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UNHCR

COMMITTEE

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UNHRC COMMITTEE

Introduction of the Committee

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is an intergovernmental body within the United Nations system in charge of the protection and campaigning of human rights around the world, condemning the situations and creating possible solutions to tackle them. Established in 2006, it is responsible for “promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner”[1]. The UNHRC is composed of 47 member states, elected by the United Nations General Assembly for a term of three years, and meet three times a year in Geneva, Switzerland, to discuss human rights issues. These involve civil and political, economic, social, and cultural rights. The UNHRC investigates and reports on international human rights violations, work to spread awareness and assumes resolutions which are representative of the wants of the international Human Rights Committee. The UNHRC’s role in the international human rights system is significant, and the committee continues to work towards campaigning the protection of human rights for all people, everywhere. The UNHRC’s key areas of focus include civil and political rights, economic, social, and cultural rights, and the rights of the marginalised, vulnerable, and disadvantaged groups. Therefore, the UNHRC address these human rights issues by issuing specialised procedures to report, gain evidence and promote awareness on war-crimes and crimes against humanity.

COMMITTEE

Civil and Political Rights – Civil and Political rights are a crucial element of human rights, protected and addressed by the UNHRC. This class of rights ensure the protection of individuals from private industries, governments and establishes the right of the individual in participating in both the civil and political areas of society and state without discrimination or repression[1].

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR) – ESCR state the right to adequate food, adequate housing, to education, to health, to social security, to take part in cultural life, to water and sanitation, and to work[1].

Rights of the Marginalised and Vulnerable Groups – The UNHRC acknowledges the importance in protecting the rights of the marginalised and vulnerable to achieve social justice and equality.

War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity – War Crimes are those violations of international humanitarian law that incur individual criminal responsibility under international law[1]. The UNHRC is committed to investigating and addressing these human rights violations and to provide assistance and aid to the victims of the human rights violations.

Citations: [1] Nations, United. "United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect." Un.org, 2024, [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/war-crimes.shtml#:~:text=Some%20examples%20of%20prohibited%20acts,charitable%20purposes%2C%20historical%20monuments%20or](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/war-crimes.shtml#:~:text=Some%20examples%20of%20prohibited%20acts,charitable%20purposes%2C%20historical%20monuments%20or.). Accessed 1 May 2024.

TOPIC 1: VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF UGHUR MUSLIMS IN CHINA

Uyghur Muslims are the largest ethnic minority group native to China's province of Xinjiang in which they make up 12 million of the Chinese population. The Uyghurs are a Muslim Turkic ethnic group and consider themselves to be both culturally and ethnically close to Central Asian Nations[1]. In recent years, however, there has been a mass migration of Han Chinese into the Xinjiang province, this accompanied with a 25% increase in growth of the Han Chinese ethnicity between 2010-2020 compared to the little 16% of the Uyghur[2], present the Hanification of the Xinjiang province. This is further evidenced as state-run boarding schools in China teach almost exclusively in mandarin and carry the risk of forced assimilation and adoption of Han cultural practices[3].

As claimed by humanitarian organisations, and later confirmed by the United Nations, the Chinese authorities have detained millions of Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and Kyrgyz (other minority groups residing in China) in Xinjiang concentration camps[4]. Through these mass network of concentration camps, the individuals of these ethnic groups are subjected to forced interrogations, political indoctrination, torture, intense surveillance, involuntary sterilisations and forced labour. In doing so, violating several human rights[5].

Since January of 2021, several international democratic governments, such as the United States, Canada, France, and the United Kingdom, have condemned and recognized China's actions as genocide[1]. Though the United Nations Human Rights Committee state that these violations may constitute as crimes against humanity, Chinese officials continue to claim that they have not infringed on Uyghur's rights and continue to persist that they have closed the reeducation camps in 2019[2]. Despite these claims made from Chinese officials, researchers and journalists have documented the ongoing mass detention throughout the Xinjiang region through the use of satellite images, testimonies made by victims of the mass detentions, as well as leaked Chinese government documents[3].

