



**United Nations High
Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)
Chair Letter**

DEAR DELEGATES,

Welcome to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees at CNYMUN 2026! As numerous issues and circumstances threaten the safety and well-being of refugees and displaced populations worldwide, we look forward to productive debate, discussion, and collaboration among delegates to ensure carefully crafted resolutions at the upcoming conference.

ABOUT THE CHAIRS:

Camille Ryan is a senior at Fayetteville-Manlius High School, and this is her fourth year participating in Model United Nations, as well as her second year chairing. Outside of school and MUN, she is a captain of the varsity lacrosse, cross country, and indoor track teams. She also loves spending time with friends and family, soaking up the sun at the lake, attending concerts, and skiing! She is very excited to meet all the delegates and is looking forward to an amazing conference!

Avya Mangla is a sophomore at Fayetteville-Manlius High School. This is her third year participating in Model United Nations, and CNYMUN is her second time chairing. Aside from Model UN, she is an attorney on FM's Mock Trial team, News Editor for her school newspaper, *The Buzz*, and plays viola in the Syracuse Youth Orchestra. In her free time, she loves to travel, try new restaurants and cafes, and listen to her favorite artists. She can't wait to meet all of the delegates and have a fantastic committee!

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE:

Your topics for UNHCR at CNYMUN 2026 will be:

1. Combatting Refugee Housing Instability in Eastern Europe
2. Enhancing Regional Protections for Displaced Populations in the Northern Triangle of Central America

Created in 1950, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) takes a global initiative to protect and promote the rights of refugees. The committee has done work in 136 different nations since its start, providing aid to over 117.3 million refugees. When governments fail or are unable to protect the rights and well-being of citizens, forcing them to flee, the UNHCR is devoted to delivering aid

and protection. Within 72 hours of an event that harms refugees, the UNHCR can rally supplies for 1 million people and send staff to protect harmed people. The committee is focused not only on providing aid for victims of disaster but also on setting up a sustainable future for refugees to flourish in a new environment. In the last decade, the committee has helped nearly 1 million refugees build new lives in different countries, which is not just survivable, but livable.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE:

Keeping in line with CNYMUN tradition, all committees will follow Harvard style debate, meaning delegates are prohibited from using pre-written clauses and/or resolutions during committee. Doing so will make a delegate ineligible for awards. To be eligible for awards, delegates must submit a Georgetown style position paper per each topic, meaning that each topic should be one page, single spaced, with a font size of 12 in Times New Roman. Position papers should outline the stance of your delegation and demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of your topics. The use of AI is prohibited and will result in disqualification from awards. When deciding on awards, chairs will look favorably upon delegates who have put significant effort into preparation prior to the conference, collaborate with other delegates without being overbearing, remain within the bounds of their nation's policies, and encourage other's voices to be heard. CNYMUN committees are structured using a tiered structure, designating each committee as open, intermediate, or advanced. UNHCR is designated as an **open** committee. In turn, the Best New Delegate award will be offered to a first-time delegate in this committee.

Please share position papers prior to the start of the conference. The chairs' emails are listed below for you to contact about any research, position paper, or committee inquiries. It is recommended that all delegates share their position papers to both chair's emails, although chairs will ask for any hard copies of position papers at the start of committee session one if necessary.

We encourage you to scan our delegate preparation resources and award structure on www.cnymun.org. We wish you the best of luck and can't wait to see what you bring to CNYMUN 2026!

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TOPIC 1: COMBATTING REFUGEE HOUSING INSTABILITY IN EASTERN EUROPE

A large-scale housing crisis is escalating in the European Union (EU). This housing crisis is primarily due to state governments failing to provide sufficient and appropriate housing for their citizens and not effectively enforcing their borders.

Additionally, privatization, financialization, and speculation have become rampant in housing markets across the EU. Privatization, in the case of housing, is when state-owned housing is sold to private investors. Financialization is the increasing dominance of financial motives in the economy and its operations. Speculation, in housing, is buying and selling properties out of anticipation of rising prices in order to gain a profit. All three of these practices end up hurting housing markets and citizens looking for housing. Currently, the only viable solution to this crisis is increasing the amount of housing. According to the European Investment Bank, housing needs to be increased by at least 25% to support the number of people residing in the EU, which would cost 27 billion euros.¹

