



## Teacher's Guide Living Together with Refugees

### Introduction 1: A problem we all face

- Alan Kurdi is a three-year-old child who was found dead on a Turkish beach while trying to escape to Europe from the Syrian Civil War. Kurdi, on his way to Europe in 2015, was found dead after a shipwreck accident in the Mediterranean Sea. A photo released by Turkish media at the time showed Kurdi lying face down on the beach, which shocked many people around the world. This single photo was more than enough for the world to realize the seriousness of the refugee problem. (Take enough time to share Kurdi's story with the students. This will give students the opportunity to empathize with the refugee issue.)
- **Who is to blame for this child's death?:** It is not the child's nor the parents' fault that a three-year-old child who left to seek a new life was found dead. The Syrian government, which fails to guarantee the safety of its people, European countries that are skeptical about accepting refugees, and people around the world who are indifferent to refugee issues are all responsible for the child's death.



### Introduction 2: Refugee crisis

- (This is an opportunity to ask some questions to the students and see if the students have any thoughts or background knowledge on the issue.)
- Have you ever heard of refugees?
- What does the term refugee refer to?
- How do you think the refugee problem is related to our lives?
- + **Global refugee crisis:** Many people think that their lives and refugee issues are unrelated, but we all have the possibility of becoming refugees one day due to war, religious persecution, and climate change.



## 1. Who are refugees?

- **Refugee:** Refugee refers to all those who have been forced to flee to other countries or leave their homeland to avoid various conflicts, disasters, or persecution that have occurred in their countries and have requested protection from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).
- **+ UNHCR's 1951 Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, Article 1:** The term "refugee" applies to any person who, "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, 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."
- **cf) Migrant:** A migrant is someone who chooses to immigrate to other countries in search of a better job or living or educational environment.

1. Who are refugees?



Refugee: People who have been forced to flee to other countries or leave their homeland to avoid various conflicts, disasters, or persecution (UN Refugee Convention, Article 1)

## 2. Why do refugees leave their countries?

- **War refugees:** Those who are forced to flee due to armed conflicts due to racial, ethnic, ideological, territorial, and underground resource disputes. E.g.) Syrian refugees, Somali refugees, Afghan refugees
- **Political refugees:** Those who are suppressed by the regime due to different political ideologies. E.g.) Yemeni refugees, Kurdish refugees, Venezuelan refugees
- **Religious refugees:** Those who leave their homes to avoid conflicts, oppression, and massacres due to religious differences. E.g.) Rohingya refugees
- **Climate refugees:** Those who lose their homes due to natural disasters that cannot be controlled by humankind such as floods, droughts, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tsunamis. E.g.) Kiribati refugees

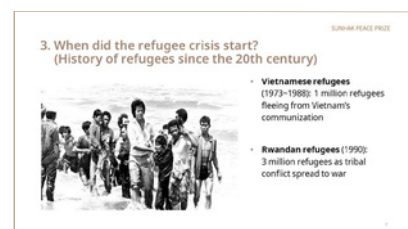
2. Why do refugees leave their countries?

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### 3. When did the refugee crisis start? (History of refugees since the 20th century)

- **Jewish refugees (1934):** When the Nazi regime was established in Germany, about 2.5 million victims of Nazism, including Jews, left Germany to escape Nazi persecution.
- **Palestinian refugees (1948):** Jews built Israel in the British-controlled Palestinian region, and Palestinian Arabs who had lived there for more than 2,000 years suddenly lost their territory. This has resulted in more than 700,000 Palestinians leaving their hometowns and living as refugees in camps in neighboring countries.
- **Vietnamese refugees (1973~1988):** When South Vietnam was communized, more than 1 million people went out to search for freedom, but many died on the way due to the lack of countries accepting refugees.
- **Rwandan refugees (1990):** The conflict between tribes in Rwanda turned into war resulting in a total of 3 million refugees. The refugees fled to neighboring countries such as Uganda and Zaire, but many died from severe food shortages and infectious diseases such as cholera.
- + There have been many refugees since humankind began war. The history of refugees has been around since ancient times, but since the 20th century, the outbreaks of World War I and World War II have produced tens of millions of refugees worldwide. During those times, many refugees left for Britain or the United States to seek refuge. With the end of World War II and the establishment of the United Nations (UN) in 1951, the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted and the whole world agreed to protect the refugees. The agreement states that it is only natural that people accept refugees who have crossed borders to seek haven.



