

Study Guide

HUMAN RIGHTS

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights



Universidad
de Navarra

FACULTAD DE
DERECHO

UNMUN
MODEL OF UNITED NATIONS

Welcome Letter from the Chair:

Dear Delegates,

It is our utmost pleasure to welcome you to the University of Navarra Model United Nations 2025, and to the Human Rights Council. The committee's leadership is composed of the President, Cristina Rodríguez-Villanueva (fourth year Law and International Relations student), the Vice President, Sophia Rathleff (second year International Relations student), and the Secretary, Sophia de Vicente (third year International Relations student).

UNMUN'25 will take place from February 6th to 8th, and the Human Rights Council's debate will focus on two key issues that are more relevant now than ever before. The first topic, ensuring the right to healthcare access among refugees and asylum seekers, concerns one of the core tenets of the UDHR as well as the 1951 Convention on Refugees. Refugees and asylum seekers are often afforded different rights as they have different statuses under law. It is vital to recognize the need for their equitable inclusion and support as they are especially vulnerable to physical and mental issues that can arise from displacement, trauma, and stress.

The second topic, promoting responsible information sharing and combating disinformation, is particularly crucial in the fast-changing and uncertain digital age we live in as the universal human right to freedom of expression must be protected. The fundamental importance of freedom of opinion and expression is enshrined in Article 19 of the UDHR which states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." However, a fine line of balance must be struck as disinformation has increasingly had severe consequences for human rights all around the globe and has played a key role in many conflicts.

Throughout the conference, it is the Chairs' aim to facilitate productive debate regarding the chosen topics as they highlight the focus needed to protect the vulnerable in our rapidly changing world. With the conference fast approaching, the Dais expects the delegates to investigate the topics with enough depth to be able to collaborate and cooperate towards a well-prepared and balanced debate that will result in effective international solutions to global problems. We also expect delegates to conduct themselves in a diplomatic manner, follow the conference's guidelines, and fulfill their commitments to this committee.

The Dais is more than willing to help at any point, be it before or during the conference, to answer any questions the delegates may have and give feedback regarding their performance as we embark on this journey together. It is a wonderful and unique learning opportunity, as well as a great way to enjoy and meet new people; we truly hope you make the most of it.

Alongside this letter, you will find a brief explanation of the committee and the Study Guide, which will provide some background information on the aforementioned topics, as well as suggested readings, key terms and further explanatory material that will certainly aid each delegate in upholding the ideals of the United Nations Human Right Council throughout your investigation. We encourage you to be curious and enthusiastic in your research as the information provided by the Dais should be used as a foundational starting point rather than a rigidly extensive manual for the conference.

Once again, welcome to the Human Rights Council. We look forward to meeting you and having a fruitful debate throughout the conference. Please do not hesitate to reach out through our contacts below!

With every great wish,

Cristina Rodríguez-Villanueva de Torres (President)

(crvillanueva@alumni.unav.es +34 659 11 47 06)

Sophia Rathleff (Vice President)

(srathleff.ieu2023@student.ie.edu +34 671 41 89 12)

Sophia Emmanuelle de Vicente Pelaez (Secretary)

(sdevicentep@alumni.unav.es +34 671 41 79 75)

About the Committee: United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:

The United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (HRC) was established by the General Assembly (GA) in 2006 with the aim of protecting and promoting human rights worldwide. It is made up of 47 member states, which are elected for three-year terms by the GA's 193 member states in a direct and individual manner. Elections take place every year to renew a third of the members, with the seats being distributed equitably amongst the UN's five regional groups (African States, Asia-Pacific States, Eastern European States, Latin American and Caribbean States, and Western European and other States). Member states can only serve two consecutive terms at a time. The Council's leadership is held by the Bureau, which is composed of a president and four vice presidents to represent each of the regional groups, with each serving a year long term. The President, who is elected by the members themselves, remains neutral as he chairs the meetings to ensure the Council carries out its activities respectfully. They also work towards coordinating and communicating with the different ongoing missions, and play a key role in building trust in the HRC's efforts through diplomacy. The vice presidents' main role is to support the President as they carry out their duties. Overall, the Bureau is responsible for all Council-related organizational and procedural matters that may arise, including correspondence with its member states. The Human Rights Council's meetings are held at the United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG). The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) provides key support, such as technical, substantive and secretariat. Since it was established in 2006 to replace the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, over 50 regular sessions have been held, more than 35 special ones, as well as nine urgent debates, with nearly 1,500 resolutions adopted and 123 of the United Nations' 193 member states serving on the Council. The Human Rights Council carries out a wide variety of tasks, including adopting

