

Clinton MUNC III 2026



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Committee: UNHRC

Committee Type: GA

Topic: Rights of Refugees and Asylum
Seekers at Borders

Date: February 28, 2026

Chair: Julian Chin & Ella van Es

Directors: Alexa Pieck

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Conference Policies:

The Clinton School Model United Nations Conference (ClintonMUNC) is dedicated to fostering meaningful debate and providing students with the chance to explore a wide range of global topics while promoting collaboration and teamwork among delegates! While we encourage passionate discussion, we emphasize the importance of maintaining respectful and considerate language, especially during debates. We trust that all participants will contribute to a positive and inclusive environment. The following policies and expectations are in place to ensure every delegate has an enriching experience at ClintonMUNC.

Attire: Delegates are required to adhere to formal Western business attire for the duration of ClintonMUNC. Exceptions may be made in crisis committees for character-specific costumes, but prior approval from the committee chair is necessary.

Expectations in Committee: Delegates are expected to uphold decorum, respect, and professionalism during all committee sessions. While representing your assigned country's stance, please communicate your points respectfully. Please follow the expectation below in order to help us create an inclusive and engaging environment for all delegates:

- Only one delegate may speak at a time during moderated caucuses. To speak, raise your placard and wait for recognition by the chair.
- Outside of Model UN Personal attacks will not be tolerated. In cases where such behavior occurs you may be asked to leave the committee/conference.
- Please Maintain focus and respect when others are speaking
- Do not speak without proper recognition and limit talking over others
- Please limit any and all unauthorized use of cell phones

- Do not use technology or any forms of AI when not permitted
- There is no toleration of any form of harassment, whether verbal, physical and will result in removal from the committee/conference.

Technology: Crisis committees operate under a strict no-technology policy—laptops and cell phones are not permitted during sessions. General Assembly (GA) committees allow limited use of technology strictly for resolution drafting during unmoderated caucuses and approved breaks. Laptops must remain closed during moderated caucuses and while fellow delegates are delivering speeches.

Awards: Delegates will be evaluated by committee chairs and directors and will consider:

- Quality and clarity of speeches
- Collaboration and leadership
- Contributions to drafting and presenting resolutions or directives
- Creativity

Meet Your Chairs + Director

Dear Delegates!

My name is Ella van Es, I am currently a junior here at Clinton and have been a member of our Model UN club since my freshman year. I have always been passionate about international relations and history and was thus very excited to become a part of the MUN community here! This is my third year participating in Clinton MUNC and my second year Chairing/Directing.

Both of my parents emigrated to New York from the Netherlands, and I am very happy to call “New Amsterdam” my home! Although I go to school here in Manhattan, I live in Brooklyn (and prefer it to Manhattan). I love New York and feel so privileged to be able to live in a city that is so diverse. I believe that, especially here, everything we do and see has something to do with global politics, and that we have a responsibility to learn about and understand the global systems that shape the lives of people both around us and across the world.

Now more than ever, the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees is a topic that deserves our attention. This topic is both timely and deeply significant, as millions of individuals worldwide are forced to flee their homes due to conflict, persecution, climate change, and human rights abuses. I am very excited to meet you all on February 28th and cannot wait to see where you will take this conversation!

Sincerely,

Ella van Es

ellamathildevanes@gmail.com

Meet Your Chairs + Director

Dear Delegates,

My name is Julian Chin, and I'll be one of your chairs for this committee. I'm currently a senior at Clinton and have been a part of Clinton's Model UN since my sophomore year. I've always found international politics to be fascinating, as it examines the complex intersection between policy, power, and choice. As a result, I've developed a strong passion for Model UN and a zest for participating in conferences, whether across from Union Square, in a different borough, or in a different state. Having the opportunities to participate in such fruitful discussions has allowed me to understand national and international politics from a broader perspective, beyond personal and comfortable lenses.