### 4. How many refugees are there? (as of 2024)

- **1.5% of the world's population:** 120 million people, which is 1.5% of the world's population, are living as refugees.
- **The number tripled in the past 15 years:** The number of refugees worldwide has tripled compared to 2010.
- The top countries refugees are coming from are Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Venezuela.



- **+ Number of people who have requested protection from other countries:** The total number of people who have taken refuge in their own country or other countries over the last decade since 2010 due to threat of safety reaches 43 million.
- **+ Extreme food shortage and malnutritions:** More than 80% of refugees stay in countries or regions suffering from food shortage and malnutritions, and many of these countries are also exposed to dangers of climate disasters.

## 5. Refugee children and adolescents

- **Half of all refugees:** More than half of all refugees are children and adolescents. Some were forced to leave their hometowns along with their parents, but others became refugees themselves to escape the threats posed to them. Every year, about 10,000 children and adolescents leave in search of safety alone. In many cases, they also become orphaned refugees after being separated from their parents during their refugee life.
- **Threats to children:** ① In some countries, children are forced to fight as child soldiers. ② Children are forced to marry at an early age. ③ The parents or brokers sell their children, and such children are sent to unfamiliar homes to work or are forced to work in factories under harsh conditions. ④ In Africa and some Asian countries, female genital mutilation is performed on young girls. It is a tradition to cut off part of the vulva, which is fatal to the health of young girls.
- **Right to education (watch video of refugee education):** More than half of refugee children and teenagers do not receive school education. Children and adolescents who believe they are deprived of education and employment opportunities are more likely to commit illegal acts in desperation. Therefore, providing educational opportunities is important in giving refugee children and adolescents the possibility for a new life.



## 6. What is happening in the source countries of refugees?

- Syria:** In 2011, a pro-democracy movement took place against the dictatorship that had lasted more than 40 years, and as the government suppressed it, anti-government forces organized a rebel army group to wage war with the government. This spread into a religious fight with the Shiites siding with the government forces and Sunnis with the rebel army group, which led to prolonged civil war and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians. To make matters worse, the radical militant group IS joined, and Syria was further thrown into chaos forcing many people to flee Syria.
- Afghanistan:** Afghanistan has long been involved in wars. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1970s, the civil war in Afghanistan, the resistance of the Taliban regime and anti-Taliban forces in the 1990s, and the numerous wars and chaos that led to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks in the 2000s have resulted in numerous Afghan refugees. The innocent Afghan civilians had to endure the danger of war and terrorism and risked their lives to leave their homeland in search of freedom. As of 2024, the number of Afghan refugees around the world stood at 6.4 million, with 90 percent living in Pakistan and Iran and 300,000 in Europe. Afghanistan is the second-largest source country of refugees.
- Myanmar:** The Rohingya, a minority of 1.1 million mostly Muslim people, live in the western state of Rakhine. They have been living in Myanmar for generations, but most of them are stateless as the Myanmar government is in denial of their citizenship, claiming that all Rohingya are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Due to these discriminatory policies, the Rohingya people are living in very harsh conditions and are also denied the medical and educational opportunities the people of Myanmar should enjoy. In 2012, tensions between the Rakhine people who are mostly Buddhists and the Rohingya people rose and riots broke out. In 2016, when an armed Rohingya group attacked police posts resulting in deaths, Myanmar's military carried out a violent crackdown on the entire Rohingya, and in August 2017, more than 400 Rohingya people were killed.



To escape such danger and confusion, the Rohingya were forced to cross the border and head toward Bangladesh.