Simultaneously, an extensive refugee crisis has been developing in Eastern Europe. A refugee crisis is defined as “a situation of acute humanitarian need, where conflict has created a large number of forcibly displaced persons within a short period of time.”² This particular refugee crisis is being fueled by the Russo-Ukrainian war. This war started on February 24, 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine -- starting one of the longest wars in Europe since World War 1. Conflict between Russia and Ukraine first arose in 2014, when Russia illegally annexed Crimea, a peninsula in Eastern Europe. Multiple invasions occurred, with none of them being nearly as devastating as Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine. This invasion devastated the entirety of Eastern Europe through its extensive fallout.³ One of the

¹ Lefort, Janel Siemplenski, and Emily Sinnott. “Why does Europe have a housing crisis and how do we fix it?” *European Investment Bank*,

<https://www.eib.org/en/essays/housing-crisis-solutions-europe>.
² “The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics and International Relations.” *Oxford University Press eBooks*, 2018, doi:10.1093/acref/9780199670840.001.0001

³ Kirby, Paul. “Why did Putin’s Russia invade Ukraine and how could the war end?” *BBC*, 13 August 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cj0q964851po>.

greatest consequences of the Russo-Ukrainian war has been an influx of displaced people.

It has been speculated that Russia's government, otherwise known as the Kremlin, may have purposely increased refugee flow to put pressure on Ukrainian allies. Regardless of the reason for the refugee influx, it is undeniable that this war has a huge impact on the number of refugees in Europe. As of July 31, 2025, there are 5,675,680 Ukrainian refugees globally, with about 90% of those refugees residing in Europe.⁴

The increasing number of Ukrainian refugees across Europe is directly contributing to the housing crisis in the EU. As with any refugee crisis at such a large scale, all refugees entering a new host country need economic support; most prominently, shelter. This situation is particularly hard to solve because of its nature. Not knowing when or how the war could end makes it difficult to budget to support refugees, as it is unclear how much money is needed and where it is needed. And, even if the war does end, there will still be an extensive amount of time in which damages from the war are repaired. Solely due to the Russo-Ukrainian war, about 176 million dollars worth of damage has been done to vital infrastructure.⁵

Another problem is the quality of housing. In numerous countries across Europe, there is a sufficient amount of housing for Ukrainian refugees, but the quality of the housing is inadequate. For example, the United Kingdom created the 'Homes For Ukraine' scheme, which matched Ukrainian refugees who were on a visa with a sponsor household.⁶ But, this program was used for malicious intent. Many UK residents were using it as a means to take advantage of refugees. Refugees were exploited for money and put into danger. This made the 'Homes for Ukraine' program especially

dangerous for women and children due to predatory men.⁷

The responsibility of providing housing for Ukrainian refugees falls on governments -- and so far, it has greatly exhausted them.

EU governments have had to single-handedly provide housing for Ukrainian refugees, since they have received very little monetary and logistical support from the United Nations, Russia, or Ukraine. The actions taken by the United Nations have been somewhat helpful, but there is still much to be done to make these actions truly impactful. Providing housing for Ukrainian refugees has used nearly two-thirds of the EU's 30 billion euros spent on Ukrainian refugee resettlement.

As mentioned earlier, many actions have been taken by the United Nations and the European Union in order to alleviate the ongoing refugee housing crisis in Eastern Europe. One of the most prevalent pieces of legislation is the Temporary Protection Directive. The Temporary Protection Directive is an EU directive that allows countries to protect refugees who need assistance, while simultaneously ensuring that asylum systems aren't overwhelmed. It was established on July 20, 2001 (so it wasn't created solely for the Ukrainian refugee crisis), but it is constantly being extended. Currently, it is valid until March 2026. This directive doesn't require applications from asylum seekers and refugees and allows Ukrainian nationals to have rights to a residence permit, education, medical care, housing, jobs, and social welfare assistance across the entire EU.⁸

An additional important action taken is the UNHCR's Emergency Shelter and Housing Program in Ukraine. This program has repaired more than forty thousand

⁴ "Ukraine Refugee Situation." *Operational Data Portal*, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>.

⁵ "Explainer: War in Ukraine - the human cost and humanitarian response." *UNHCR*, 21 February 2025, <https://www.unhcr.org/us/news/stories/explainer-war-ukraine-human-cost-and-humanitarian-response>.

⁶ "Apply for a visa under the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme." *GOV.UK*, 18 March 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-visa-under-the-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme>.

⁷ "Hundreds of Ukrainian refugees removed from UK's 'unsuitable' housing sponsors; Homes for Ukraine scheme 'unravelling' as government seeks new accommodation for 600 people at risk of being exploited by hosts * Russia-Ukraine war -- latest updates." *Observer* [London, England], 8 May 2022. *Gale In Context: Global Issues*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A702947800/GIC?u=nysl_ce_faymanhs&id=bookmark-GIC&xid=96896dc8. Accessed 21 Aug. 2025.

