

**Forum:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)  
**Question of:** Measures to ensure the protection of refugees from sexual assault and rape  
**Student Officer:** Jordan Kim, President

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## Introduction

One in five refugee women and girls deal with sexual assault at some point as they flee their home region or country according to researchers from Johns Hopkins University.<sup>1</sup> This disturbing statistic is the dark, often unspoken truth about the experience of refugees. Proper protection against sexual assault and rape has become an institutionalized right throughout the international community. Yet, the status of refugees and their right to protection against sexual violence are constantly in danger. Therefore, ensuring the protection of refugees against sexual assault and rape is an agenda that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees treats seriously and as a top priority. As of late, the Ukrainian-Russian conflict and the countless cases of rape among the Ukrainian refugees resulting from the incident are drawing the attention of the international community. However, refugees have been victims of sexual violence for a long, and therefore, it is important to understand the large scope of the issue at hand. Though the Ukrainian-Russian conflict provides important modern context and a relatable call to action, the solutions ought to encompass the full extent of sexual assault that occurs among refugees.

Among the various reasons as to why refugees are particularly more susceptible to sexual violence, the most prominent is the lawless, hectic nature of seeking refuge. Shelters provided to refugees on a daily basis are highly unpredictable due to the lack of available venues and constantly changing circumstances of the reason driving individuals out of a region. As a result, it is difficult to track down individual refugees and know whether or not they are safe. The circumstances breed silent yet cruel crimes as the perpetrators of sexual violence are aware that victims are not in an apt situation to report the crime. Especially, due to the shortage of authorities and police forces in these areas, such sexual violence may often go unnoticed and unacknowledged even when reported. A case in point example occurred when two men assaulted a Ukrainian teenager staying in a refugee hotel boat in March of 2022.<sup>2</sup> Though

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Vu et al., “The Prevalence of Sexual Violence among Female Refugees in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis,” *PLoS Currents*, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1371/currents.dis.835f10778fd80ae031aac12d3b533ca7>.

<sup>2</sup> Lauren Lewis, “Ukrainian 18-Year-Old Refugee 'Is Gang-Raped by Two Men' on Board German Hotel Ship,” *Daily Mail Online* (Associated Newspapers, March 15, 2022),

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the crime was reported, due to the lack of specific details and the ability to track down the offender, the German government was unable to act on the report. The only action that the government took was to condemn the crime and avow to “ensure that people who seek shelter are able to [safety] get it.”<sup>3</sup>

Another cause of sexual violence among refugees is the prevalence of violence within refugees' pathways. Citizens typically seek refuge in the presence of a dangerous conflict, but this means that often they are more exposed and thereby vulnerable to inflict the harm of the quarrel. In particular, violent military officers often enact violent sexual crimes as a means of sexual relief. For instance, a Ukrainian woman by the name of Anna—a fictitious name given to the woman to protect her identity—was raped at gunpoint after a Russian soldier suddenly entered her house and killed her husband on March 7, 2022.<sup>4</sup> These incidents are not uncommon in circumstances of war. During World War II, for instance, Japanese soldiers famously sexually assaulted thousands of women in the Rape of Nanjing and went on to cultivate a prostitute house filled with comfort women who were raped by the military officials. As such, simple coincidental involvement in such violent situations can severely endanger women as sexual crimes often occur in these environments.

A major roadblock in halting such sexual offenses in dangerous environments that refugees are subjected to is the corruption of authorities. United Nations peacekeepers, for instance, have been subjected to various accusations of abusing civilians in West African countries since 2002. These peacekeepers that are deployed to protect refugees often ironically become the ones that are inflicting the most harm. Not to mention, local police forces often lack the means to investigate individual reports of a sexual offense or intentionally turn a blind eye after receiving compensation of sorts from the offender. Another issue includes the fact that refugees are placed in dangerous circumstances by nature. As a result, monitoring and ensuring the safety of women is far more difficult when compared to normal environments where women have easy access to safe homes.

To combat the issue at hand, the UNHCR has published several policy guidelines including Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women beginning in 1991. The organization has also initiated various programs in order to better protect refugees from sexual violence such as the Vulnerable Women

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<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10614551/Ukrainian-18-year-old-refugee-gang-raped-two-men-board-German-hotel-ship.html>.

