



DIYAFAH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL L.L.C

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**DISMUN 2026-2027 | UNITED NATIONS  
HIGH COMMISSIONER  
FOR REFUGEE**

**STUDY GUIDE 2026-2027**





**United  
Nations**

High Commissioner  
for Refugees

## UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES GUIDE 2026-2027

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2026-27 Diyafah International School Model United Nations Conference (DISMUN)! We are pleased to welcome you to the High Commissioner for Refugees committee. This year's Chair is Dazlyn Pereira, who is currently in Year 12, and this year's Deputy Chair is Riyanthika Anand Kumar, who is currently in Year 11.

***The topic under discussion for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is:***

- Ensuring Security and Dignity for Refugees in Border Regions

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a global UN agency mandated to protect and aid refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless or internally displaced people. Rather than having independent "member states," it is governed by the UN General Assembly and an Executive Committee consisting of over 100 UN member states.

This background guide is designed to introduce our committee's topics, but it should only serve as a starting point. We strongly urge delegates to conduct further in-depth research into their assigned member state's policies and to utilize the provided annotations to deepen their understanding.

On the [DISMUN](#) webpage, you will find resources that are essential to your preparation for the conference and as a reference during committee sessions. The [DISMUN Handbook](#) explains each step in the delegation process from preconference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Delegates should not discuss the topics or agenda with other members of their committee until the first committee session. We urge our delegates to be respectful of this request.

In addition, please review the mandatory [DISMUN Conduct Expectations](#) and the [DISMUN Procedure](#) on the DISMUN website. DIS wants to emphasise that any instances of discrimination based on race, gender, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated.

If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the Conference itself, please contact [Communications.DISMUN@diyafahinternationalschool.com](mailto:Communications.DISMUN@diyafahinternationalschool.com)

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

**Chair:** Dazlyn Pereira

**Deputy Chair:** Riyanthika Kumar

## **Committee History:**

**“A place where the international community unites to safeguard human dignity, protect the vulnerable, and ensure that those forced to flee are never left without hope or refuge.”**

### ***Introduction***

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is a critical agency of the United Nations, mandated by its Statute to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. The Office submits an annual report to the United Nations General Assembly. After the devastating effects of the Second World War and the resulting displacement across Europe, the international community decided to establish the UNHCR to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees, ensuring everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge. The Office was established as a principal humanitarian body tasked with the primary responsibility of protecting uprooted populations and brokering durable solutions to their plight.

The UNHCR formally began its operations on 1 January 1951, initially given a three-year mandate to assist European refugees in the wake of the war. Following its establishment, the agency established its permanent headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. At that time, a limited number of states formed its initial Executive Committee (ExCom) to oversee its programmatic functions. However, over subsequent decades, as global displacement crises expanded beyond Europe, discussions regarding the structure and reach of the agency began to take place. The Executive Committee gradually expanded its membership to include over one hundred Member States, and although its core humanitarian mandate remains steadfast, discussions regarding its response strategies and operational configuration take place frequently to meet evolving global challenges.

### ***Governance and Structure***

The UNHCR is a subsidiary organ of the United Nations General Assembly, operating on an entirely non-political, humanitarian, and social mandate. Unlike political bodies like the Security Council, the UNHCR does not possess the authority to adopt legally binding resolutions or enforce compliance on Member States. Instead, in accordance with the Statute of the Office of the UNHCR (1950) and Article 35 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, Member States undertake to cooperate with the Office, facilitating its fundamental duty to supervise the international application of refugee protections.

The UNHCR relies on a distinct set of operational tools to guide the international community and address humanitarian crises. For instance, the High Commissioner or the Chairman of the Executive Committee (ExCom) may issue formal statements, policy directives, or global appeals to communicate the official position of the agency. While these programmatic tools, recommendations, and ExCom conclusions are not legally binding, they carry immense moral and diplomatic weight. They successfully focus international attention on critical humanitarian emergencies, compel state action, and mobilize essential resource distribution to resolve displacement crises worldwide.