TOPIC 1: VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF UGHUR MUSLIMS IN CHINA

Majority of the people detained in these reeducation camps were targeted for a variety of reasons, majority being attending religious services at Mosques, travelling, or contacting people from any of the 26 countries China considers "sensitive", such as Afghanistan, having more than three children, sending and spreading Quranic verses and hadeeths[1]. However, the main reason is usually due to the religion in which the individuals follow, Islam, in which a significant majority of the Uyghur ethnic group follow and practice.



HISTORY AND PAST UN ACTIONS

The United Nations Council held a debate regarding the alleged human rights abuses made by the People's Republic of China against the Uyghurs as well as the other Muslims in the Xinjiang province. However, this, there was a defeat as 19 votes were against the motion, 17 for the motion, and 11 abstentions[1]. The rejection of the motion, initiated by countries such as the United States, Canada, and Britain, was stated to be a failed attempt of Western nations in "using the United Nations Human Rights Body to interfere in China's internal affairs", said China's foreign ministry[2].

Though this setback, on the 31st of August 2022, the United Nations report stated that the People's Republic of China has committed abuses that may amount to crimes against humanity, targeting Uyghurs and other Turkic ethnic communities in the Xinjiang region[3]. The report was composed of several victim accounts that give proof of several human rights violations, such as the following: torture, forced labour, mass arbitrary detention, involuntary sterilizations etc.

The United Nations report challenges the Chinese government's blatant disregard for its international human rights obligations[4]. It notes that the victims had to sign documents to remain silent about the camp, otherwise they'd be kept in longer and there would be negative consequences for the family. Moreover, it assesses the growing body of evidence concerning the Chinese government and their active violations of human rights. Furthermore, in June 2022, another group of UN experts reiterated the 2020 statement and urged Chinese authorities to grant them access to investigate "allegations of significant human rights violations and repression of fundamental freedoms in the country"[5].

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

A resolution addressing the Uyghur genocide in China must confront the issues facing the Turkic ethnic population in Xinjiang. These issues include the systematic mass detentions, in which the Uyghur are subjected to forced labour, torture, and indoctrination. Moreover, the resolution must address the restrictions made on religious freedoms, such as the destruction of Mosques and other religious sites. The resolution must condemn the Hanification of the Turkic ethnic group and aim to reduce the suppression of both the Uyghur language and identity within China. Furthermore, the resolution must address the reports of involuntary sterilisations as well as other measures acted upon to further decrease Uyghur birth rates- which is regarded as a crime against humanity. Finally, it should demand unrestricted access for independent journalists and humanitarian organisations to both investigate and document the human rights abuses in the region.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How can the international community effectively pressure China in putting a stop to these human rights violations whilst continuing to maintain their diplomatic relationships?
2. What strategies can be made to ensure that the individuals and organisations responsible for these crimes against the Uyghurs are held accountable for their actions?
3. How can humanitarian aid be effectively delivered to the Turkic communities in Xinjiang whilst navigating China's restrictions?
4. What role can neighboring countries play in addressing the Uyghur crisis and support the Turkic communities?
5. What measures can be implemented to ensure long-term preservation of Uyghur cultural and religious identity amidst the oppressive assimilative efforts made by the Chinese government?

TOPIC 2: MASS DEPORTATION OF AFGHAN REFUGEES IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan had long interfered into the domestic affairs of Afghan politics, so much so, Pakistani security forces supported the Mujahideen, Muslims who fight on behalf of faith, in their retaliation against USSR occupation and the communist ideology[1]. The mujahideen were viewed as asserts to Pakistan regarding Post-Cold War Afghanistan, though due to USA's sudden withdrawal from the nation, Afghanistan quickly erupted into a civil war, resulting in millions of refugees fleeing to Pakistan[2]. Therefore, the history of Afghan refugees in Pakistan originated from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Millions of Afghans fled their nation to seek refuge in neighboring nations, such as Pakistan and Iran[3]. Initially, Afghan refugees were welcomed with open arms by their neighboring countries, however the conflict in Afghanistan endured for several more decades, and the inflow of refugees only escalated. This is evident with the recent Taliban takeover in Afghanistan 2021, where 600,000 Afghan sought refuge in Afghanistan[4].

