*Delegates,*

Welcome to Kennesaw State University’s 2024 High School Model United Nations Conference and to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). My name is Daniah Chaudhry and I will be serving as your Director for the duration of the conference. I am currently a member of both the Kennesaw State University’s Model United Nations and High School Model United Nations teams. I am majoring in English Education, for which I am currently student-teaching 11th grade American Literature. This will be my second year on staff at KSU HSMUN, however my first year as Director for a committee. I am extremely eager to meet each and every one of you and to hear your wonderful insights regarding the important topics to be discussed, and I cannot wait to begin session!

Serving as your Assistant Director for this committee is Amanda Giddings. She is a recent graduate from Kennesaw State with her Bachelors in International Affairs. This will be her fifth year on staff at KSU HSMUN. She is currently looking to pursue her Masters degree in International Development and looks forward to seeing the discussion and collaboration that will occur on these topics during the conference.

UNRWA has played a vital part in international relations since the creation of the United Nations. This council was formed as one of the six main principal organs of the UN and is tasked with coordinating the economic and social responses of multiple UN agencies.

**The topics under discussion for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East are:**

1. **The Impact of Conflict and Displacement on Palestinian Refugee Children’s Access to Education**
2. **Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities Among Palestinian Refugees**

Each Member State’s delegation within this committee is expected to submit a position paper presenting their ideas for both agenda topics. A position paper is a short essay describing your Member State’s history and position on the issues at hand. There are three key parts to any successful position paper: history, the current status of the issue, and possible solutions for the future. Information for properly formatting the position papers, as well as valuable advice for writing a quality paper, can be found in the Delegate Preparation section of the HSMUN webpage (http://conference.kennesaw.edu/hsmun/). Delegates are reminded that papers should be no longer than two pages in length with titles in size 12 and text in size 10-12 Times New Roman. Citations should be footnoted in Chicago-style formatting, such as those used inside this guide. Furthermore, plagiarism in an academic setting is unacceptable and will nullify any score for the paper in question. During the grading process, we will be utilizing the university’s plagiarism checker. Wikipedia is a wonderful place to begin researching, but we highly encourage the use of peer-reviewed academic articles or trusted media sources. The objective of a position paper is to present the diplomatic position of your Member State on both topics as accurately as possible. ***All position papers MUST be sent to ksuhsmun2024@gmail.com by February 24th, 2024. Late papers will be accepted until February 28th, 2024 with points penalized.*** Daniah and I send you the warmest regards in preparation for the KSU HSMUN Conference 2023 and look forward to reviewing your position papers. Please feel free to contact the Secretary-General, through the email listed above, should you have any questions during your preparation for the conference.

**History of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency**

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was established on December 8, 1949, in response to the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1948. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 302 officially created UNRWA, assigning it the crucial mission of providing humanitarian aid and assistance to Palestinian refugees directly affected by the conflict. Initially, UNRWA's primary focus was on immediate relief efforts, offering essential provisions such as food, shelter, and healthcare to Palestinian refugees dispersed across the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Operating under the directorship of John Blandford Jr., UNRWA played a pivotal role in alleviating the pressing humanitarian crisis stemming from the mass displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. Over the years, UNRWA's mandate evolved to include not only relief efforts but also long-term development programs to improve the socio-economic conditions of Palestinian refugees. Education became a central component of UNRWA's activities, with the establishment of schools for Palestinian refugee children, aiming to provide them with access to quality education.

In addition to education, UNRWA expanded its services to include healthcare, vocational training, and social services, striving to enhance the overall well-being and self-reliance of the Palestinian refugee population. The agency's work became integral in addressing the protracted nature of the refugee situation. UNRWA faced various challenges throughout its history, including funding shortages, political tensions in the region, and complex humanitarian issues. Despite these challenges, the agency persisted in its mission to support Palestinian refugees and alleviate their suffering. In recent years, UNRWA has adapted to changing dynamics in the Middle East and continued to provide essential services to Palestinian refugees. The agency has also played a role in advocating for a just and lasting resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, addressing the root causes of the refugee crisis. UNRWA's commitment to the principles of the United Nations, including human rights and humanitarian assistance, remains a cornerstone of its mission. The agency continues to operate in a complex geopolitical environment, navigating challenges to ensure the well-being and dignity of Palestinian refugees.