Aside from Model UN, I'm a proud Manhattan-native and have lived in Greenwich Village for my entire life. I've attended Clinton since the sixth grade and am forever grateful for the amazing food spots located around Union Square! While I spend most of my time within the confines of Clinton, you'll most likely catch me CitiBike-ing anywhere below 23rd Street, or you'll spot me restaurant-hopping with my friends all across the city.

I am so thankful for the opportunity to host a space similar to the ones that ignited my passion for global politics. I hope that every single delegate tries their best to participate and collaborate.

I'm eager to see all of you on the 28th, prepared to discuss.

Best regards,

Julian Chin

julianleechin@gmail.com

Meet Your Chairs + Director

Dear Delegates,

My name is Alexa Pieck, and I am honored to serve as the Director for this committee. I am currently a Junior at Clinton and have been involved in Model UN since early sophomore year, during which I have developed a strong interest in international law, human rights, and multilateral cooperation. Model UN has given me the opportunity to engage with complex global issues and has shaped how I think about diplomacy, responsibility, and the role of international institutions in addressing injustice.

Aside from Model UN, I live in downtown Manhattan which has given me the opportunity to grow up in a city shaped by constant movement, diversity, and global connection, which has influenced how I view international issues beyond the classroom. Outside of academics, I enjoy spending time with friends and exploring the city, experiences that help keep me grounded and open-minded! I believe these perspectives are essential when approaching international dialogue and human rights work, where understanding different lived experiences is just as important as policy itself.

I am very much looking forward to meeting you all on February 28th and to guiding a productive, dynamic, and meaningful discussion.

See you soon,

Alexa Pieck

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UNHRC

(United Nations Human Rights Council)

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) was established in 2006 by the United Nations General Assembly as a subsidiary body tasked with the promotion and protection of human rights across the globe. Created to replace the former UN Commission on Human Rights, the Council was designed to be more effective, credible, and responsive to human rights violations. It is composed of 47 elected member states, distributed according to geographic

regions to ensure balanced global representation. Although the committee is relatively recent in comparison to other UN bodies, it has played a significant role in bringing international attention to pressing human rights concerns and holding states accountable through multilateral dialogue and oversight.



The UNHRC addresses human rights issues through a variety of mechanisms, including the adoption of resolutions, the convening of special sessions, the establishment of independent fact-finding missions, and the appointment of Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts. These mechanisms allow the Council to investigate allegations of abuse, monitor ongoing situations, and issue recommendations to the international community. Among its most significant accomplishments are investigations into violations committed against migrants and refugees, the development of mandates focused on the rights of internally displaced persons, and repeated reaffirmations of the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the return of individuals to countries where they may face persecution or serious harm.

In relation to refugees and asylum seekers, the UNHRC has closely examined state practices such as border pushbacks, prolonged or arbitrary detention, restrictions on access to asylum procedures, and discrimination based on nationality, ethnicity, or legal status. The Council has also emphasized the responsibilities of states under international human rights and refugee law, particularly during mass displacement crises. Through reports, resolutions, and public debate, the UNHRC continues to serve as a key forum for addressing the human rights dimensions of forced displacement and for encouraging greater international cooperation and accountability.

Background

The global refugee crisis has reached unprecedented levels, with tens of millions of individuals forced to flee their homes due to armed conflict, political persecution, environmental disasters, and widespread human rights violations. Although international frameworks such as the *1951 Refugee Convention* and its *1967 Protocol* formally recognize the right to seek asylum, the lived reality for many refugees falls far short of these legal protections. Across the world, displaced

persons face border closures, pushbacks, prolonged detention, forced returns, and systemic denial of basic rights, including access to healthcare, education, and legal protection. These practices raise serious concerns regarding state compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law.

This committee will focus specifically on the human rights of refugees and asylum seekers at international borders and within host states, examining how individuals are treated upon arrival, the accessibility and fairness of asylum procedures, and the conditions under which refugees are detained or accommodated. Additionally, the committee will address the issue of burden-sharing, as a disproportionate number of refugees are hosted by a small group of states, often those with limited resources. Rather than a single, isolated emergency, the refugee crisis represents an ongoing and evolving global challenge, shaped by political priorities, economic inequality, regional instability, and gaps in international cooperation. Delegates will be expected to consider both immediate humanitarian responses and long-term, rights-based solutions.

