate, advocacy, and diplomatic activities, the Third Committee raises global awareness of the humanitarian consequences of conflict, promotes respect for the provisions of international humanitarian law, and creates a framework for international cooperation in finding solutions to humanitarian/social problems.

PRACTICE DEBATE TOPIC - Challenges Faced by Civilians in Conflict Zones in the Horn of Africa

CONFERENCE TOPIC - Protection of refugees and internally displaced persons in humanitarian crises

PRACTICE DEBATE - Challenges Faced by Civilians in Conflict Zones in the Horn of Africa

Topic Overview

Humanitarian crises in the Horn of Africa have worsened as armed conflict converges with vulnerable, ineffective civilian populations. Currently, Sudan and the conflict between SAF and RSF have reached a level of urgency unmatched among all global humanitarian crises. Since the beginning of violence in Sudan in April of this year, over 12 million people are now displaced and an additional 30 million require humanitarian aid due to mass displacement, destroyed health services and a lack of food, water, and electricity. In addition to this, Ethiopia also displays similar humanitarian patterns as both federal forces and militia continue to clash and pose danger to civilians, leaving massive amounts of life-sustaining infrastructure such as hospitals unattended and vulnerable to destruction or theft.

Many of the conflicts and their impact on society are now made worse by environmental stressors. Ethiopia, Somalia and other neighbouring countries face climate change-related droughts that exacerbate food insecurity and displace millions of people due to drought and armed conflict – the overlap of violence and climate-related shocks has eroded the civilian protection and human security of the Horn of Africa.

This debate will focus on protecting civilians and will require representatives to assess how various social, economic, legal, political systems positively or negatively impact civilian suffering and how human rights based approaches fit within the purview of SOCHUM.

Case Studies

Sudan – Mass Atrocities, Displacement, and Civilian Targeting

The civil war in Sudan, sparked in April 2023 by conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), is one of the most pressing crises faced by civilians that is currently apparent around the world. The conflict has escalated into densely populated cities and has resulted in a high number of civilian deaths and destruction of hospitals, markets, and water infrastructure.

Specifically, SOCHUM is concerned about reports of ethnic-related violence, mass killings, sexual violence, and forced displacement, particularly in the region of Darfur. International mechanisms and human rights bodies have warned that the pattern of such violence against a particular ethnic group may amount to genocide or crimes against humanity. There are intentional attacks on civilians because of identity, and women and children are at a heightened risk of protection.

Somalia – Insurgency, Counterterrorism, and Civilian Vulnerability

The civilian crisis in Somalia is also fuelled by the long-running insurgency led by the group Al-Shabaab, as well as the counter-terrorism operations carried out by the Somali Federal Government and the international community. Al-Shabaab is also responsible for bombings and attacks carried out within civilian areas, such as markets, hotels, and other public facilities, resulting in the deaths of civilians as well as spreading terror among them. In the areas it controls, the group subjects the civilian population to forced conscription, restriction of movements, as well as taxation.

The military activities carried out by the Somali National Army and the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) have aimed at lessening the control Al-Shabaab has over the region, but the combat activities near populated areas have led to displacement. The co-existence of different armed groups makes it difficult for protection activities.

Conflict-induced displacement, in turn, is worsened by drought spells and widespread food insecurity, making millions of people rely on humanitarian support. Most of the IDPs live in the country's informal settlements, lacking access to health, education, safe water, and protection. Under the SOCHUM framework, the case of Somalia demonstrates the convergence of the impacts of insurgency, the use of military measures, lack of governance, and drought-related pressures in making civilians vulnerable in the long term, with the resulting human rights issues.

Points to Consider

- How do attacks on health services, food systems, and other key aspects of society contribute to worsening the humanitarian situation for civilians?
- What are the major threats encountered by civilians in conflict-affected areas throughout the Horn of Africa including violence, displacement and the loss of access to essential services?
- What role should UNGA3/SOCHUM play in strengthening the protection of civilians, accountability, and international cooperation in the Horn of Africa?

Further Reading

- <https://www.unocha.org/horn-africa>
- <https://reliefweb.int/region/horn-africa>
- <https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/horn-africa-situation>
- <https://www.icrc.org/en/where-we-work/africa/horn-africa>
- <https://acleddata.com/region/conflict-horn-africa/>
- <https://www.hrw.org/world-report>
- <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/horn-of-africa/>
- <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/protection-civilians>

CONFERENCE TOPIC - Protection of refugees and internally displaced persons in humanitarian crises

Topic Overview

In protecting refugees and IDPs, it is essential to protect their fundamental rights through the provision of access to basic life-saving humanitarian assistance, especially in emergencies, and the prevention of harm, including violence, discrimination, and exploitation. The protection framework consists of the ways that international legal standards, the responsibility of the state, the role of humanitarian action, and the underlying principles of human rights interact to create a protection framework for the above-mentioned groups. As the global displacement situation continues to increase, protecting human rights is not only a legal and ethical requirement; it is also necessary to uphold human dignity, promote long-term stability, and establish the foundation for lasting peace in the impacted areas.