1. **The Impact of Conflict and Displacement on Palestinian Refugee Children’s Access to Education**

***Introduction***

In the tumultuous landscape of conflict, the enduring plight of Palestinian refugee children, particularly concerning their access to education amidst conflict and displacement, stands as a poignant testament to the complex challenges in the region. UNRWA plays a pivotal role in addressing the multifaceted needs of vulnerable children, serving as a beacon of hope amidst the tumultuous historical backdrop. This guide embarks on a detailed exploration of the impacts which displacement has upon Palestinian refugee children’s access to education, addressing the persistent barriers and UNRWA's contributions to ensuring that education remains an enduring right for every child. Throughout its history, UNRWA has navigated the intricate web of challenges posed by conflict in the region. The agency's commitment to the cause is deeply enshrined in various United Nations resolutions and forums, reflecting the international community's recognition of the unique circumstances facing Palestinian refugees. For instance, UN General Assembly Resolution 302, which established UNRWA in 1949, underscored the urgent need for humanitarian aid and assistance for Palestinian refugees affected by the Arab-Israeli conflict.[[1]](#footnote-0) Furthermore, the agency's role is amplified in forums such as the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), where the severity of the crisis and the involved parties are meticulously considered. UNRWA's dedicated efforts align with the principles outlined in General Assembly resolution A/RES/46/182, affirming the crucial role of humanitarian agencies in providing emergency responses and aid to populations in need.[[2]](#footnote-1)

In recent times, the agency's resiliency and adaptability have been evident in its responses to specific challenges. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, UNRWA swiftly adjusted its operations, ensuring the continuity of education through innovative measures, highlighting the agency's commitment to overcoming adversities. The exploration within this guide aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the historical, political, and social contexts that shape the educational landscape for Palestinian refugee children, emphasizing the integral role of UNRWA in fostering educational resilience amidst the complexities of conflict and displacement.

***History***

The foundational General Assembly Resolution 302 outlined UNRWA's mandate and underscored the pressing need to provide relief, including food, shelter, and healthcare, to those affected by the conflict. The agency's early years were characterized by a focus on emergency relief, setting the stage for its enduring commitment to the welfare of Palestinian refugees. The United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education first called for the establishment of a global emergency education fund at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2015.[[3]](#footnote-2)

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, UNRWA underwent a transformative phase as it expanded its operations to address the comprehensive needs of Palestinian refugees, particularly in the realm of education. The establishment of schools became a cornerstone of UNRWA's mission, recognizing education as a fundamental right and a key driver for sustainable development. As conflicts persisted, most notably during the 1967 Six-Day War, UNRWA adapted its operations to include the newly occupied territories, showcasing the agency's resilience and flexibility in the face of evolving geopolitical challenges. The educational component of UNRWA's work gained prominence, reflecting a commitment to fostering the well-being and future prospects of Palestinian refugee children.

In the 1960s and 1970s, UNRWA's dedication to education became evident through its collaboration with UNESCO, leading to the implementation of quality educational practices across the region. During this period, the innovative use of distance learning contributed to a substantial reduction in the percentage of untrained teachers from 90% to 9%.[[4]](#footnote-3) As the organization continued to provide education for Palestine refugees, its commitment to quality education remained steadfast. In the 1980s and 2000s, UNRWA's education system faced increasing scrutiny, leading to a growing recognition within and beyond the Agency of the need for reform. Despite being acknowledged as equal to or better than the education systems of host countries, concerns arose about declining quality, as evidenced by results from Agency-wide Monitoring Learning Achievements tests. The changing demands of a 21st-century education system further fueled the call for a reevaluation of UNRWA's educational initiatives.

Between 2003 and 2010, external factors such as the global financial crisis and the Iraqi refugee crisis significantly impacted the region, posing challenges to UNRWA's operating contexts. Issues included reduced remittances from diaspora Palestinians, the return of workers, and a decrease in donor aid flows. In response to these challenges, UNRWA conducted a comprehensive review of its education program in 2010, facilitated by the external organization Universalia.[[5]](#footnote-4) This review laid the groundwork for the subsequent development of the UNRWA Education Reform Strategy. In 2010, UNRWA initiated the development of a "Sustaining Change" strategy, aligning with the overall Reform agenda of the Agency. This strategic approach aimed to consolidate and build upon the achievements of the initial phase, with a specific focus on reforming programmatic areas. Education emerged as a key component of this broader reform strategy.