<sup>3</sup>“Germany Pledges to Protect Refugees after Reported Rape Case,” Associated Press, March 16, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-europe-crime-germany-migration-135f0b5517568f696a561e0862f4326e>.

<sup>4</sup>Yogita Limaye, “Ukraine Conflict: 'Russian Soldiers Raped Me and Killed My Husband',” BBC News (BBC, April 11, 2022), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61071243>.

and Children's Programme for refugees from Somalia.<sup>5</sup> This program focuses on ensuring the security of women within refugee camps by bolstering overall protection within the region of the camp. These detailed measures by an international organization such as the UNHCR have allowed for cases of rape to reduce in Somalia, for instance. As such, targeted programs have seen success in the past. For countries experiencing violent conflicts and nations receiving thousands of refugees each year, it is crucial to hear out the voices of the victims of sexual assault and institutionalize measures of protection for women. With concrete programs in place, history shows that sexual violence is a danger that can be tamed within areas of conflict. The entire international community ought to work together, however. "Bonds of unity" need to form between and beyond areas of conflict for significant progress to be achieved in protecting refugees from sexual assault and rape.

### Definition of Key Terms

#### **Sexual assault**

Sexual assault refers to all forms of sexual acts that are unwanted by the victim and are thereby criminal. For instance, unwanted groping, rubbing, kissing, touching, and sexual encounters are examples of sexual assault.<sup>6</sup> Rape is a form of sexual assault and is often used interchangeably, but the degree of sexual contact varies between the two terms, with rape implying a stronger connotation. Refugees are subjected to sexual assault in many different cases.

#### **Rape**

Rape is any means of penetration of the vagina or anus, or an oral penetration done by a sexual organ of another individual, according to a revised definition issued by the FBI in 2012. In all cases, the sexual encounter is not consensual, which classifies a given action as rape.<sup>7</sup> Differentiating the terminology of various forms of sexual violence is critical as preventing rape is the foremost priority in many regions of the world.

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<sup>5</sup> Katy Migiro, "Rape, Militia and Health Fears Mean Somali Refugees Want to Stay in Kenya: Charity," Reuters (Thomson Reuters, October 12, 2016), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-kenya-refugees/rape-militia-and-health-fears-mean-somali-refugees-want-to-stay-in-kenya-charity-idUSKCN12C2L1>.

<sup>6</sup> Sarah L. Cook Professor of Psychology & Associate Dean, Lilia M. Cortina Professor of Psychology, and Mary P. Koss Regents' Professor of Public Health, "What's the Difference between Sexual Abuse, Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment and Rape?," The Conversation, June 18, 2022, <https://theconversation.com/whats-the-difference-between-sexual-abuse-sexual-assault-sexual-harassment-and-rape-88218>.

<sup>7</sup> Courtesy of Lisa O. Monaco and Courtesy of Vanita Gupta, "An Updated Definition of Rape," The United States Department of Justice, April 7, 2017, <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/blog/updated-definition-rape>.

### **Protection marriages**

Protection marriages are marriages that typically involve single girls and women entering into a contractual marriage with a man in order to protect themselves from sexual assault. Women force themselves upon such a kind of marriage, though consensual, in order to protect themselves from dangers looming within refugee shelters and areas of conflict.<sup>8</sup>

### **Transit Camps**

Transit camps are temporary shelters for individuals that are traveling through an area or country of conflict. In these transit camps, food is limited, shelters are not sanitary, and facilities are not segregated by sex. As a result, sexual assault and rape are commonplace within these refugee camps in particular due to the lack of security.<sup>9</sup>

### **Smugglers**

Smugglers are individuals that help refugees flee areas of conflict. In the process, many smugglers often force women into having sexual intercourse, which amounts to sexual assault or rape when non-consensual. The problem stems from the fact that smugglers utilize their position of power in order to force vulnerable women and girls into becoming willing victims of sexual assault.<sup>10</sup>

## **Timeline of Key Events**

### **August 12, 1949 - Geneva Convention IV**

At the Geneva Convention IV following World War II discussed certain principles with which citizens ought to be treated with. One right that all citizens are entitled to is the right against any form of sexual assault or rape. These codified rights for citizens of the world remain crucial today, and the fact that refugees are also entitled to this right acts as the foundational starting point for the conversation.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Marija Obradovic, "Protecting Female Refugees against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Camps," United Nations University, accessed July 6, 2022, <https://unu.edu/publications/articles/protecting-female-refugees-against-sexual-and-gender-based-violence-in-camps.html>.