resolutions and decisions conveying the international community's opinion on certain issues during regular sessions, holding special sessions when a sudden human rights crisis occurs, as well as assigning experts to monitor specific situations, and reviewing each of the 193 member states' human rights records through the Universal Periodic Review. In certain situations, such as those of systematic human rights violations, the UNGA may take a vote to suspend a state's HRC membership. The Human Rights Council operates through its five main bodies, the investigations it mandates, designated experts, as well as intergovernmental working groups, forums, and expert mechanisms.

TOPIC A: Promoting Responsible Information Sharing and Combating Disinformation

INTRODUCTION:

The fundamental importance of freedom of opinion and expression is enshrined in Article 19 of the UDHR which states that “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”¹ In the fast-changing and uncertain digital age we live in, it is crucial to protect the universal human right to freedom of expression while also addressing disinformation’s harmful effect on democratic processes and social cohesion.

Over the years, disinformation has increasingly had severe consequences for human rights all around the globe from the nationalist propaganda of the Bosnian War which led to the Srebrenica Genocide to the campaigns of hate and dehumanization that have fueled horrific violence in Myanmar’s Rohingya Refugee Crisis. There is an urgent need for nations to protect and promote free, independent, and diverse media as well as digital literacy.

Thus, there is a need to find a fine line of balance wherein public opinion (especially on wide-reaching social platforms) does not face excessive censorship while also preventing persecution and polarization that most affect vulnerable communities as seen in the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian renaissance of Soviet Union-esque propaganda, as well as the polemic discourse on anti-semitism of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

In today's interconnected world, the rapid spread of information through digital platforms has revolutionized communication but also introduced significant challenges. One of the most pressing issues is the proliferation of disinformation, which can undermine democratic processes, erode public trust, and incite social unrest.² Promoting responsible information sharing and combating disinformation are critical tasks that require a multifaceted

¹ (United Nations 1948)

² (United Nations, n.d.)

approach involving governments, media organizations, technology companies, and civil society.

Disinformation, often referred to as "fake news," involves the deliberate creation and dissemination of false information with the intent to deceive. This phenomenon is not new, but the advent of social media and other digital platforms has amplified its reach and impact. Disinformation campaigns can be orchestrated by state and non-state actors to influence public opinion, disrupt political processes, and create confusion. The consequences of unchecked disinformation are profound, affecting everything from election integrity to public health, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To effectively combat disinformation, it is essential to promote media literacy among the public. Media literacy empowers individuals to critically evaluate the information they encounter, discern credible sources from unreliable ones, and understand the mechanisms behind disinformation. Educational initiatives, both in formal settings like schools and through public awareness campaigns, play a crucial role in fostering a more informed and discerning populace. By equipping people with the skills to navigate the complex information landscape, societies can build resilience against the spread of false information.

Another key strategy is enhancing the transparency and accountability of digital platforms. Social media companies and other online platforms have a significant role in curbing the spread of disinformation. This can be achieved through measures such as algorithmic transparency, where platforms disclose how their algorithms prioritize and disseminate content, and by implementing robust fact-checking mechanisms. Additionally, regulatory frameworks that hold platforms accountable for the content they host can incentivize more responsible information practices.

Promoting responsible information sharing and combating disinformation is vital for maintaining the integrity of democratic institutions and ensuring an informed public. By addressing disinformation through education, regulation, and international cooperation, we can create a more resilient and informed global community.