### ***Presidency***

Each member country of the UNHCR Executive Committee participates in the governance of the Committee under a leadership team headed by the Chairman, elected annually to ensure continuity. Executive Committee meetings are formally called by the High Commissioner to address urgent refugee matters, or upon the collective request of eight member countries. Under Article 35 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, member countries agree to cooperate fully with the UNHCR and support its duty to protect refugees worldwide. Additionally, according to Rule 4 of the Rules of Procedure, the official agenda for each meeting is prepared by the High Commissioner and presented for approval under the guidance of the Chairman.

### ***Participation***

Any Member State of the UN may attend the committee meetings upon the invitation of the Council. Member States are invited if the UNHCR committee is discussing an issue that directly concerns the interests of the Member State. Invited Member States do not have the right to vote but are allowed to submit proposals and draft resolutions. Furthermore, those Member States can inform the Council about a current crisis in their region. However, such proposals may be put to a vote only at the request of a member of the committee.

## ***Voting***

Each Member State represented in the committee shall have one vote. Decisions on draft resolutions and substantive matters shall be adopted by a simple majority of members present and voting. Procedural matters shall also be decided by a simple majority. As a humanitarian body focused on cooperation and refugee protection, delegates are encouraged to work towards consensus whenever possible in order to develop effective and widely supported solutions.

## ***Mandates, Functions & Powers***

The mandate of the UNHCR is to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide, as specified in the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol specifically govern the UNHCR and the framework for safeguarding uprooted populations. The 1951 Convention aims to establish the fundamental rights of refugees on a non-political basis, whereas the 1967 Protocol extends these protections globally without geographic limitations. Any Member State can report a humanitarian crisis or a sudden surge in forced migration to the UNHCR; the role of the UNHCR is to determine the severity of the crisis brought before the body and its international impact. The UNHCR is responsible for making recommendations to broker humanitarian solutions that take into account the previous measures attempted by the host countries involved. Collectively, these core instruments outline the specific functions and powers the UNHCR uses to achieve its mandate.

- **Sanctions:** Under its international protection mandate, the UNHCR cannot impose punitive economic or military sanctions, but it calls upon its members to strictly enforce international legal protections and prevent measures involving the forced return (*refoulement*) of refugees to territories where their lives are threatened. These include monitoring borders, conducting refugee status determinations, issuing identity documentation, preventing arbitrary detention, and advocating against discriminatory legal restrictions, among others. It may further mandate the establishment of humanitarian corridors, enforce international human rights standards in camp settings, or initiate interventions within national and international legal systems to defend asylum seekers.
- **Diplomatic Tools:** The UNHCR has a mandate to investigate any dispute or situation that might lead to mass displacement or humanitarian emergencies between states or other non-state groups or within states' national territories. To do so, it may "recommend methods of adjusting such disputes or the terms of settlement regarding refugee integration; formulate plans for the establishment of a system to regulate asylum procedures; determine the existence of a threat to refugee safety or act of persecution and recommend what humanitarian action should be taken."
- **Military Action:** The UNHCR does not take military action against a state or other entity, nor does it deploy combat troops; instead, it coordinates the deployment of field officers, emergency response teams, and protection experts to areas threatening the security and survival of displaced persons. The UNHCR may also decide to initiate emergency relief operations, as well as the extensions of their operational mandates and subsequent modification or withdrawal of humanitarian aid workers and resources from specific regions.
- **Partnerships:** The UNHCR also cooperates with several international and regional organisations as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to implement its decisions. Cooperation between the UNHCR and UN-related organisations, such as the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF, and the World Health Organization (WHO), is significant, but partnerships with independent intergovernmental organisations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and regional bodies like the African Union or the European Union Asylum Agency are also of paramount importance for addressing a broad range of issues such as statelessness, emergency shelter delivery, access to education, and extreme vulnerabilities faced by displaced non-state actors, among others.