<sup>9</sup> "Female Refugees Face Physical Assault, Exploitation and Sexual Harassment on Their Journey through Europe," Amnesty International, January 18, 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/01/female-refugees-face-physical-assault-exploitation-and-sexual-harassment-on-their-journey-through-europe/>.

<sup>10</sup> "Female Refugees Face Physical Assault, Exploitation and Sexual Harassment on Their Journey through Europe," Amnesty International, January 18, 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/01/female-refugees-face-physical-assault-exploitation-and-sexual-harassment-on-their-journey-through-europe/>.

<sup>11</sup> "Convention (IV) Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War," International Committee of the Red Cross, August 12, 1949, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/380>.

**March, 1995 - Sexual Violence Against Refugees: Guidelines on Prevention and Response**

In March of 1995, the UNHCR issues the report “Sexual Violence Against Refugees: Guidelines on Prevention and Response,” which outlines the issue of sexual violence victimizing refugees. As the first of its kind from the UNHCR, a special report being issued by the organization comes to illustrate the fact that sexual violence had become a prominent issue facing refugees. The detailed report on the causes of sexual violence and possible ways to prevent occurrences illustrates their commitment.<sup>12</sup>

**November 8, 1996 - Report on Impact of Armed Conflict on Children Exposes Moral Vacuum**

The United Nation’s landmark report “Report on Impact of Armed Conflict on Children Exposes Moral Vacuum” exposed the troubling pattern that sexual violence and child prostitution correlated with the arrival of UN peacekeeping troops. The UN’s self-report critiquing its own troops not only alarmed the general public and illustrated that peacekeepers are prone to similar offenses that military officers commit during wartime but also stood as a testament to the organization’s strive for transparency. Since then, greater attention has been devoted to preventing the abuse of power and committing of sexual violence by UN peace keepers.<sup>13</sup>

**November 2013 - Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) report on Syrian refugee rape cases**

The international NGO EMHRN report was revolutionary in that it revealed the fact that approximately 6,000 refugees had been raped during the Syrian refugee crisis. The EMHRN found that gang rape and unreported rape cases were very prominent, which was another concerning trend. As a result, the NGO opened the general public’s eyes to the atrocities developing behind the chaos of a refugee crisis. Since then, more attention and international awareness has been accrued for the issue of sexual assault and rape during refugee crises.<sup>14</sup>

**June 10, 2014 - June 13, 2014 - Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict**

The Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict was the largest conference to date to gather and discuss the issue of sexual violence in areas of conflict. Over 1,700 delegates across 123 countries

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<sup>12</sup> Radhika Coomaraswamy, “United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,” March 1995, <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/operations/3b9cc26c4/sexual-violence-against-refugees-guidelines-prevention-response-unhcr.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Graça Machel, “Report on Impact of Armed Conflict on Children Exposes Moral Vacuum, Secretary-General’s Expert Tells Third Committee” (United Nations, November 8, 1996), <https://www.un.org/press/en/1996/19961108.gash3382.html>.

<sup>14</sup> “Syria Conflict: Women 'Targets of Abuse and Torture',” BBC News, November 26, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25100122>.