## 7. What awaits those who leave their homeland?

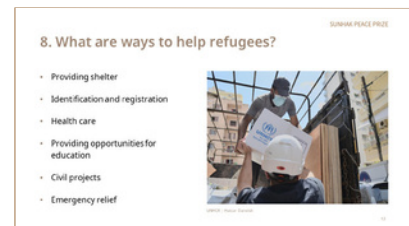
- **Life-threatening escape and journey:** The refugees' escapes are always accompanied by danger. Refugees who do not have official documents to cross the border mostly use illegal methods such as using informal passageways or getting help from brokers. As a result, they have no choice but to go over barbed wire fences, ride boats with water leaks, and even hide themselves in a container with no breathing holes to find refuge. The number of refugees who lose their lives in accidents during the escape journey is constantly increasing.
- **+ Refugees' destinations:** Currently, most of the refugees are headed for Europe. Most refugees come from Africa or the Middle East, and to them, Europe is the closest and the most suitable place to settle down. But now Europe has begun to close its doors to refugees.
- **Refugee camp:** Most of the refugees leave their hometowns with empty hands. To protect them, international relief agencies provide refugee camps. Since countries in Africa and the Middle East are some of the biggest source countries of refugees, these camps are in neighboring countries such as Jordan, Pakistan, Ethiopia and Kenya. However, these camps are poorly facilitated. Public health care or education is difficult to expect, and there are only small rationed food and tent facilities to avoid rain and wind.
- **Seeking asylum:** A person persecuted by one's own country may apply to be protected by another sovereign authority, and this is called seeking "asylum". Only when asylum applications are accepted can refugees who arrive in a new country receive official protection from the country's government and enjoy a full life. But it is generally very difficult to be granted asylum, and it may take years for asylum to be finally confirmed.
- **Forced repatriation of refugees:** The Refugee Convention stipulates that "no person shall be deported or repatriated to the borders of any area where life or freedom may be



threatened on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.” This is the most basic principle of refugee protection in the Refugee Convention and is legally binding for all countries in the world under international customary law. However, many countries violate the agreement and forcibly repatriate refugees by prioritizing their interests and relations with neighboring countries.

## 8. What are ways to help refugees?

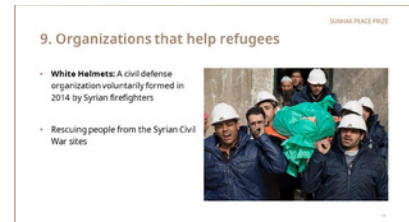
- **Providing shelter:** All refugees and internally displaced people are people who were forced to leave their homes. Therefore, they need a place where they can sleep and rest straight away. Many times, tents are used as emergency shelters. Other times, but more rarely, refugees will be provided with materials that they can use to build simple shelters themselves.
- **Identification and registration:** Registering is not merely for the use of taking a headcount. Registering will allow refugees to receive various kinds of services and will help reunite families that have been scattered apart.
- **Health care:** Vaccination, nutritional support, control of spreadable diseases, etc. will minimize the occurrence of further crises and help manage the refugees’ mental health as well. Providing opportunities for education: Providing basic education will give refugees a chance to build, through their own efforts, a better future for themselves and will help them with getting high-school level education in other countries.
- **Civil projects:** Refugee aid organizations work in collaboration with political, economic, and social organizations of countries that directly affect the lives of refugees. This is in order to encourage and ensure that the countries’ policies, citizen’s public attitude and regulations adhere to international standards.
- **Emergency relief:** Emergency relief should be provided by reacting quickly to sudden crises such as conflicts or natural disasters and rebuilding destroyed infrastructure and offering refugees protection.



- + What are ways to help refugees? (Ask the question to the students and let them brainstorm and discuss freely.)

## 9. Organizations that help refugees:

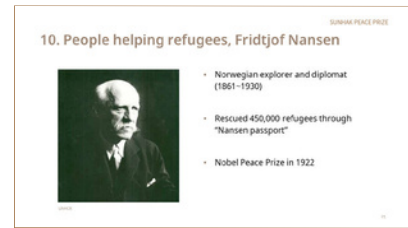
- **The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR):** Established by the UN General Assembly in 1949, the UNHCR is the representative organization for international refugee aid. It has been empowered to lead and coordinate various international measures to protect refugees and solve refugee problems, and it is working towards the goal of protecting refugee rights and welfare. As of 2019, the organization helped 70.8 million refugees and people subject to protection. The UNHCR was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1954 and 1981.
- **White Helmets:** The White Helmets, officially known as the Syrian Civil Defence, was constituted in 2014. It is a volunteer civil defense organization in the Syrian Civil War. As the civil war in Syria intensified, government-controlled firefighting organizations ceased to operate in areas occupied by the rebels. Thereafter, the remaining firefighters and citizens in isolated areas started forming their own firefighting organizations with the remaining firefighting equipment in 2013, leading to the start of the White Helmets' activities. They mainly extinguished fires caused by air raids and artillery fires by government forces and rescued those who were buried. At first, they were operating separately in various places as a voluntary fire brigade without a unified group name, mainly under the control of self-governing civil organizations. After this, it was launched as an official defense force through public relations efforts of various NGOs and support from the UN. In 2016, the White Helmets was awarded the Right Livelihood Award.