⁸ Luyten, Katrien. "Temporary Protection Directive." *European Parliament*, July 2024, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/762373/EPRS_BRI\(2024\)762373_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/762373/EPRS_BRI(2024)762373_EN.pdf).

homes damaged by war and has cost 114 million dollars so far. It pays for the full repair of homes damaged by war -- from contractors to construction materials. It also works to repair common areas in multistory buildings, such as apartment buildings. The program does this to encourage people to apply to the *Evidnovlennia* program by Ukraine's Ministry of Development of Community and Territories.⁹

One aspect to consider when providing housing for Ukrainian refugees is cost & efficiency. Most Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries have reported that it costs under \$10,000 per head to economically support refugees.¹⁰ The amount of personal contribution needed from refugees varies from country to country. For example, in the Netherlands, Ukrainian refugees receive no subsistence allowance. Additionally, if they live in municipal housing accommodations and are over 18 with a job or receiving benefits, they must pay towards the cost of their accommodation. The amount they have to pay depends on their income and the number of people in their household, with the maximum being 992.80 euros.¹¹

Another aspect to consider when providing housing for Ukrainian refugees is the increasing amount of xenophobia in Eastern Europe. Generally speaking, Europe has adopted a harsher stance on migration & asylum policy-wise. This policy shift happened in 2024, following a push from voters for a tougher stance on migration and new far-right leaders across the EU. This led to an increase in xenophobia against migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees.¹² Xenophobia negatively impacts refugees' abilities to get housing and indirectly causes refugees to be socially and physically isolated.

⁹ *UNHCR Ukraine Emergency Shelter and housing factsheet - March 2025*. UNHCR Operational Data Portal (ODP). (n.d.). <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/116290>

¹⁰ Mitchell, Ian. "The Costs of Hosting Refugees in OECD Countries and Why the UK Is an Outlier." *Center for Global Development*, 25 September 2024, <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/costs-hosting-refugees-oecd-countries-and-why-uk-outlier>.

¹¹ "Ukrainian Refugees: Personal Contribution." *Government of the Netherlands*, <https://www.government.nl/topics/reception-of-refugees-from-ukraine/ukrainian-refugees-personal-contribution>.

¹² Afzal, Madiha. "Understanding Europe's turn on migration | Brookings." *Brookings Institution*, 24 October 2024, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/understanding-europes-turn-on-migration/>.

Xenophobia has been particularly elevated against Ukrainian Roma refugees. The Roma people are the largest minority group in Europe, and they have been discriminated against since World War 2. Many Ukrainian Roma have been displaced, but are undocumented, which means that they don't receive the benefits of legislation created specifically for Ukrainian citizens who have been displaced. Ukrainian Roma have also faced discrimination throughout the entire resettlement process. They are more likely to be attacked by Ukrainian nationalists in their host country. Additionally, Ukrainian Roma are treated unfairly in refugee shelters. Often, they are segregated from Ukrainian refugees and put into inadequate living spaces, such as abandoned universities and detention centers, or denied exit from Ukraine. Furthermore, many landlords will refuse to house refugees unless they're white (which excludes Roma).¹³

Many European nations have been using ad-hoc solutions to alleviate the refugee housing crisis. Ad-hoc solutions are temporary solutions meant to be there for refugees while they work independently to obtain permanent housing. However, these solutions can often be unreliable.¹⁴

One last aspect to consider when formulating solutions is the involvement of supranational organizations and NGOS. Some key organizations in this situation have been the International Organization for Migration, which has supported over 4.4 million people in Ukraine by providing both shelter & traditional housing, Housing for IDP, and the World Bank. These are just a few examples of many organizations to consider collaborating with.

¹³ Blum, Mollie, and Max Kampelman. "Ukrainian Roma Refugees Face Discrimination Throughout Europe - CSCE." *Helsinki Commission*, <https://www.csce.gov/articles/ukrainian-roma-refugees-face-discrimination-throughout-europe-2/>.

¹⁴ Lakševics, K., Franz, Y., Haase, A., Nasya, B., Patti, D., Reeger, U., Raubiško, I., Schmidt, A., & Šuvajevs, A. (2023). The permanent regime of temporary solutions: Housing of forced migrants in Europe as a policy challenge. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 31(1), 81-87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09697764231197963> (Original work published 2024)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- How can nations build upon current programs and legislation created to provide housing for Ukrainian refugees and make them more effective?
- How can nations collaborate with prominent supranational organizations and NGOs to provide housing for Ukrainian refugees?
- How can nations reduce Ukrainian refugees in the current EU housing crisis?
- How can nations ensure that all housing for Ukrainian refugees is safe and has livable conditions?
- How can nations ensure that the housing process for refugees is ethnicity blind to ensure equal treatment of Roma and other marginalized groups?
- How can nations combat or alleviate future refugee crises?