The Pakistani government assert that Pakistan's economy is shattering due to the strain of providing for numerous Afghan refugees, even though many undocumented Afghans studied, worked, and were raised in the Pakistani nation for several generations[5]. This had resulted in the announcement of the 'Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan', involving a one-month deadline for 'undocumented' Afghan refugees to leave the country or be subject to deportation[6].

It is estimated that several hundred thousand Afghans have already been deported back to Afghanistan since September 2023. Furthermore, in April of 2024, Amnesty international reports that another 800,000 Afghans are under threat of abusive and eventual deportation by the Pakistani Government[1]. According to James Jennion, Campaigner for the Refugee and Migrants' Rights at Amnesty International, Pakistan's 'Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan is in violation of Refugee and International Human Rights Law and puts the lives of all Afghan refugees at risk."[2]. Furthermore, several different humanitarian groups assert that the Afghan women and girls, are at greatest risk, as they return to a gender segregated nation, which unjustly marginalizes and oppresses Afghan women.

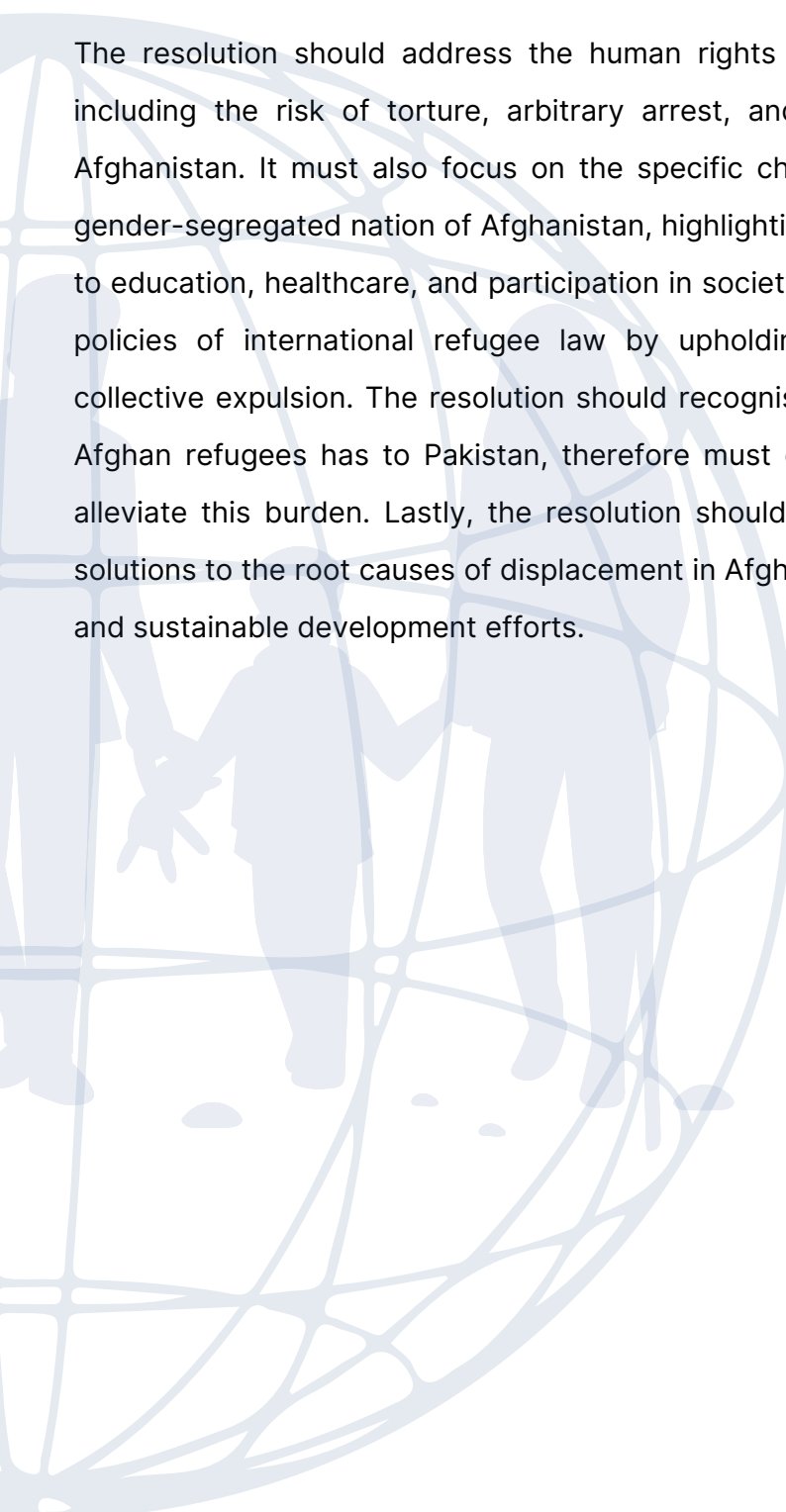
HISTORY AND PAST UN ACTIONS

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) urged the Pakistani authorities to put a stop to the mass deportations of Afghan refugees[1]. Several representatives of the UNHCR state that the Afghans facing the mass deportations are at risk of human rights violations, such as torture, detention, and arbitrary arrest[2]. The UNHCR also stresses the abhorrent policies in which Afghan women and girls would have to endure if deported back to the nation, such as the banning of women from attending secondary and university education[3].

In addition to the emphasis placed onto the impact the deportations would do to Afghan women and girls, the UNHCR continue to stress the gender persecution and large-scale systematic human rights violations present in Afghanistan[4]. Moreover, the UNHCR make continuous appeals to the Pakistani government to ensure that any returns of Afghans back to Afghanistan should be just, safe, and voluntary with full respect for the rights and protection of the Afghans. Experts continue to express their concern over refoulement and urge Pakistan to uphold the human rights principles of non-refoulement and prevention of collective expulsion[5]. Despite this, there is little to no policies being implemented to ensure these principles are being executed upon.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