Border Control and Human Rights Obligations

The increasing use of strict border control measures; such as pushbacks, asylum suspensions, and interception at sea or land, has sparked serious concerns about states neglecting their international legal obligations to protect refugees and asylum seekers. Under international refugee and human rights law, the principle of non-refoulement prohibits returning individuals to places where they could face persecution, torture, or other serious harm, and requires that asylum seekers be granted access to fair procedures before any removal is considered.

Despite these legal standards, numerous reports show that states continue to engage in practices that may violate these protections. For example, Cyprus has been documented forcibly returning Syrian refugees to Lebanon without assessing their protection needs, contradicting non-refoulement obligations and undermining due process. Likewise, European states have been criticized by UN agencies for restricting access to asylum and conducting violent maritime pushbacks, which impede individuals' ability to seek protection. Critics argue that such measures, often justified in the name of security or migration control, not only worsen refugees' vulnerability but also weaken the global refugee protection framework that has existed since the *1951 Refugee Convention*.

Asylum Procedures and Access to Legal Protection

Access to fair and efficient asylum procedures is critical for ensuring that individuals fleeing persecution are recognized and protected under international law. According to international standards, refugees and asylum seekers must be referred to competent authorities who can determine their need for protection; such procedures are intended to be independent, specialized, and compliant with due process guarantees. However, inconsistent application of asylum laws and procedural barriers often impede access to these rights, resulting in delays, denial of protection, and legal limbo for many. For example, authorities in some countries require asylum seekers to file claims offshore or outside their borders, which undermines access to fair refugee status determination and violates principles of international protection.

Scholars and human rights advocates emphasize that without reliable asylum procedures, refugees are left vulnerable to refoulement and other abuses, as they cannot effectively demonstrate their need for protection or contest adverse decisions. Moreover, disparate systems across regions create unequal protections, meaning a refugee's chance of being granted asylum can depend heavily on the country where they arrive. Strengthening asylum systems, harmonizing legal standards, and ensuring procedural fairness are therefore central goals for human rights and refugee protection advocates.

Detention Practices and Living Conditions of Refugees

Detention of refugees and asylum seekers has become a widespread practice in many parts of the world, often justified on administrative or security grounds. However, according to international human rights standards and UNHCR guidance, detention should be avoided except as a measure of last resort and only when necessary, reasonable, and proportionate to a legitimate purpose. Because asylum seekers have not committed a crime by seeking protection, their immigration status alone should not be used as the basis for detention.

In practice, refugees and asylum seekers are frequently held for extended periods, sometimes in facilities that resemble prisons or in “de facto detention” situations where freedom of movement is severely restricted without clear legal oversight. These conditions can include inadequate access to legal counsel, limited humanitarian services, and psychological harm, all of which undermine the dignity and rights of those detained. For instance, protests by refugees in humanitarian centers have emerged in places such as Niger where prolonged detention and poor living conditions have prompted hunger strikes and calls for improved treatment and resettlement opportunities.

Vulnerable Populations and Non-State Actor Involvement

Within refugee and asylum seeker populations, certain groups face heightened vulnerability due to age, gender identity, disability, or social status. Children, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and the elderly often face increased risks of exploitation, violence, and neglect, both within camps and during transit. National and international human rights frameworks call for special protections for such groups, including access to education, healthcare, legal assistance, and safe shelter.

In addition to state actors, non-state actors, such as armed groups, smugglers, and militias, can significantly impact refugee safety. In conflict zones and transit routes, these actors may perpetrate violence, human trafficking, or coercion, creating complex protection challenges that exceed the capacity of state systems. Their involvement often exacerbates instability and undermines efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance, making cooperation among governments, international organizations, and civil society essential to protecting vulnerable refugees.

