

Committee: UNHCR**Topic: Improving Family Reunification Services at Refugee Camps and Borders****Report of the Chairs**

I. Theme of the Conference

Model United Nations San Antonio (MUNSA) is a conference dedicated to fostering authentic and passionate debate amongst delegates to generate solutions to current global issues. The theme of *MUNSA XXIV: Envision* encapsulates our mission to urge delegates to foresee a future in which these problems have been dissolved. With collaboration in mind, delegates from every committee are encouraged to visualize innovative resolutions and a prosperous world to come. Together, we will propel ourselves into an age in which brilliant ideas converge to transform our world and address its most paramount issues.

II. Rationale

There are currently 65.6 million people displaced all over the world due to persecution, violence, and human rights violations.¹ 22.5 million of these displaced people are minors. In the U.S alone as of 2015, 2,654 children have been separated from their parents. Across Europe, there are thousands of children who are arriving unaccompanied every month. Family separation is a problem that has been occurring for years all over the world and is a complex issue that stems from fear. Governments continue to try to stymie the flow of migrants to their countries by creating and enforcing family separation policies, but it has become clear that these policies are ineffective in their intended purpose. Countries try to stop people from coming by warning parents that their children will be taken from them, but people will continue to persevere no matter how hard countries resist. Without putting efforts towards ending family separation, young children will continue to be put in detention centers by themselves.² This committee, with the collaboration of all delegates, hopes to tackle family separation to build a future in which the fundamental social unit of the family is preserved among migrants.

III. Background of the Topic

Family separation was first introduced at the end of World War I as a way to put a stop to the thousands of fleeing refugees.³ The United States and Europe would often deport children back to their birth countries while the parents would remain undocumented in the country they escaped to. Currently, children who get separated from their parents at borders are put into detaining centers until their parents can prove their biological relation to the child or until they can circumvent the system.⁴ This process can take several months, and there are many cases where parents never see their child again either due to incomplete identification or death. There are many cases where one country's policy on family separation deeply affects another country. Brazil has been directly impacted by the United States' family separation policy; 49% of Brazilian parents who have crossed the border have been separated from their children.⁵ This has convinced Brazilians to take action on their own soil to reunite families.

The United Nations has taken many steps to put an end to family separation. The UN compelled the United States to put an end to family separation, saying its policies violated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In other countries such as Austria and Australia, there are organizations such as the Red Cross or the Special Humanitarian Programme who are working to stop family separation, because their own countries have yet to deal with the crisis.

IV. Contemporary Evidence of the Topic

Middle Eastern and European nations are overwhelmed by the number of refugees seeking asylum in their country. In 2018, Turkey had the largest number of refugees worldwide, with Pakistan and Uganda close behind.⁶ The majority of these refugees are Syrians who fled due to human rights violations and violence in their country. No other country has family separation policies as strict as the United States; its policies have been subject to media and international scrutiny. Despite the attention to the US, many unaccompanied children arrive alone seeking asylum in countries all over the world.⁷ For example, Germany has the largest amount of children seeking asylum in the world. In addition, migrants who travel North from South America often get separated from their family along the way.

Family reunification services are drastically different all around the world. In Canada and many other countries, migrants must already have a sponsored person in the country to apply for

their non-accompanying family members to join them.⁸ Since family separation is such a new policy, many developing nations have yet to establish any unification practices. The United Nations continues to make strides to unite the families who have been separated along borders or during any part of their travels. In 2019, 2,737 children were separated from their families in the U.S. alone.⁹ The process to get your child back once you are separated is long and strenuous. Delegates in this committee must construct creative solutions to family separation; solutions that respect family unity while upholding the laws of all member states.

V. References and Research Resources

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6. UNHCR Turkey Factsheet. 31, August 2018. UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Retrieved Sept. 8, 2019. From reliefweb.int/report/turkey/unhcr-turkey-factsheet-august-2010

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8. Center for immigration studies. N.d. Retrieved Sept. 8, 2019. From cis.org/Immigrationopic/Family-Reunification
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VI. Note to the Delegates

Greetings delegates, we look forward to meeting you and hearing an exciting debate this coming January. If you need anything at all, please do not hesitate to ask.

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