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**ASSIGNMENT; Do you think that Developed Countries in Europe and North America are protecting the rights of refugees?**

**INTRODUCTION**

The world is witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record. An unprecedented 70.8 million people around the world have been forced from home by conflict and persecution at the end of 2018. Among them are nearly 30 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18. There are also millions of stateless people, who have been denied a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement.

In today’s world, where nearly 1 person is forcibly displaced every 2 seconds as a result of conflict or persecution, there is an influx of refugees and displaced persons all over the world. This calls for the effort of the United Nations agency for refugees, which is the UNHCR. The work of UNHCR is more important than ever before, as well as countries in the international system.

In addition to persecution and conflict, in the 21st century, natural disaster (sometimes due to climate change) can also force people to seek refuge in other countries. Such disasters – floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, mudslides – are increasing in frequency and intensity. While most of the displacement caused by these events is internal, they can also cause people to cross borders. None of the existing international and regional refugee law instruments, however, specifically addresses the plight of such people. (Nations, n.d.)

Conflict, violence, persecution and human rights violations led to a record high of 70.8 million people being displaced by the end of 2018. While some displaced people did manage to return to their country of origin, there were 13.6 million newly displaced persons in 2018 – that means 37,000 persons were forced to flee their homes each day of the year due to war or persecution. A total of 3.5 million asylum seekers - those under international protection, but not yet granted refugee status - were awaiting a decision about their applications, 1.7 million of which were new applicants. More people sought asylum in the US than any other country, followed by Peru, Germany, France and Turkey.

More than two-thirds of all refugees originate from just five countries: Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia. In each of these countries, war and unrest account for the high numbers of displaced people. Syrians make up the largest single group of displaced people, with 13 million living in displacement, including 6,654,000 refugees, 6,184,000 internally displaced persons and 140,000 asylum seekers. Syria has been the main country of origin of refugees for more than five years. (Wood, 2019)

**ARE THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF REFUGEES?**

The mass movement of people in our world today calls us to reflect carefully on the relative weights of the obligations and rights that arise from our common humanity and from our distinctive identities. All countries should begin by reaffirming the United Nations’ 1951 Refugee Convention’s affirmation that refugees fleeing persecution should have a high-priority claim to be granted asylum in another country.

Refugees are people who have virtually no alternative except flight from home. In almost all cases their choice is either migration or loss of basic human rights, in many cases even the right to life. Thus, in all cases where a country has the resources to admit refugees without severely jeopardizing the life and well-being of its own citizens, it ought to do so, granting asylum to the refugees at its borders.

In addition, we should insist with the Refugee Convention that refugees have a right not to be subject to forcible return (refoulement) to regions where they face serious threats to their lives and freedoms. The priority of non-refoulement of refugees is grounded both in Christian respect for the dignity of every person and in the wisdom formed by political experience.

It is clear that wealthy countries like those of Europe and North America have the resources needed to grant asylum to refugees from countries like Syria and South Sudan today. Chancellor Angela Merkel took the right path when she decided to relax Germany’s borders to all those fleeing the chaos of Syria.

When Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom announced in 2016, that his country would grant asylum to 20,000 people over the next five years, however, he was appropriately reminded that Lebanon had admitted that many Syrians over the previous two weekends. Indeed, developing countries today host 86 percent of the world’s refugees, the highest percentage in more than two decades, and the very poorest countries among them are providing asylum to 25 percent of the global total. Thus, the rich nations of the North have a duty to admit a considerably larger number of asylum seekers than they do now and an even greater duty to assist these less-developed countries that are already hosting most of the world’s refugees. Sadly, the funds being provided for this burden-sharing by the North fall far short of what is needed.

It is also clear that in wealthy nations like those of the United States, Europe and Australia, much of the negative attitude toward migrants and refugees is grounded in a mixture of racially driven xenophobia and a mistaken fear that refugees may be terrorists. Dislike of the needy stranger, especially when motivated by racial or religious stereotypes, is clearly contrary to core principles of Christianity and to the secular norms of a human rights ethic as well. The asylum needed by refugees should be a top priority as we determine how to combine loyalty to our own community and to those from other societies. Balancing these loyalties requires that we work to overcome exclusionary, xenophobic attitudes. (Hollenbach, 2015)

It is true that refugees have become overwhelming for most European and North American countries. There are a great number of refugees, especially from Syria and managing this great number can pose as an issue for these countries of the North. The state structure and system prepared may not be sufficient for the increasing number of refugees around the world.

Another reason there might be a shortcoming in the protection of the rights of refugees on the path of developed countries in Europe and North America is as a result of terrorism. Most of these countries where these refugees come from are countries that are conflict ridden with terrorists, and these developed countries fear that some of these asylum seekers and refugees may be disguised terrorists, and so they choose to be extremely careful, thereby leading to the rejection of such refugees.

Also, health care can be another issue the government of developed countries consider before accepting refugees, the health care facility may not be sufficient for the great number of refugees seeking asylum as they were originally established for their citizens. The same goes to the issue of jobs and employment.

**CONCLUSION**

There are no doubt additional grounds for a country to grant priority to the admission of migrants from a particular background when not all can be received. These suggestions indicate the direction we should be moving today. Indeed, the most fundamental criterion for determining our priorities should be our duty to support the basic human dignity of those whose lives and basic human rights are severely threatened.

# **REFERENCES**

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