In 2010, UNRWA initiated the development of a "Sustaining Change" strategy, aligning with the overall Reform agenda of the Agency. This strategic approach aimed to consolidate and build upon the achievements of the initial phase, with a specific focus on reforming programmatic areas. Education emerged as a key component of this broader reform strategy. In the subsequent years, spanning from 2016 to 2021, the UNRWA Education Reform Strategy unfolded. The strategy, with an emphasis on the classroom, teaching, and learning pedagogy, comprised eight key dimensions. These included teacher development, curriculum and student assessment, inclusive education, and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET).[[6]](#footnote-5) The overarching goal was to bring about transformational change toward enhanced quality education for Palestine refugees.

***Current situation***

Looking ahead to the period from 2021 to 2026, the Reform is estimated to cost $4 million over five years. It addresses initial outlays for materials, evidence-based policies, frameworks, monitoring, and evaluation. The focus remains on establishing a strong enabling environment, aligning with UNRWA's strategic frameworks, and ensuring that education continues to be a priority for donors. The Reform aligns with the UNRWA Sustaining Change agenda, Medium Term Strategy, and global Education For All aspirations, emphasizing the imperative of education reform for the development of Palestine refugees on individual, societal, regional, and global levels.[[7]](#footnote-6)

As of 2020, UNRWA continues to implement a Digital Learning Platform (DLP) which operates assistance and protection to Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Gaza Strip.[[8]](#footnote-7) The DLP is a part of UNRWA’s “Self Learning Programme,” which is designed for children who cannot regularly access school to learn at home or in their communities. The Education in Emergencies programme further implements the delivery of education in innovative and alternative ways, having more psychosocial support to children, and safety and security training for students, staff and parents.

As of 2023, Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the UN Fund for Education in Emergencies, announced a $10 million 12 month grant in support of UNRWA’s efforts to provide children in Gaza with life-saving psychological support and protective learning processes.[[9]](#footnote-8)

As of 2023, the current situation in the Gaza Strip is marked by severe challenge. Since the onset of the war, 85 incidents have impacted 67 UNRWA installations, with 17 of them directly hit. The gravity of the situation is underscored by the fact that, as of the latest reporting, there have been five Israeli Forces' incursions into UNRWA installations during the conflict. Geographically, over half of the impacted installations are located south of Wadi Gaza, reflecting concentrated challenges in this area. Tragically, the toll on UNRWA personnel is unprecedented, with 104 colleagues losing their lives, marking the highest number of United Nations aid workers killed in a conflict in UN history. Significantly, at least half of these casualties occurred south of Wadi Gaza. The humanitarian crisis is further exacerbated by the displacement of nearly 900,000 people seeking refuge in UNRWA facilities across the Gaza Strip, a number six times greater than what UNRWA initially planned for under a worst-case scenario. This dire situation necessitates urgent attention and coordinated international efforts to address the immediate needs and ensure the safety of those affected.[[10]](#footnote-9)

***Conclusion***

The critical situation in the Gaza Strip highlights the urgent need for UNRWA to address the educational needs of refugee children amidst the ongoing conflict. The staggering impact of conflict on UNRWA installations underscores the severity of the humanitarian crisis. Despite facing immense challenges, UNRWA remains steadfast in its commitment to providing education for displaced children. The organization's efforts are crucial in mitigating the disruptions caused by conflict, with nearly 900,000 displaced individuals seeking refuge in UNRWA facilities. The scale of displacement, six times greater than anticipated, emphasizes the immense strain on resources and the urgency of addressing educational needs for these vulnerable children. In the face of adversity, UNRWA's dedication to education emerges as a beacon of hope, signifying the organization's resilience and unwavering commitment to the well-being and future prospects of refugee children affected by conflict in the region. As the international community grapples with the aftermath of the war, there is an imperative for sustained support and collaborative efforts to ensure that the right to education is upheld for the displaced children who represent the future of the region.

