

# BMUNC 2018

Background Guide

United Nations Third General Assembly

Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee



SOCHUM

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Third General Assembly of the United Nations, or the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural committee. SOCHUM is one of the six general assemblies of the UN, and is currently in its 73rd session. As members of SOCHUM, you'll be discussing matters concerning human rights, the advancement of women, treatment of refugees, and the promotion of freedom from inequality and prejudice. This year, the committee is headed by a Chair and a Co-Chair.

Hello, My name is Zachary McIntyre and I am the Chair of the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural committee this year. I am a junior at Bard College, and I am a conservatory double major. I play the french horn in conservatory, and my major in the college is computer science. I've been involved in MUN since high school, and this is my second time being involved with BMUNC, specifically the General Assembly. I'm really excited for this conference and I hope you enjoy your time at Bard.

#### COCHAIR STATEMENT

We think we have a good topic picked out for everyone this year, and we are excited to see the debate develop. If you have any questions about the topic, committee, Bard or college life in general, feel free to ask us or email the secretary general who can get us in contact. We look forward to seeing you at BMUNC!

Zachary McIntyre,  
Chair of SOCHUM

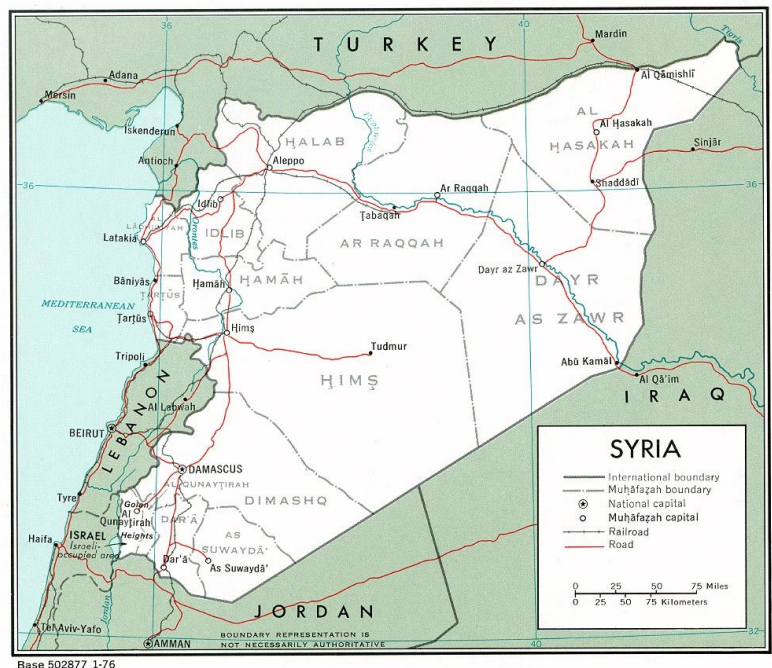
## Committee Background

The Committee on Social, Humanitarian and Culture (SOCHUM) is the Third Committee of the General Assembly (GA) of the United Nations. The committee works with the security council as well as the (relatively) newly formed Human Rights Council (HRC), which was formed in 2006, to address issues involving the preservation of human rights and the empowering of marginalized groups of people. This directly contributes to one of the founding principles of the United Nations addressed in article 1 of the United Nations Charter, which is as follows: "To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace."

# The Syrian Refugee Crisis

## Introduction

As of October 11, 2018, there are over 5.6 million Syrian refugees across the world, as well as 6.6 million internally displaced citizens within Syria according to the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR). According to the UNHCR, a refugee is “someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence.” These numbers truly justify the term “crisis” to describe the current situation.



Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan currently grant asylum to the most refugees, however refugees have fled to all corners of the world. Of course, with this massive outpouring of people, nations and other bodies have raised concerns over conditions for refugees within camps in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, as well as other places. There have also been major concerns regarding human trafficking and its impact on refugees.

## Background

In late 2010, the Arab spring protests erupted in Tunisia and in Egypt, resulting in the overthrow of both governments. Many now speculated that the protests were fueled by the advent of social media and the ease at which information could spread, not only sowing more and more unrest among those who resented the authoritarian regimes, but also providing a platform for



revolutionaries to more safely and easily convene and share ideas. As Tunisia's government fell, pro-democracy advocates and religious elites struggled to

consolidate power. Meanwhile, in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Iraq, civil unrest continued to grow and protests were met with more and more violence.

In Syria, protests began in January of 2011 after a officer assaulted an old man in Damascus. The old man was subsequently arrested and protests followed. However, the civil unrest in Syria would come to a head in March of that year, after 15 children were arrested and detained after writing anti-government

messages on walls. In the days following, thousands of people protested against the government in cities across the country, such as Aleppo, Damascus and Daraa. While there are no official numbers, most estimates say that there were about 3000 injured and some injured following the harsh response from the government, including military involvement. In April, over 100,000 people gathered and called for the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad, and they were once again met with more violence. Protests continued into July, with security tightening throughout the region.

On July 31, 2011, Syrian tanks were driven into multiple cities, Hama and Daraa, resulting in the deaths of 136 people. On a protest in August, forces shot at protesters from inside ambulances, resulting in 11 dead. By January 2012, the Free Syrian Army (FSA) has taken control of a few cities outside of Damascus, and the Syrian Army dug into cities surrounding Damascus and launched a full blown military assault against the FSA. Over the next three months, the fighting was constant and harsh. The FSA conducted hit and run tactics as the Syrian army began to retake a few cities in the region. By April 2012, there was a very shaky ceasefire, but fighting still occurred, especially in Al-Qusayr which was virtually split in two from the fighting, with the rebels in the north and the Syrian army in the south. By June, the Syrian UN peacekeeping chief officially declared Syria to be in a state of civil war.

### Current Sate

Since 2012, the violence has improved very little. The current death toll resulting from the conflict is over 500,000. Now, the Syrian Civil War is longer than World War II, and it has seen the growth of the Kurds, who are considered one of the largest ethnic groups with no nation, in the north, and Islamic State (IS) in the southeast. There is evidence on all sides of human rights violations, but perhaps the most abhorrent is the sheer number of people displaced. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that this is one of the most tragic displacements of people since World War II.

It is growing ever more difficult for refugees to make it to Turkey, Jordan or Lebanon, as they impose what the Human Rights Watch calls “unlawful administrative, legal and even physical barriers.” Even if refugees make it to one of these nations, since the conditions in camps are often poor, it is all but a necessity for refugees to try to go to Europe to become migrant workers, a journey which is very deadly.

Before the conflict, Syria was a hub for sex-tourism, with many women from Indonesia and Ethiopia being forced into servitude with little to no wages, having their passports withheld and being threatened, all common practices among sex traffickers. Since the onset of the war, the massive amount of refugees have become targets of sex traffickers. They often promise safe

passage into Europe, while instead selling them into slavery, and threatening to report them to local authorities.

#### Questions to Consider

1. How should this body address the ever growing number of syrian refugees throughout the world?
2. What can the UN do to address human trafficking, which has become prevalent because of the weakened infrastructure of Syria?