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participated in the conference, and the roster of delegates included 79 ministers. The conference discussed specific means to prevent sexual violence in conflict, specifically through bolstering policing and security along with separating confines by sex in order to ensure women appropriate protection.<sup>15</sup>

### **2015 - Ongoing - Rohingya Refugee Crisis**

Since the beginning of the Rohingya refugee crisis, approximately 600,000 refugees have fled the borders of Myanmar, and amidst such human traffic, there have been flooding reports of sexual assault and rape.<sup>16</sup> For instance, within camps in the Bazar District within Bangladesh, there have been 900 different gender-based violence, often amounting to sexual assault. There have been several reports of serious gang-rape which has left certain refugee camps in shock including one in the Bazar District.<sup>17</sup>

### **October, 2015 - Ongoing - #MeToo Movement**

The #MeToo movement, which took off with the Harvey Weinstein case that cleared the way for many more victims of sexual violence to speak up for themselves, has created an environment allowing refugees to report their experiences.<sup>18</sup> As sexual violence against refugees, and even individuals at large, occur under circumstances in which influential individuals—such as smugglers or UN peacekeepers—abuse their authority.

### **February 24, 2022 - Ongoing - Ukraine-Russia Conflict**

In the current Ukraine-Russia Conflict, many refugee women from Ukraine have become a victim of sexual assault and rape as a result of poor means of security provided for these fleeing individuals. Specifically, due to strict abortion laws, there are many Ukrainian women that are unable to receive an abortion even though they are suffering from rape cases.<sup>19</sup> As the conflict continues, the international community is searching for means to swiftly aid such women and protect them from violent criminals amidst a chaotic environment.

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<sup>15</sup> “Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict,” United Kingdom Government, accessed July 6, 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/sexual-violence-in-conflict>.

<sup>16</sup> “Sexual Violence Devastating, Humanitarian Needs Mounting in Rohingya Crisis,” United Nations Population Fund, October 20, 2017, <https://www.unfpa.org/news/sexual-violence-devastating-humanitarian-needs-mounting-rohingya-crisis>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Alix Langone, “What Is the Time's up Movement and the #MeToo Movement?,” Time, March 22, 2018, <https://time.com/5189945/whats-the-difference-between-the-metoo-and-times-up-movements/>.

<sup>19</sup> Khaleda Rahman, “Abortion Pills Sent to Ukraine as More Reports of Russian Rapes Emerge,” Newsweek (Newsweek, April 28, 2022), <https://www.newsweek.com/abortion-pills-sent-ukraine-more-reports-russian-rapes-emerge-1701726>.

## Position of Key Member Nations and Other Bodies

### **Germany**

After historically opening its borders to refugees in 2015, more than a million refugees have found a home in Germany, providing significant economic and social benefits.<sup>20</sup> However, in part, the economic benefits have derived from the fact that refugees are paid lower wages, fail to receive adequate protection from the government, and are often undocumented. In turn, refugees in Germany have a history of being victims of sexual violence. Namely, in 2018, a group of ten men attacked and raped an 18-year-old woman in front of a nightclub.<sup>21</sup> Fast forward four years and there are continued problems with hindering the prevalence of sexual violence directed at refugees as illustrated by the aforementioned case of gang raping a Ukrainian refugee. Though the German government has spoken against the rape and resolved to provide better security for its refugees, these issues continue.

### **Kenya**

Kenya is home to large refugee camps with populations exceeding approximately 300,000. Among them, around 95% of the population are Somali refugees escaping the crisis occurring within their own country.<sup>22</sup> However, the East African nation is facing difficulties ensuring adequate safety for its refugees as rape and sexual violence remain extremely prevalent. As a result, Kenya has been witnessing the construction of vigilante groups as a means of protecting themselves from sexual assault. To combat the further escalation of situations, the Kenyan government and UNHCR representative are planning on instituting a curfew and drastically increasing the number of officers patrolling the refugee housing facilities.<sup>23</sup>

### **Poland**

With the recent conflict in Ukraine and the flood of refugees that have resulted, Poland is currently dealing with an influx of refugees into its borders. Ukrainian women who have become victim to sexual violence are not able to access appropriate health within the state of Poland, however. Due to Poland's stringent rape and sexual assault legislation, women who have been victim to rape are facing difficulties

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<sup>20</sup> "Ten Men Convicted over Gang Rape in Germany," BBC News (BBC, July 23, 2020), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53517022>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Elsa Buchanon, "String of Rapes in Kenya's Kakuma Refugee Camp Forces Communities to Set up Vigilante Groups," Yahoo! News (Yahoo!, June 28, 2016), <https://sg.news.yahoo.com/string-rapes-kenyas-kakuma-refugee-071504736.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



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in getting an abortion, for instance.<sup>24</sup> The UNHCR and other organizations are urging Poland to loosen its strict laws to allow for adequate care for the refugees. Meanwhile, others are noting the fact that Poland's strict abortion laws will not be amended in time, so refugees should search for other destinations too. Poland has remained contained and seeks to keep its abortion legislation.