HELPFUL SOURCES:

Ukraine's refugees highlight the shameful EU Housing Crisis

<https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/ukraines-refugees-highlight-the-shameful-eu-housing-crisis/>

Housing for migrants and refugees in the UNECE region: Challenges and practices

https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Housing%20for%20Migrants_compressed_0.pdf

Housing for Ukrainian Refugees in Europe: Options for Long-Term Solutions

<https://www.habitat.org/emea/housing-ukrainian-refugees-europe#:~:text=The%20refugee%20crisis%20in%20Ukraine,be%20discussed%20in%20this%20document.>

The Longer-Term Repercussions of Ukrainian Displacement

<https://www.saisjournal.eu/article/76-The-Longer-Term-Repercussions-of-Ukrainian-Displacement.cfm>

Ukraine Refugee Situation Statistics

<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

TOPIC 2: ENHANCING REGIONAL PROTECTIONS FOR DISPLACED POPULATIONS IN THE NORTHERN TRIANGLE OF CENTRAL AMERICA

The Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA) currently stands in a state of crisis as it relates to the increasingly large number of displaced populations throughout the region. While there is increased pressure on the NTCA, this disaster has evolved into a worldwide endeavor.

In order to understand the extent of this issue, it is crucial to acknowledge the severity of the events that led to the rise of these displaced populations. Organized criminal violence, including drug cartels and human trafficking, as well as gang activity within groups of maras, violent and transactional criminal organizations, is directly connected to increased rates of homicide¹⁵. This, therefore, creates a climate of fear and insecurity, in turn forcing different populations of people dependent on each specific situation to flee to neighboring communities and across borders. Generational poverty has also continued to infiltrate these communities and magnify the growing issue at hand. Trapped in torturous cycles of poverty, these families are more likely to partake in criminal activity and fall under the control of larger gangs and criminal organizations as a way to compensate and cope with hardship in their day-to-day lives.

Instability in the greater NTCA region has also intensified as a direct result of poor leadership, negligible enforcement of the law by government officials, and corruption within top levels of government. This, in turn, leads to the inflation and magnification of the greater issue at hand.

The growing practice of forcible evictions has further resulted in the internal displacement of indigenous and peasant communities. Not only have forcible evictions been an increased cause, but gender based violence, specifically against women and

¹⁵ "Mafia of the Poor: Gang Violence and Extortion in Central America | International Crisis Group." *Crisisgroup.org*, 6 Apr. 2017, www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/central-america-guatemala-honduras-el-salvador/062-mafia-poor-gang-violence-and-extortion-central-america.

non-gender-conforming individuals, has also been of major concern. This sex-based violence is primarily based on power dynamics within relationships and patriarchal structures. Many of the communities in and around the NTCA largely originated in and were influenced by almost one hundred percent male leadership as it relates to lawmakers and government officials, as well as gang leaders and drug lords.¹⁶ These patriarchal societies often result in femicide, domestic violence, hate crimes, and the overall exploitation of women within these communities.

This goes hand-in-hand with the overwhelming control of criminal groups, with their influence extending into schools, prisons, businesses, and the general public sphere of influence, in which individuals are taken advantage of and forced into these groups to be used as pawns. Because these societies exist, the drive for women to escape these awful cyclic systems is much more prominent. As a result, these women attempt to flee, leaving their homes and sometimes even crossing borders in an effort to bring themselves and often their children to safer regions.

While El Salvador has experienced significant gang violence alongside poor leadership and overall government instability, they have also dealt with large-scale natural disasters as a result of climate change and general geography. From volcano eruptions to landslides and flash flooding to hurricanes and tropical storms, the loss of infrastructure has only worsened the greater issue at hand. Not only are displaced populations without legal protections and rights, but they are also often without homes and belongings, with nowhere to go.

Through different families and small communities of people leaving their homes and relocating to different areas within the greater NTCA region, this causes massive instability economically and politically, as well as putting increased pressure and stress on the international community. International stress and impact vary within each country, dependent on

¹⁶ USIDHR. "Tackling Violence against Women in the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA)." *Usidhr.org*, 2021, usidhr.org/tackling-violence-against-women-in-the-northern-triangle-of-central-america-ntca.

several factors including economic availability, space, and policy. Housing refugees puts enormous financial and political stress on host countries in terms of providing for these displaced populations. Countries including the United States, Mexico, and Spain, as well as others, have played key roles in providing for these populations. More internationally, the world has seen an increase in asylum applications¹⁷, which this crisis has directly affected and contributed to. Evidently, there has also been an influx of humanitarian concerns for the health and safety of the refugee populations internally and externally.