***Committee Directive***

The committee directs delegates to delve into the intricate challenges surrounding the access to education for Palestinian refugee children in conflict zones, with a focus on understanding the generational impacts of such adversity. Delegates are encouraged to explore the historical context and current dynamics contributing to the heightened educational challenges faced by these children, particularly in the aftermath of the recent conflict in the Gaza Strip. Consideration should be given to the long-term consequences on future generations, addressing questions such as: How does prolonged conflict affect the educational trajectories of Palestinian refugee children, and what are the generational implications? How can the international community collaborate to ensure that these children have sustained access to quality education despite the ongoing conflict? Furthermore, the committee urges delegates to harness creative and innovative solutions to address the urgent issue of education for displaced Palestinian refugee children. Delegates are encouraged to think beyond traditional approaches and devise strategies which utilize technology and international partnerships to enhance educational opportunities.

1. **Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities Among Palestinian Refugees**

***Introduction***

Even in times without conflict children with disabilities face greater challenges in receiving an education than those without. Among Palestinian Refugees this difficulty grows as there is a large number of growing refugees and only limited resources with which to provide assistance. The United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the near east (UNRWA) operates 706 elementary and preparatory schools for palestinian refugees, supported by 19,866 education staff, which teaches 543,075 students.[[11]](#footnote-10) These children receiving education are of immense importance to UNRWA but the problem for children with disabilities attempting to get education in an UNRWA-run facility have to be within or nearby one of the UNRWA camps that these facilities are placed within, otherwise they won’t be able to make the journey to school each day, either due to physical disabilities or safety concerns. This problem extends beyond UNRWA schools too, as there are many cases where schools are centralized around safe zones, leaving those far outside of them to fend for themselves and leaving more than 1,700 children within the West Bank to walk more than 5 km to school each day.[[12]](#footnote-11)

***History***

In the historical context of UNRWA’s efforts to ensure inclusive education for children with disabilities among Palestinian refugees, many significant milestones have shaped the organization’s commitment to providing equitable opportunities. In the early stages, attention was directed towards recognizing the unique challenges faced by children with disabilities within the Palestinian refugee population. It wasn't until the late 20th century, around the 1980s, that UNRWA began actively addressing these challenges, acknowledging the importance of inclusive education as a fundamental right.

UNRWA has operated since the mid-1900’s, starting with 93 schools accommodating 35,000 students, so it’s safe to say that UNRWA has come a long way since then.[[13]](#footnote-12) This is in no small part due to the importance UNRWA has placed on education, especially for young Palestinian girls wanting to receive an education. Additionally the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has partnered with UNRWA to assist with providing education to Palestinian refugees within Gaza, the West Bank, and surrounding Member States.[[14]](#footnote-13) This partnership has assisted with providing policies to better facilitate the education of Palestinian refugees while simultaneously lowering the rate of dropouts. Throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s, UNRWA made notable strides in incorporating inclusive education practices. Initiatives were implemented to identify and overcome barriers hindering the participation of children with disabilities in mainstream educational settings. This period marked a shift towards fostering a more inclusive environment, breaking down societal stigmas, and adapting educational facilities to accommodate diverse learning needs.[[15]](#footnote-14) As of the 2015-2016 school year, there were approximately 10,640 persons (6,409 boys and 4,231 girls) with disabilities studying in UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip.[[16]](#footnote-15) These students live with various major motor, fine motor, visual, hearing, health, speech and other impairments. As of 2015, UNRWA showcased its commitment to inclusive education for Special Needs students, encouraging their attendance in UNRWA schools. The Inclusive Education approach, implemented during this period, played a pivotal role in facilitating the integration of these students into mainstream schooling by offering additional support. To address more specialized needs, UNRWA strategically referred students to Community-Based Rehabilitation Centres (CBRCs). At that time, seven CBRCs were operational across the Gaza Strip, rendering essential services, including educational support, to approximately 800 refugee children with disabilities. Moreover, the Agency directly oversaw the welfare of 132 visually impaired children through the UNRWA Rehabilitation Centre for Visually Impaired in Gaza city. Additionally, the educational landscape in Gaza was enriched by the presence of 11 learning support centres, each dedicated to providing specialized services to children in need. This snapshot from 2015 exemplifies UNRWA's multifaceted approach to inclusive education, underscoring its commitment to ensuring educational accessibility and tailored support for students with diverse needs.[[17]](#footnote-16)