### **United States**

Refugees that seek their way to the United States face similar issues that they are subject to across the world. A substantial number of rape and other sexual violence cases among refugees occur in the southern border regions of the US.<sup>25</sup> Most of such cases are not reported and thereby go unprosecuted.<sup>26</sup> A problem that the US faces is the influx of refugees amidst a limited number of immigrants allowed into the country. As a result, squatter regions along the border are often home to a large portion of these crimes. Meanwhile, the prevalence of illegal immigration allows for smugglers and customs officers to demand sex in return for their services. To combat these issues, the US is looking to add further patrolling along the border lines and ensure transparency among the officers.

### **Bangladesh**

Bangladesh is another country that has experienced a recent influx of refugees following the Rohingya refugee crisis in Myanmar. While Bangladesh has provided large spaces and facilities to house refugees that are crossing the border to Bangladesh, the nation has not been devoid of issues with regard to protection against sexual violence within camps. Specifically, Bangladesh created a refugee camp in the island of Bhasan Char, yet the secluded nature of the island without ulterior sources of food, water, and aid at large, women have raised accusations of sexual abuse.<sup>27</sup> Bangladesh authorities are continuing to search for means to provide safe housing while not leaving thousands of refugees without a place to stay.

### **United Kingdom**

With refugee counts within the United Kingdom on the rise, there have been recent concerns with regard to what grants refugee status in the UK. A clause was introduced restricting access to refugee status for

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<sup>24</sup> Person, "Access to Abortions Needed for Ukrainian Refugees in Poland, UNHCR Says," Reuters (Thomson Reuters, May 13, 2022),

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/access-abortions-needed-ukrainian-refugees-poland-unhcr-2022-05-13/>.

<sup>25</sup> "Rapes of U.S.-Bound Migrants Make a Treacherous Route Even More Dangerous," The Wall Street Journal (Dow Jones & Company, September 7, 2021),

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/rapes-of-u-s-bound-migrants-make-a-treacherous-route-even-more-dangerous-11630956539>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> "Rohingya Refugees Allege Sexual Assault on Bangladeshi Island," The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, September 22, 2020),

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/22/rohingya-refugees-allege-sexual-assault-on-bangladeshi-island>.



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women that have faced gender-based violence, which includes forms of sexual violence, assault, and rape. However, the peers rejected this clause as it would severely restrict access to women who are fleeing countries and have experienced forms of sexual violence. Still, the debate and controversy surrounding the clause to restrict refugee status illustrate that the priority in protecting victims of sexual violence, taken with the issue of rising refugee counts, remains contentious.

### **Pakistan**

Since the Taliban takeover, over 100,000 refugees have fled Afghanistan and entered Pakistan via asylum.<sup>28</sup> As such, Pakistan continues to accept large numbers of refugees from countries such as Afghanistan. Though most refugees are well-educated and seek to eventually migrate into the US and other western countries, many end up facing immigration problems and often stay in Pakistan long term. In the process, there are Afghanistan women are often subjected to sexual violence from male smugglers.<sup>29</sup> Due to the country's low economic status, however, Pakistani are facing difficulties aptly responding to issues arising within refugee camps and along the trail of refuge.

### **Greece**

With a substantial number of African and Afghan refugees, Greece is another popular destination for refuge by many asylum seekers. In turn, rape cases have been prevalent and numerous over the years. However, the recent introduction of the programme "A Step Forward" set up by Doctors of the World and Human Rights 360 has allowed for a better climate for refugee women to speak up about sexual violence and domestic abuse.<sup>30</sup> As such, Greece, though sexual violence remains prevalent, is enacting such measures in collaboration with NGOs to allow for swift reporting of cases.