## ***Conclusion***

As the international community faces increasing threats from climate-induced displacement and transnational humanitarian crises, the UNHCR has adapted to new working methods and broader and more open discussions. But these situations also represent the systemic divides among Member States regarding responsibility-sharing and border control. This lack of capacity can be partially explained by the agency's controversial funding process, specifically its near-total reliance on voluntary financial contributions from a small group of wealthy donor nations. However, as the UNHCR represents the leading body within the UN that has the mandate to coordinate global refugee protection and oversee the implementation of international refugee law, it is still the entity of utmost importance for the maintenance of international human rights and the resolution of forced displacement.

**STUDY GUIDE 2026–2027**

**Topic: Ensuring Security and Dignity for Refugees in Border Regions**

**Introduction:**

Border regions have become some of the most challenging environments for refugee protection. As conflicts, climate disasters, and political instability force millions to flee, many refugees find themselves stranded at borders where states struggle to balance national security concerns with humanitarian obligations. These areas often lack adequate shelter, sanitation, legal assistance, and protection from violence, exploitation, and trafficking. Refugees in border zones are particularly vulnerable to pushbacks, arbitrary detention, and human rights violations, making the question of **security and dignity** central to UNHCR's mandate.

The UNHCR plays a critical role in coordinating humanitarian responses, advocating for refugee rights, and supporting states in meeting their international obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. However, rising nationalism, restrictive border policies, and resource constraints have made it increasingly difficult to ensure humane treatment for displaced populations. This study guide explores the challenges faced by refugees in border regions and evaluates strategies to strengthen protection, drawing on real-world case studies and international frameworks.

**Understanding the Issue:**

Refugees in border regions face a unique set of risks:

- **Security threats**, including violence, trafficking, armed groups, and exploitation
- **Lack of legal pathways**, leading to irregular crossings and heightened vulnerability
- **Humanitarian shortages**, such as inadequate shelter, food, water, and medical care
- **Pushbacks and border closures**, often in violation of international law
- **Lack of documentation**, preventing access to asylum procedures
- **Gender-based violence**, particularly affecting women and unaccompanied minors

Ensuring both **security** and **dignity** requires coordinated action between states, UN agencies, NGOs, and local communities.

## Case Studies:

### *Case Study 1: Rohingya Refugees at the Bangladesh–Myanmar Border*

#### Official Title:

#### **Assessing Protection Challenges for Rohingya Refugees in the Cox’s Bazar Border Region**

#### **Introduction**

This study guide is designed to help delegates understand the complex humanitarian, legal, political, and human rights dimensions of the Rohingya crisis, as discussed within the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). It provides detailed background, key issues, applicable international frameworks, stakeholder positions, and guiding questions to prepare you for drafting resolutions, delivering speeches, and negotiating solutions. The focus is on the situation of Rohingya refugees at the Bangladesh–Myanmar border, the root causes of displacement, current challenges, and pathways to durable solutions.

#### **1. Core Background & Context**

Who are the Rohingya?

- The Rohingya are an ethnic, linguistic, and religious Muslim minority primarily residing in Rakhine State, western Myanmar. They have lived in the region for generations, yet are not recognized as one of Myanmar’s 135 official ethnic groups.
- Under Myanmar’s 1982 Citizenship Law, the Rohingya are effectively denied citizenship, rendering them one of the largest stateless populations in the world. This status strips them of fundamental rights: freedom of movement, access to education, healthcare, property ownership, and legal protection.
- They face systemic discrimination, restrictions on marriage, family size, and access to public services, which have persisted for decades.

Timeline of Key Events

- **Pre-2017:** Sporadic outbreaks of violence, displacement, and human rights abuses occurred in 1978, 1991–1992, 2012, and 2016, leading to repeated waves of refugee flows into Bangladesh.
- **August 2017:** The most severe crisis began when the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) launched attacks on police posts in Rakhine State. In response, Myanmar’s military and local militias launched a “clearance operation” involving widespread violence, arson, sexual violence, and mass killings.
- **Displacement Scale:** Over 740,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh in just three months, joining roughly 300,000 who had settled there previously. Today, more than 1.2 million Rohingya live in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh – hosting the world’s largest refugee camp complex.
- **Current Status:** While large-scale violence has decreased, the situation remains volatile. Most refugees cannot return safely; they face overcrowding, limited resources, and restricted rights in Bangladesh, while conditions in Rakhine State have not improved sufficiently for sustainable repatriation.