KEYWORDS/CONCEPTS:

- **Disinformation:** “False information deliberately and often covertly spread (as by the planting of rumors) in order to influence public opinion or obscure the truth”³
- **Misinformation:** incorrect information which is given to a person, “often in a deliberate attempt to make them believe something which is not true.”⁴
- **Malinformation:** “information that stems from the truth but is often exaggerated in a way that misleads and causes potential harm”⁵
- **Media Literacy:** “Knowledge, understanding, and experience of various media forms. In some definitions the concept includes literacy and numeracy; Competence in using various media and the ability to think critically about them; Levels of skill and competence in using media devices.”⁶
- **Fact-Checking:** “the process of checking that all the facts in a piece of writing, a news article, a speech, etc. are correct”⁷
- **Digital Literacy:** the ability to competently use and have knowledge of digital devices and platforms. It can also incorporate the ability to critically think about digital situations and differentiate between different types of digital information.⁸
- **Algorithmic Transparency:** “Algorithmic transparency is openness about the purpose, structure and underlying actions of the algorithms used to search for, process and deliver information.”⁹
- **Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI):** The ability of GAI tools to synthesize vast quantities of data, generate human-like text, and produce multilingual translations could augment human cognition, creativity, and productivity in the near term. At the same time, GAI, with its synthetic voice and audio capabilities, widespread availability,

³ (Stamper 2024)

⁴ (Collins Dictionary 2024)

⁵ (“Malinformation Definition”, n.d.)

⁶ (Oxford Reference, n.d.)

⁷ (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.)

⁸ (UNESCO, n.d.)

⁹ (Tech Target, n.d.)

and low cost, effectively democratizes disinformation and could erode societal trust and expertise.

- **Information Integrity:** “refers to the accuracy, consistency and reliability of information.”¹⁰
- **Strategic Communication:** Specific way of receiving and distributing information.¹¹
- **Disinformation Campaigns:** “targeted, organized information attack on a company, a party, an institution or an individual, whereby a large number of demonstrably false or misleading information (disinformation) is published, which serves the purpose of manipulation and is deliberately disseminated on a large scale”.¹²
- **Social Media Regulation:** “the process or set of rules that a government, company, individual, or other entity uses to dictate how social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can be used. This can include what content is allowed to be posted, who can see it, and how long it remains accessible. It can also encompass more general guidelines about appropriate behaviour on social media.”¹³
- **Public Awareness:** the availability and accessibility to information provided to the public, in order to increase awareness on the regarding topic
- **Counter-Messaging:** aims to “disrupt the communicative activities of terrorist and extremist political and religious groups, either by undermining extremist messengers or messages, or by convincing audiences with alternative ideological messages.”¹⁴
- **Journalistic Standards/Ethics:** “journalism ethics are a set of principles that journalists must follow to complete their journalism duties. These ethics are based on the idea that people deserve respect and must know the truth.”¹⁵

¹⁰ (United Nations, n.d. Information Integrity)

¹¹ (Simplr, n.d.)

¹² (Preveny, n.d.)

¹³ (“Social Media Research Institute”, n.d.)

¹⁴ (Lee 2019, 68)

¹⁵ (Shukla 2024)

- **Democratic Resilience:** “the capacity of a democratic regime to absorb external challenges and internal stressors and to dynamically adapt to the changing”¹⁶
- **False Narratives:** “involve the presentation of incorrect information regarding a particular situation”¹⁷
- **Information Manipulation:** “undertaken to shape public opinion or undermine trust in the authenticity of information. It includes the use of new and traditional media to amplify divides and foment unrest in the homeland, sometimes coordinated with illicit cyber activities”¹⁸

One of the primary concepts is media literacy which empowers individuals to critically analyze the information they encounter, understand the motives behind different media messages, and recognize biases and misinformation. By integrating media literacy education into school curricula and public awareness campaigns, societies can equip citizens with the tools needed to navigate the complex information landscape effectively.

Another crucial concept is fact-checking. Fact-checking organizations play a vital role in verifying the accuracy of information and debunking false claims. These organizations often collaborate with social media platforms to flag and reduce the visibility of disinformation. Encouraging individuals to verify information before sharing it can significantly curb the spread of false information. Fact-checking not only helps maintain the integrity of the information ecosystem but also promotes a culture of accountability and transparency.

Government policies and regulations are also essential in addressing disinformation. Governments can implement laws that hold individuals and organizations accountable for deliberately spreading false information. However, these measures must be balanced to protect freedom of speech. Policies that promote transparency in digital advertising and require social media platforms to disclose the sources of political ads can help mitigate the spread of disinformation. International cooperation is crucial, as disinformation often transcends national borders.

¹⁶ (Merkel 2023)

¹⁷ (PennState, n.d.)

¹⁸ (USA Government, n.d.)