As for means of focusing on the more dire internal catastrophe, it is of utmost importance to place regional protections to protect overall human safety, control violence, create access to all basic needs, provide healthcare, provide legal protections, and maintain economic stability. The countries that are most affected by this issue must be conscious of economic control and stability, as well as how free movement of large populations of people can have major consequences as it relates to social and cultural change, public services, increased diversity, and potential labor markets.

Controlling criminal and gang violence, as well as creating and enforcing the law through incorrupt courts, is one of the most important factors to consider in this time of unrest. The number one concern of displaced populations is the safety of those who are relocated and their surrounding communities, and a major emphasis must be placed on this issue in further research and in discussion at the upcoming conference. Parallel with overall safety is the concern for all basic needs to be met. Displaced persons are often forced to leave their homes and inner societies quickly and without much warning, frequently resulting in undersupplied necessities. These internal and external refugees often relocate to overcrowded shelters or community centers where conditions are unsanitary and health is not a major concern. This can lead to further medical issues, including the rapid spread of disease. The overall availability of clean water is also incredibly limited,

¹⁷ UNHCR. "Global Trends." *UNHCR US*, 2024, www.unhcr.org/us/global-trends.

which may leave these groups even more vulnerable than they were originally. Not only is physical health impacted by this crisis, but so is mental health. During times of hardship and stress, families may be split, and oftentimes, individuals are surviving on a day-to-day basis, which may result in declining mental health.

As for the concern in legal protections, while it is the job of each respective government to keep their citizens safe in times of distress, it must be understood that this is not always possible during times of crisis. Internally displaced persons, or IDPs, are not subject to the same legal rights as refugees, making them even more vulnerable to being taken advantage of by corrupt governments and court systems. Lacking documentation and identification is also a major concern, as therefore they minimize all potential protections and rights. Along with incorrect stigmas and discrimination placed around these groups of displaced persons, all these problems may be further exacerbated when lacking proper documentation.

While all of these concerns will continue to be standing issues as the crisis continues to grow and evolve, there has been some headway within the UNHCR to help the crisis and provide protection for these displaced persons within the greater NTCA region. To protect refugees internally within the region, UNHCR has worked to provide support to shelters and safe houses in Central America and Mexico in an effort to help these people immigrate and move across borders as safely as possible. They have also provided financial aid to host countries and assisted in making efficient refugee status determination procedures. In 2024 alone, the UNHCR supported over 28,000 people through mobile units and assistance centers in Guatemala, provided cash and emergency shelters for thousands of Hondurans, and strengthened 15 separate shelters that hosted 2,500 people monthly.¹⁸

Not to mention a large effort made to supply livelihood and education services to empower

¹⁸ *El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras emergency*. UNHCR US, <https://www.unhcr.org/us/emergencies/el-salvador-guatemala-and-honduras-emergency>

displaced women, children, those who identify with the LGBTQ community, and other vulnerable groups. Refugees who may have also been victims of sexual gender gender-based violence, including harassment and rape, have also been provided aid, cash grants, psychological support, and legal assistance. Furthermore, several campaigns have been launched that are aimed at promoting peaceful coexistence between citizens and refugees within host countries to decrease societal tensions. The MIRPS or the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework is also an integral part of the UNHCR's efforts to combat this crisis. This organization includes Belize, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Panama. While there have been many clear efforts made to relieve the growing issue of displaced persons in the Northern Triangle of Central America, there is still a dire need for reform, assistance, structure, and peace.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. How are internally displaced persons compared to externally displaced persons affected differently, and how may that be considered when creating solutions?
2. How may different nations work together to build and develop efficient and safe solutions to accounting for and relocating these displaced communities while keeping international law in mind?
3. How may NGOs be supportive of these communities during times of hardship?
4. How may financial stress and pressure be relieved in host countries?

HELPFUL SOURCES:

Central America Displacement Crisis Explained
<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/central-america-displacement-crisis-explained/#:~:text=Some%20of%20UNHCR's%20activities%20in.for%20UNHCR's%20newest%20monthly%20donor>

Internal Displacement in the Northern Triangle of Central America
<https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/internaldisplacement.pdf>

Central America's Turbulent Northern Triangle
<https://www.cfr.org/background/central-americas-turbulent-northern-triangle>