## Key Findings:

- **Overcrowding and inadequate infrastructure** have created severe health and sanitation challenges.
- **Security risks**, including trafficking networks and armed criminal groups, threaten refugee safety.
- **Restrictions on movement** limit access to education, employment, and legal services.
- **Border tensions** between Myanmar and Bangladesh complicate repatriation efforts.
- **Women and children** face heightened risks of gender-based violence and exploitation.

## Stakeholder Positions & Perspectives

### Myanmar

- **Official Stance:** Claims the crisis is about security and counter-terrorism; refers to Rohingya as “Bengalis” (framing them as illegal migrants from Bangladesh); denies allegations of human rights abuses; states that return is possible only after verification of “legitimate residents.”
- **Internal Divisions:** Some civil society groups and ethnic minorities express solidarity or concern, while nationalist groups support exclusionary policies. Since 2021, the military government has tightened control and limited access to Rakhine State.

### Bangladesh

- **Official Stance:** Has provided shelter and aid, but emphasizes that the situation is not sustainable; insists on safe, voluntary, and dignified repatriation as the preferred solution; calls for international financial and technical support; advocates for regional cooperation.
- **Domestic Views:** Sympathy for refugees exists, but concerns over economic strain, environmental damage, and security risks have grown.

### The Rohingya Community

- **Demands:** Recognition as an ethnic group, full citizenship, safety and security, return of property, and accountability for abuses.
- **Perspectives:** Fear of returning without guarantees; desire for education and a future for children; concern over prolonged displacement and loss of identity.

### International Community

- **Western Nations:** Strongly condemn abuses, support accountability mechanisms, provide humanitarian aid, and pressure Myanmar for reform.
- **Regional Powers (China, India):** Maintain diplomatic ties with Myanmar; prioritize stability and economic interests; support limited humanitarian efforts but avoid strong pressure or sanctions.
- **ASEAN:** Focuses on dialogue and assistance; established the ASEAN Coordination Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre), but progress is slow due to consensus-based decision-making.
- **UN Agencies:** Focus on protection, aid delivery, evidence collection, and diplomatic engagement; work to bridge gaps between states and affected populations.

## Overview:

- Since 2017, over 700,000 Rohingya refugees have fled violence in Myanmar’s Rakhine State, seeking safety in Bangladesh. The majority reside in Cox’s Bazar, now the world’s largest refugee settlement. Located near the Myanmar border, the camps face overcrowding, limited resources, and frequent security incidents.

## Insight:

The Rohingya crisis demonstrates how border regions can become long-term humanitarian zones, requiring sustained international support to ensure both safety and dignity for displaced populations.

## **Case Study 2: Venezuelan Refugees at the Colombia–Venezuela Border**

### **Official Title: Humanitarian and Security Conditions for Venezuelan Refugees in Border Crossings**

#### **Introduction**

This study guide provides a comprehensive breakdown of the crisis involving Venezuelan refugees and migrants at the Colombia–Venezuela border, tailored for debate within the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). It covers root causes, legal frameworks, stakeholder positions, and core challenges, while guiding you through key debates, solutions, and resolution drafting. The focus is on human rights protection, humanitarian response, regional cooperation, and pathways to durable solutions for millions of people displaced from Venezuela.

## **1. Core Background & Context**

### **Overview of the Crisis**

Since 2014, Venezuela has experienced a profound political, economic, social, and institutional collapse, leading to one of the largest displacement crises in the world. Over 7.7 million Venezuelans have left their country, with approximately 6 million remaining in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Colombia–Venezuela border—stretching over 2,200 km—has become the primary route of movement, with more than 2.5 million Venezuelans currently residing in Colombia, and hundreds of thousands crossing annually for food, healthcare, or to transit further.