***Current Situation***

With recent conflicts within the region there has been an increase of people with disabilities among Palestinian refugees, with each conflict causing more and more. These conflicts have also directly impacted the ability of any Palestinian refugees to receive an education with individuals using schools as shelters, preventing them from being used as schools.[[18]](#footnote-17) Due to this some schools have started to pop up within the region specialized towards those with disabilities. In 2011 the first and only public secondary school for the deaf, Mustafa Sadeq Rafaee, was founded in Gaza, where more than 160 students enrolled within their first year.[[19]](#footnote-18) Among the students that attended this secondary school many further attended the Islamic University of Gaza in 2014.[[20]](#footnote-19) These individuals wouldn’t have had this opportunity within normal public schools within the region as they just aren’t equipped to deal with disabilities due to the large number of students they have to cater to.

In an effort to rectify the public school’s failings the Ministry of Education (MoE), the official government department for education within Palestine, enacted a 250-page strategic plan with goals and policies to provide quality education to individuals regardless of their gender or disability.[[21]](#footnote-20) Specifically, by 2030 the Ministry of Education wants to eliminate gender disparities within their education system and they have placed a greater focus on building new facilities and upgrading current ones to be more inclusive to children with disabilities and to provide safe, non-violent learning environments.[[22]](#footnote-21) These efforts have also led to the MoE partnering with higher institutions of learning within Palestine to provide easier access to further education past secondary schools to those with disabilities. All of the MoE’s efforts have culminated in a culture of acceptance and support within the educational world for those with disabilities, with these institutions assisting in developing a possible disabilities rights bill and also have worked towards changing negative views within the region towards those with disabilities.

These efforts though are very broad, lacking the specificity necessary to assist those with disabilities as their disabilities are, generally, very specific in regards to the accommodations that they require. Within government schools run by the Ministry of Education there are 2,847 individuals with an articulation disorder that may require some form of vocal therapy or an assistant, there are 2,257 students with visual impairment and 303 blind students that may require braille books and auditory aids, 1,362 students who are hard of hearing and 197 students who are deaf with the opposite requirements of the blind students.[[23]](#footnote-22) There are also 1642 students with a physical disability that may need mobility aids, automatic doors, or other structure to allow for ease of movement, and 793 students with a mental disability that require additional focus during education.[[24]](#footnote-23) While the Ministry of Education is making broad strokes to help these individuals often times they would benefit much more from plans catered towards them or schools, such as the first deaf school, Mustafa Sadeq Raqaee that specialize in teaching those with these disabilities. Overall while the situation is certainly improving it is a question of which approach to take to best assist everyone involved, as devoting too many resources too quickly, especially with the current volatile situation, may impact students without disabilities ability to receive an education but not devoting enough resources disallows these individuals from taking part in a core part of society.

***Conclusion***

This committee’s commitment to inclusive education for Palestinian refugee children is exemplified through its comprehensive Education Reform and the adoption of an Agency-wide Inclusive Education Policy. Developed collaboratively with the active involvement of all five fields and various stakeholders, this policy underscores a shared understanding and dedication to providing quality education that respects the rights and appreciates the diversity of all children.[[25]](#footnote-24) Recognizing the fundamental right to education for every child, regardless of gender, abilities, disabilities, or social circumstances, UNRWA's principles and approach guide teachers and staff in fostering inclusivity within the education system. The strategy outlines gradual and progressive steps, embedding the inclusive approach at every level, from strategic planning to classroom practices. By prioritizing child-friendly schools, promoting student participation, and addressing cross-cutting issues such as disability, gender, and protection, UNRWA strives to create an environment where every student feels valued and has equal learning opportunities. Through its unwavering commitment and practical strategies, UNRWA aims to ensure that all Palestine refugee children can realize their full potential, fostering an inclusive and empowering educational landscape.

***Committee Directive***

In addressing the crucial issue of inclusive education for children with disabilities among Palestinian refugees, the committee directs delegates to focus on devising comprehensive strategies and policies within the framework of UNRWA). Delegates are encouraged to explore and propose innovative solutions that ensure the rights and well-being of children with disabilities are not overlooked, especially in times of conflict and crisis. The directive calls for a holistic approach, considering both immediate needs and long-term sustainable practices that can withstand challenging circumstances. Furthermore, the directive urges delegates to contemplate measures to raise awareness about the importance of inclusive education, dispelling societal stigmas and fostering a culture of acceptance and support.

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