### **Turkey**

Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees in the world with approximately 4 million refugees residing within the country; among the 4 million, 3.6 million come from Syria. Yet these Syrian refugees face particularly higher rates of sexual exploitation in Turkey, according to NGO ECPAT.<sup>31</sup> The country remains lax on regulations regarding child marriage and exploitation within prostitution. Its laws allow for

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<sup>28</sup> Ayaz Gul, "Pakistan Rules out Refugee Status for Afghan Asylum-Seekers," VOA, May 6, 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/pakistan-rules-out-refugee-status-for-afghan-asylum-seekers-/6560881.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Fariba Nawa, "For One Afghan Teenage Girl, the Refugee Trail Is as Dangerous as the War Left Behind," The World, November 28, 2016, <https://theworld.org/stories/2016-11-28/one-afghan-teenage-girl-refugee-trail-dangerous-war-left-behind>.

<sup>30</sup> "Abused Refugee in Greece Says 'No Longer Afraid to Speak up'," France 24, March 7, 2022, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220307-abused-refugee-in-greece-says-no-longer-afraid-to-speak-up>.

<sup>31</sup> Rina Gholson, "Syrian Refugees in Turkey Particularly at Risk of Sexual Exploitation," ECPAT, September 13, 2021, <https://ecpat.org/story/syrian-refugees-in-turkey-particularly-at-risk-of-sexual-exploitation/>.

child marriage and have continued to debate the institution of a bill that would lessen sentencing for child sexual offenders if they marry their victims.<sup>32</sup> As such, the conservative laws within the country are causing and allowing for sexual violence to place refugee women and girls in danger.

### **Peru**

Amidst the Venezuelan Refugee Crisis kickstarted by uncontrolled inflation, Peru has become the destination of choice for approximately 1.3 Venezuelan asylum seekers.<sup>33</sup> But according to recent reports by Amnesty International, Peru needs to bolster its legislation surrounding the treatment and protection of refugee women who report sexual violence. Interviews from Venezuelan refugees who have endured sexual assault have revealed that police officials tend to stereotype Venezuelan women, not allowing them access to crucial resources and help.<sup>34</sup> Coupled with misinformation about the full rights of asylum seekers within the state of Peru, many women are unable to receive the services that they are entitled to.

## **Suggested Solutions**

The issue of sexual assault remains a critical issue among the refugee community, and although the international community's attention has been focused on finding a home for these refugees, the next step is to ensure that this home is safe. Due to the exorbitant amount of dangers and barriers that lie in the face of refugees, rape and sexual violence are even more prevalent among these populations. In large part, host countries need to step up and ensure adequate safety for refugees. The following are a few of the many different solutions that can be implemented in order to address this pressing issue.

For one, recipient nations ought to bolster security measures within refugee camps and centers so that sexual violence is hindered. In many refugee camps, security personnel is outnumbered at a ratio that makes it difficult for these officers to ensure the protection of individual refugees. Their main concern becomes containing the refugees at large and cannot investigate or protect individuals that are in danger of becoming subject to sexual violence. As a result, the first order of action is to increase the number of police and security officers that are deployed within facilities. Another means of ensuring security is by instituting an earlier curfew within the refugee centers. Curfews can allow refugee centers with fewer security personnel to handle the crowd of refugees and protect vulnerable individuals from sexual

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ronna Rísquez, "Peru Is Failing in Its Care of Venezuelan Women Who Survive Gender-Based Violence," Amnesty International, November 25, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/11/peru-failing-care-venezuelan-women-survive-gender-based-violence/>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

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violence that typically occurs during later hours.<sup>35</sup> Though imperfect, solutions such as these can easily and quickly be implemented across various centers. Another example of such a measure is to separate the dwellings of males and females. Due to the unorganized nature of many refugee dwellings, it is common for refugee centers not to be appropriately divided by sex. However, many past cases have shown that the lack of gender divisions can breed an environment conducive to instances of sexual violence. Hence, this is another piece of countless other safety measures that can help towards ensuring a safe dwelling for refugees. Another possible improvement to current policies is to make available health services for victims of sexual violence. Allowing abortions to help women avoid unwanted pregnancies caused by rape is crucial and providing treatment for injuries can significantly better the healing process for victims who wish to return to normal life.<sup>36</sup>