Technology companies have a significant responsibility in promoting responsible information sharing. Social media platforms, search engines, and other digital services must develop and implement algorithms that prioritize accurate and reliable information. They can also provide users with tools to report false information and improve the visibility of credible sources. Collaboration between technology companies and independent fact-checkers can enhance the effectiveness of these efforts. Investing in artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies can help detect and mitigate the spread of disinformation more efficiently.

- [Microsoft Word - Amnesty International submission on misinformation for OHCHR.docx](#)

Finally, public awareness campaigns are essential in promoting responsible information sharing. These campaigns can educate the public about the dangers of disinformation and the importance of verifying information before sharing it. By raising awareness about the impact of disinformation on society and encouraging responsible online behavior, these campaigns can foster a more informed and discerning public. Public awareness efforts can also highlight the role of individuals in combating disinformation and promote a culture of critical thinking and skepticism.

- [Addressing Mis- and Disinformation on Social Media | SpringerLink](#)

BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Nature of the Problem:

The rapid dissemination of disinformation through social media and other digital platforms has amplified its impact, making it a pressing issue that requires coordinated efforts from various stakeholders.

One of the core issues is the difficulty in distinguishing between disinformation and other types of false information, such as misinformation, which is false information spread without malicious intent. This distinction is crucial for developing effective regulatory and policy responses. Additionally, the sheer volume of information online makes it challenging to identify and counteract false narratives quickly. The dynamic nature of digital platforms, where content can go viral in minutes, further complicates efforts to manage and mitigate the spread of disinformation.

Technological advancements, such as artificial intelligence and deepfake technology, have made it easier to create and disseminate convincing false information. These technologies can be used to manipulate images, videos, and audio, making it increasingly difficult for individuals to discern truth from falsehood.¹⁹ This technological arms race between those spreading disinformation and those trying to combat it necessitates continuous innovation and adaptation in strategies to promote responsible information sharing.

Moreover, combating disinformation requires a multi-stakeholder approach involving governments, tech companies, media organizations, civil society, and individuals. Governments need to implement policies that protect freedom of expression while curbing the spread of harmful false information.²⁰ Tech companies must develop and enforce robust content moderation policies. Media organizations play a critical role in fact-checking and providing accurate information.²¹ Civil society organizations can help educate the public on media literacy, empowering individuals to critically evaluate the information they encounter. This collaborative effort is essential to create a resilient information ecosystem that can withstand the challenges posed by disinformation.

Most Important Developments:

- Launched by the **United Nations Department of Global Communications (DGC)**, the **Verified Initiative** aims to provide accurate and reliable information, especially during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. It creates and disseminates content in multiple languages to counter false information. It aims to tackle what has been labeled an “infodemic” using a replicable model of public information campaigns.²²
- **UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)** promotes media and information literacy (MIL) to empower individuals to critically evaluate information and make

¹⁹ (Fowler 2022)

²⁰ (United Nations, n.d. Countering Disinformation)

²¹ (Fowler 2022)

²² (United Nations 2021)

informed decisions.²³ This includes educational programs and resources for various age groups. Media literacy aims to equip individuals with the skills to critically evaluate the information they consume. Educational institutions and non-profits are increasingly incorporating media literacy into their curricula, teaching students how to identify credible sources and recognize disinformation tactics. This proactive approach empowers individuals to make informed decisions and reduces the spread of false information.

- UNESCO has been a major advocate for media literacy, organizing Global MIL Week annually. This event brings together stakeholders from around the world to promote media and information literacy. In 2019, 193 countries officially proclaimed Global MIL Week, highlighting its importance on the international development agenda.²⁴
- Various international organizations, including the European Commission, African Union, and the United Nations, have been collaborating to enhance media literacy. For instance, Global MIL Week 2021 saw over 600 local events and activities organized worldwide²⁵, emphasizing the role of media literacy and international cooperation for the public good
- Additionally, under UNESCO’s guidance media and information literacy is now recognised as a tool for development in many countries, putting it “firmly on the international development agenda and calendar”²⁶
- The Global Principles for information Integrity was launched by the UN in June 2024 addressing “the need for immediate action to address the harms caused by misinformation, disinformation and hate speech”²⁷
- It aims to uphold the values of free speech while simultaneously making information spaces safer and improve public trust.