The development of international protection mechanisms followed WWII with the establishment of the UNHCR in 1950 and the acceptance of the 1951 Refugee Convention, later supplemented in 1967. The increase in internal wars has created a greater awareness about the plight of internally displaced persons through new documents and agreements beginning with the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and regional arrangements such as the Kampala Convention in 2009. There continues to be a significant problem with protracted displacement, where many people remain living for many years in rural camps or informal settlements, often suffering from gender-based violence, human trafficking, forced recruitment, lack of financial aid, limited access to humanitarian assistance, and increasing climate induced displacement. Therefore, it is imperative to establish stronger international cooperation and to fully implement legally binding conventions in order to develop sustainable and inclusive solutions.

Case Studies

Iraqi Kurds and Forced Displacement in Iraq

During the Anfal Campaign (1987–1988) under control of the Saddam Hussein's regime, Kurdish populations in northern Iraq were victims of mass killings, village destruction, and chemical attacks, most notably in Halabja. These actions led to widespread internal displacement and forced thousands of Kurds to flee as refugees into neighbouring countries such as Türkiye and Iran. Resulting in several civilians being Displaced without Refuge, thus being recognized as IDPs.

The crisis highlighted major protection gaps for civilians and internally displaced persons, as the Iraqi state itself was responsible for the persecution. Many displaced Kurds were deprived of their humanitarian aid and faced severe insecurity, while those who crossed borders

encountered limited international protection mechanisms. The situation exposed the vulnerability of IDPs, who were not covered by a binding international legal framework.

Following the 1991 Gulf War, renewed displacement prompted international intervention through Operation Provide Comfort, Humanitarian Safe Zones and a No-Fly Zone in Northern Iraq were Established. This response allowed humanitarian agencies to operate more effectively and enabled the return of many displaced Kurds. The Iraqi Kurdish case remains relevant to UNGA3/SOCHUM, as it reminds Nations the need for stronger International Protection of Civilians and Internally Displaced Persons in Conflict Zones.

Rohingya Refugees and Forced Displacement in Myanmar

The Rohingya crisis represents one of the most severe refugee situations in South and Southeast Asia. In 2017, widespread violence and persecution by Myanmar's military forced over 700,000 Rohingya Muslims to flee from Rakhine State into Bangladesh, while others were internally displaced. The Long-standing Discrimination and Denied Citizenships rendered the Rohingya effectively stateless, Extending unnecessary Displacement.

Refugees in camps such as Cox's Bazar face overcrowding, limited access to education and livelihoods, and heightened risks of gender-based violence and trafficking. Despite humanitarian assistance given by UN agencies and NGOs, the lack of legal status and durable solutions has prolonged dependency and insecurity on these Parties. The Rohingya case highlights the challenges of protecting refugees when return is unsafe and host states face resource constraints.

Venezuelan Displacement in South America

Venezuela has caused one of the largest displacement movements in South America, with millions of people forced to flee due to economic collapse, political instability, and human rights violations. Large numbers of Venezuelans have crossed into neighbouring countries such as Colombia, Brazil, and Peru, while others remain internally displaced or in vulnerable conditions within the country.

Venezuelan refugees endure lack of legal status, limited access to basic services, and risks of exploitation and discrimination. Several South American states have introduced temporary protection and regularisation measures, most notably Colombia's Temporary Protection Statute, provides legal status and access to essential services. The Case Study shows the importance of regional cooperation and inclusive protection frameworks in addressing large-scale displacement.

Treaties and Conventions

- 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees
- 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees
- African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention, 2009)
- OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (1969)
- Cartagena Declaration on Refugees (1984)

Points to Consider

- What are the key legal and practical differences between refugees and internally displaced persons, and how do these affect their protection?
- How effective are current international frameworks in protecting refugees and IDPs during humanitarian crises?
- How can civilians and displaced populations be better protected in active conflict zones?
- What role should UNGA3/SOCHUM play in strengthening international cooperation and accountability?
- How can host states be supported while ensuring respect for the rights of refugees and IDPs?
- What measures are most effective in preventing gender-based violence, trafficking, and child exploitation among displaced populations?

Further Reading

- <https://globalprotectioncluster.org/protection-issues>
- <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/high-commissioners-dialogue-protection-challenges-protecting-internally-displaced>
- <https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/protected-persons-internally-displaced-persons>
- <https://www.un.org/es/global-issues/refugee>
- <https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/legal-framework/unhcr%E2%80%99s-mandate-refugees-and-stateless-persons-and-its-role-idp-situations>
- <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/internally-displaced-persons-and-international-humanitarian-law>
- <https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/legal-framework/idp-definition>
- <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/how-does-humanitarian-law-protect-refugees-and-internally-displaced-persons-0>

Message from Chairs:

Delegates of GA3 (SOCHUM),

The Third Committee is an exceptionally rewarding, stimulating and thought-provoking committee, and it requires that all delegates take a thorough, analytical, well-researched and principled approach in their discussions. This years' agenda has created the opportunity to have nuanced debates regarding the various humanitarian and social issues that are so complex, and on the expectation that all delegates will have demonstrated an awareness of the various human rights framework, international humanitarian law, contemporary global challenges, and how they impact people.

GA3 is intended to support and encourage delegates as they take a critical examination of how conflict and inequality affect people, how diplomacy intersects with the human dignity of all people, and how to develop solutions that are both realistic and aspirational. We look forward to the opportunity to see each delegate explore multiple perspectives, to challenge commonly held beliefs, and to offer new and insightful approaches to some of the most pressing issues that vulnerable populations throughout the world are facing.

We are excited to see the outcome of your research, diplomacy and advocacy efforts in this committee, and we wish you success as you prepare for this project.

Dylan and Suhansith