Another solution is to ensure transparency and accountability among officers stationed within refugee camps so that victims of sexual violence feel comfortable reporting cases. While the issue surrounding reporting instances of sexual abuse is caused by the shortage of officers and resources at refugee camps, transparency and accountability are two other pillars that need to be addressed. As exposed by the “Report on Impact of Armed Conflict on Children Exposes Moral Vacuum,” UN peacekeeping troops have a grounded history of abusing refugees and other vulnerable populations in areas in which they are deployed.<sup>37</sup> Many tend to overlook the problem of ensuring the moral commitment of peacekeeping officers to their jobs. However, a more diligent approach toward properly training and educating UN peacekeepers and other official governmental officers is critical, for they often become the offenders of sexual violence. Accountability among these security officers is another side of the coin that often goes unaddressed. When receiving reports of sexual violence, all officers should be properly trained to investigate the situation and direct the victims to the help that they need. More specifically, they need the education to deal with reports that may not be filled by natives. Refugee women in Peru, for instance, cited that they were stereotyped for their refugee status and did not have their cases properly heard and investigated by authorities.<sup>38</sup> Hence, preventing discrimination subjected to refugees, in particular, is a

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<sup>35</sup> Elsa Buchanon, “String of Rapes in Kenya's Kakuma Refugee Camp Forces Communities to Set up Vigilante Groups,” Yahoo! News (Yahoo!, June 28, 2016), <https://sg.news.yahoo.com/string-rapes-kenyas-kakuma-refugee-071504736.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Ari Shapiro et al., “This Secretive Network Helps Ukrainian Refugees Find Abortions in Europe,” NPR, June 1, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/01/1101473557/ukrainian-refugees-abortions-europe-poland-warsaw>.

<sup>37</sup> Graça Machel, “Report on Impact of Armed Conflict on Children Exposes Moral Vacuum, Secretary-General’s Expert Tells Third Committee” (United Nations, November 8, 1996), <https://www.un.org/press/en/1996/19961108.gash3382.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Ronna Rísquez, “Peru Is Failing in Its Care of Venezuelan Women Who Survive Gender-Based Violence,” Amnesty International, November 25, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/11/peru-failing-care-venezuelan-women-survive-gender-based-violence/>.

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crucial step that many facilities and police offices need to take. To further encourage victims to speak up, authorities can consider creating hotlines or posting various posters that facilitate the reporting of sexual violence. Still, precedent, above all, will determine whether victims feel free to report their cases, yet these advertising methods can help when instituted as part of widespread reform.

Finally, an often overlooked underlying cause of sexual violence directed at refugees is the lack of spaces for legal immigration. Especially in wealthier countries such as the United States, strict immigration policies stand as a barrier for asylum seekers. Opening borders is made difficult for various logistical reasons and has been an issue that policymakers and diplomats have repeatedly attempted to yet failed to address appropriately. However, it is important to note the repercussions of making legal immigration difficult. Smugglers are active in border regions of countries and often take advantage of women and girls who wish to seek asylum or migrate.<sup>39</sup> In a position of power, smugglers are able to leverage their services and rape or sexually offend refugees. Helpless refugees around the world thereby become victims of sexual violence. Because their dreams of migrating to a safer, more habitable country are on the line, refugees not only endure sexual abuse but also often choose not to report their stories to authorities. A recent UN report found that “women are exposed to sexual violence [by smugglers], leading to unwanted pregnancies and abortions.”<sup>40</sup> Stricter policing around border regions for smuggling activity is needed, and when reported, law enforcement needs to properly investigate and convict smugglers as, in the status quo, legal action and appropriate treatment for smugglers remain weak. Still, it will ultimately come short of solving the issue. Though an overarching problem, allowing for more fluid and legal migration is critical to stop the issue of sexual assault directed at refugees. These are only a few solutions that can help toward reducing sexual violence that remains rampant among refugee populations to this day. Preventing sexual violence remains difficult because it stems, in large part, from the unstable, dangerous environment in which refugees find themselves. While the international community may fail to entirely eliminate danger along the road of seeking refuge, appropriate additions and changes to current legislation and policies surrounding the treatment of refugees can substantially reduce instances of sexual violence.

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