## 10. People helping refugees, Fridtjof Nansen

- Norwegian explorer and diplomat (1861~1930)
- After World War I, as the High Commissioner of the International Federation, Fridtjof Nansen started a project that issued the “Nansen Passport” to refugees without nationalities and later saved 450,000 refugees. He also helped return prisoners of war and actively assisted those suffering from war damage. During the Russian Civil War, when the famine caused millions of people to die of starvation and survivors started eating their own family members, he used all of his personal wealth to establish a relief center, which was able to prevent even more terrible tragedies from happening. For this achievement, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1922.



## 11. People helping refugees, Sakena Yacoobi

- Afghanistan refugee and educator
- Sakena Yacoobi is an educator who studied in America and has dedicated herself to helping war refugees in her home country, Afghanistan. She established the Afghan Institute for Learning (AIL) in 1995, providing education and vocational training opportunities to a total of 14 million refugees in 21 years. Under the Taliban regime, where women’s education was strictly prohibited, she operated more than 80 secret schools, educated about 3,000 girls, and worked on improving the human rights and social status of Muslim women. Emphasizing that women’s education and education of mothers are the most essential things to bring change to Afghanistan, she provided support for rebuilding their homeland through education. In recognition of this achievement, Dr. Yacoobi was awarded the Sunhak Peace Prize in 2017.



## 12. Should we accept or reject refugees?

- Arguments for accepting refugees:** Refugees are potential human capital. According to the French National Science Research Center, refugees did not have an adverse effect on the macroeconomy of European countries. The study says that refugees were not a burden to the national economy but a benefit. According to the study, 3 to 5 years after refugees received recognition from an accepting country, they increased the country's GDP and raised the country's tax revenues by about 1 percent. Furthermore, as global citizens, it is a natural duty to help those in need lead a safe life. If we remember that we could all become refugees one day, we will be able to make positive decisions on the issue of accepting refugees.
- Arguments for rejecting refugees:** Accepting refugees puts a great economic and social burden on a country. In order to protect refugees, the government must spend enormous budget, which are covered by the people's taxes. Furthermore, there are many suggestions that if a large number of refugees are taken in, the competition for jobs during economic recession might intensify. Also, crimes and acts of terrorism by refugees increase social unrest. European countries that were accepting refugees for five years prior to 2024 faced various challenges in managing refugee issues. In some regions, incidents involving crimes committed by refugees, particularly those related to sexual violence or acts of terrorism, have heightened social tensions. These issues have significantly influenced public opinion on refugee acceptance policies within Europe, leading to growing demands in some countries for the reinforcement or revision of refugee policies.



## 13. What attitude should we have towards refugees?

- As global citizens:** It can be said that the refugee problem is not just a problem for the source countries of refugees but for all of us. This is because the refugee problem is steadily becoming bigger and affects not only the source countries but also neighboring countries and even the entire world. Therefore, in order to solve this issue, we must focus on each region, join forces with the state and non-governmental organizations, stand in solidarity and work together with the mindset of global citizens. With the understanding that all citizens of the world require and deserve human security, a variety of solutions should be



- **We were all refugees or are potential refugees:**  
Looking back on the history of the distant past, some of our ancestors may have been refugees who came from faraway places. Moreover, during our own lifetime, we may become a refugees ourselves fleeing from inevitable dangers and violence. Every country on the planet has the potential to become a source country of refugees or a country that protects refugees. With this awareness, we need to prepare ways to coexist with refugees.