International Disparities and Responsibility Sharing

Responsibility-sharing remains one of the most persistent challenges in the global refugee regime. While the *1951 Refugee Convention* and related UN instruments recognize that asylum may place “unduly heavy burdens on certain countries,” they do not create binding legal obligations for states to share these responsibilities equitably. As a result, wealthier nations often contribute unevenly to refugee protection compared to countries with fewer resources but larger refugee populations, particularly in Africa and the Middle East.

The lack of a formal mechanism for responsibility-sharing has contributed to protection gaps, strained public services in host countries, and political tensions between states. Critics argue that without stronger cooperative frameworks; such as expanded resettlement programs, financial support, and humanitarian aid, the refugee protection system will continue to struggle under disproportionate burden distribution. Greater collaboration, equitable resettlement commitments, and meaningful international solidarity are seen by advocates as essential to ensuring that the rights of refugees are upheld irrespective of where they seek safety.

(Regional, GA) Positions and Blocs

Western Europe & Allied Liberal Democracies

This bloc, including countries such as France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Iceland, Czechia, Estonia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Cyprus, and the Republic of Korea, generally emphasizes a rights-based approach to refugee protection grounded in international law. These states often publicly support the right to asylum, non-refoulement, and humanitarian protections. However, internal political pressures—particularly concerns over border security, irregular migration, and domestic backlash—have led to increasingly restrictive asylum procedures, externalized border controls, and reliance on third-country agreements. As a result, while this bloc frequently promotes strong human rights language in UNHRC resolutions, it is often cautious about binding enforcement mechanisms or obligations that could limit national control over migration.

Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East

Countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda's regional partners (represented here by Kenya and Ethiopia), Angola, Benin, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Malawi, Mauritius, Gambia, South Africa, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, and Qatar tend to emphasize the unequal burden placed on developing states that host large refugee populations despite limited resources. This bloc frequently calls for greater international solidarity, increased financial assistance, and expanded resettlement programs from wealthier nations. While many of these states support refugee protection in principle, they also stress sovereignty and the practical challenges of long-term hosting, including economic strain, security concerns, and social integration pressures. Their positions often reflect frustration with what they perceive as symbolic commitments from the Global North without sufficient material support.

Latin America & Caribbean

States such as Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Bolivia, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, and Cuba generally advocate for regional cooperation, humanitarian entry pathways, and

temporary protection mechanisms rather than rigid asylum systems. Drawing from experiences with mass displacement—particularly from Venezuela and Central America—this bloc often frames refugee protection as a regional responsibility requiring coordination rather than isolationist border policies. Many Latin American countries support progressive refugee frameworks in international forums but face domestic capacity limits that affect implementation. As a result, they often push for international funding, development-based responses, and flexibility in protection standards during large influxes.

Asia-Pacific and Non-Western Major Powers

Countries such as China, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand, Viet Nam, Japan, and the Marshall Islands tend to prioritize state sovereignty and non-interference while supporting humanitarian assistance in principle. Many of these states are not parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention or apply it selectively, favoring ad hoc or temporary protection measures. This bloc often expresses concern over politicization of human rights issues and resists intrusive monitoring or country-specific condemnations. While some members contribute significantly to humanitarian aid and host refugee populations, they frequently oppose binding international obligations that could constrain domestic migration policy.

Mediator States

Countries such as Switzerland, Iceland, Japan, and some smaller European and African states often act as bridge-builders within the committee. These states emphasize dialogue, consensus-building, and technical cooperation over confrontation. They are more likely to support resolutions focused on improving asylum systems, humanitarian access, and international cooperation rather than punitive measures. This bloc tends to prioritize maintaining the legitimacy of the UNHRC itself while advancing incremental improvements to refugee protection standards.

Guiding Questions for Committee

- 1) How can states uphold border security while fully complying with international human rights and refugee law?
- 2) What standards should govern the detention and treatment of refugees and asylum seekers?
- 3) How can the international community ensure equitable responsibility-sharing among states?
- 4) What protections are necessary for especially vulnerable refugee populations?
- 5) How should human rights obligations apply during mass influxes or emergency situations?
- 6) What role should international organizations and NGOs play in monitoring refugee rights?

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