The resolution should address the human rights violations faced by Afghan refugees in Pakistan, including the risk of torture, arbitrary arrest, and gender-based persecution upon deportation to Afghanistan. It must also focus on the specific challenges faced by Afghan women and girls in the gender-segregated nation of Afghanistan, highlighting the need to protect their rights, including access to education, healthcare, and participation in society. Furthermore, the resolution should commit to the policies of international refugee law by upholding principles of non-refoulement and preventing collective expulsion. The resolution should recognise the strain on resources holding a big number of Afghan refugees has to Pakistan, therefore must encourage international assistance and support to alleviate this burden. Lastly, the resolution should emphasize the importance of pursuing long-term solutions to the root causes of displacement in Afghanistan, including peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and sustainable development efforts.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How can the international community ensure that the deportation policies of host nations, such as Pakistan, adhere to international human rights standards and principles?

2. What measures can be taken to address the specific challenges faced by Afghan women and girls, both in host nations and upon their potential return to Afghanistan?

3. How can the United Nations and other international bodies ensure that the repatriation of Afghan refugees is voluntary and conducted with appropriate oversight to safeguard their rights and well-being?

4. What forms of international assistance and support can be provided to countries such as Pakistan, to help alleviate the strain on resources?

5. What strategies and initiatives can be implemented to address the causes of displacement in Afghanistan, and promote stability, peace, and sustainable development in the region?

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