Unlike many refugee crises driven primarily by conflict, this crisis is rooted in systemic governance failures, economic collapse, and erosion of the rule of law, creating complex legal and protection challenges.

### **Timeline of Key Events**

- 2013–2014: Economic decline begins under President Nicolás Maduro; inflation rises, basic goods become scarce, and first waves of migration start.
- 2015–2017: Deterioration accelerates; political tensions escalate, protests are met with repression, and human rights violations increase. Border crossings grow rapidly.
- 2018: The UN Human Rights Council first establishes a Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela to document abuses. Hyperinflation destroys livelihoods; mass displacement becomes widespread.
- 2019–2020: Political crisis deepens with competing claims to power; border closures and restrictions are imposed, then partially lifted. COVID-19 further strains systems and limits movement.
- 2021–Present: Displacement continues at high levels. Colombia has shifted from open-door policies to more structured regularization, while border mobility remains volatile—with periodic closures, reopenings, and informal crossings. Regional cooperation frameworks (such as the *Quito Process* and *Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan*) are active but face funding and implementation gaps.

### **Root Causes of Displacement**

- **Economic Collapse:** Hyperinflation, currency devaluation, collapse of oil revenues, and shortages of food, medicine, fuel, and basic services.
- **Political Instability:** Erosion of democratic institutions, disputed elections, concentration of power, and lack of independent governance.

- **Human Rights Violations:** Systematic repression, arbitrary detention, torture, extrajudicial killings, and restrictions on freedom of speech, assembly, and movement—documented extensively by UN bodies.
- **Social Breakdown:** Rising poverty, lack of access to healthcare and education, and increased violence and insecurity.

## 2. Key Findings:

- **Irregular border crossings** expose refugees to armed groups, smugglers, and trafficking networks.
- **Humanitarian shortages**, including food, shelter, and medical care, strain local communities.
- **Lack of documentation** prevents access to asylum procedures and legal employment.
- **Children and pregnant women** face severe health risks due to inadequate facilities.
- **Cross-border criminal activity** increases insecurity for both refugees and host populations.

## Stakeholder Positions & Perspectives

### Venezuela

- **Official Stance:** Rejects claims of human rights violations; describes migration as voluntary and economic; accuses other countries and international bodies of political interference and applying unilateral sanctions that worsen conditions. Restricts access for international humanitarian organizations.
- **Civil Society:** Groups inside and outside document abuses, advocate for rights, and call for accountability and humanitarian access.

### Colombia

- **Official Stance:** Has maintained a policy of open borders and protection; implemented large-scale regularization programs (ETPS); calls for international financial and technical support; emphasizes that the crisis is regional and cannot be borne by host countries alone. Recently introduced more structured entry controls.
- **Domestic Views:** Strong solidarity initially, but growing public concern over costs, security, and competition for resources.

### The Venezuelan Community

- **Demands:** Legal status, safety, access to work and services, family reunification, and accountability for abuses.
- **Perspectives:** Most do not see return as possible in the short term; want stability and opportunities to rebuild lives. Fear deportation and loss of rights.

### International Community

- **United Nations:** Focuses on protection, aid delivery, documentation, and accountability; calls for safe passage and access.
- **Regional States:** Positions vary — some (Ecuador, Peru) have tightened entry rules; others (Argentina, Chile) offer more open policies.
- **International Powers:** Divided positions — some support sanctions and political pressure; others prioritize dialogue and humanitarian aid; geopolitical interests influence engagement.
- **Civil Society & NGOs:** Provide direct aid, legal support, and advocacy; bridge gaps between states and affected populations.

### Overview:

The economic and political collapse in Venezuela has forced more than 7 million people to flee, with Colombia hosting the largest number. Border towns such as Cúcuta have become critical entry points, where refugees face insecurity, exploitation, and limited access to basic services.

**Insight:**

The Venezuelan displacement crisis highlights the need for coordinated border management, humanitarian assistance, and legal pathways to prevent exploitation and uphold refugee dignity.

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