²³ (UNESCO, n.d. Media and Information Literacy for Global Communication and Learning)

²⁴ (UNESCO 2021,International community gives a strong push to media and information literacy)

²⁵ (UNESCO 2021,International community gives a strong push to media and information literacy)

²⁶ (UNESCO 2019)

²⁷ (Yang 2024)

- The United Nations Global Principles for Information Integrity, are a list of five principles aiming to diversify control over global information flows²⁸
- The five principles are listed as; societal trust and resilience, healthy incentives, public empowerment, independent, free and pluralistic media, and transparency and research.²⁹

One significant development is the implementation of fact-checking initiatives which involve independent organizations verifying the accuracy of information circulating in the media and online platforms. Fact-checking has proven effective in debunking false claims and providing the public with reliable information. For instance, platforms like Facebook and Twitter have partnered with fact-checkers to label misleading content, helping users discern between true and false information. One significant example is Faktisk.no, Norway's fact checking organisation which has organised a joint verification desk for all media outlets in Norway.³⁰ They played a significant role in the early coverage of the Russo-Ukraine conflict.

Algorithmic adjustments by social media platforms also play a vital role in combating disinformation. Platforms are refining their algorithms to prioritize credible sources and demote content flagged as misleading. These adjustments help reduce the visibility of disinformation and promote responsible information sharing. For example, YouTube has updated its recommendation system to limit the spread of conspiracy theories and promote authoritative content.

International cooperation is another key development in this area. Governments and organizations are collaborating across borders to tackle disinformation more effectively. The European Union, for instance, has implemented the Code of Practice on Disinformation, which sets out commitments for online platforms to combat disinformation. This collaborative effort ensures a unified response to the global challenge of disinformation and promotes the sharing of best practices. As seen before, IGOs such as the UN play a key role in creating new initiatives and standards for information sharing.

²⁸ (United Nations, n.d. United Nations Global Principles for Information Integrity)

²⁹ (United Nations, n.d. United Nations Global Principles for Information Integrity)

³⁰ (Egeberg, n.d.)

Lastly, public awareness campaigns have been instrumental in promoting responsible information sharing. These campaigns aim to educate the public about the dangers of disinformation and encourage critical thinking. By raising awareness, these initiatives help create a more informed and vigilant society. For example, the European Commission has launched campaigns to inform citizens about the impact of disinformation on democratic processes and how to identify false information.

Setbacks:

Promoting responsible information sharing and combating disinformation face several significant setbacks, starting with the sheer volume and speed of information dissemination. In today's digital age, information spreads rapidly across social media platforms and other online channels. This makes it incredibly challenging to identify and counteract false information quickly. Disinformation can go viral within minutes, reaching millions of people before fact-checkers and authorities can respond. The speed at which false narratives can spread often outpaces the efforts to debunk them, leading to widespread misinformation.

Technological advancements have further complicated the issue. Technologies such as deepfakes and AI-generated content have made it easier to create highly convincing false information. These advancements make it increasingly difficult for individuals, and even experts, to distinguish between real and fake content. The sophistication of these technologies means that disinformation can be more persuasive and harder to detect, posing a significant challenge to efforts aimed at promoting responsible information sharing.

Balancing the need to combat disinformation with the protection of free speech is another major setback. Implementing measures to regulate and reduce the spread of false information without infringing on freedom of expression is a delicate balance.³¹ Overly restrictive policies can lead to censorship and the suppression of legitimate discourse, which can undermine democratic principles. On the other hand, too lenient an approach may fail to address the problem effectively, allowing disinformation to proliferate

³¹ (United Nations, n.d. United Nations Global Principles for Information Integrity)

unchecked. Striking the right balance is crucial but challenging, requiring careful consideration of legal and ethical implications.

Finally, building public trust and awareness is an ongoing challenge. Many people lack the media literacy skills needed to critically evaluate the information they encounter, making them more susceptible to false narratives. Efforts to promote responsible information sharing must include educational initiatives to improve media literacy and critical thinking skills. However, changing public behavior and perceptions takes time and sustained effort.³² Additionally, there is often a deep-seated mistrust of traditional media and authoritative sources, which can hinder efforts to promote accurate information. Overcoming these barriers requires a multifaceted approach that includes education, transparency, and engagement with diverse communities.

CURRENT STATUS:

Governmental status

- One of the most pressing current issues is the lack of transparency and repression of information by governments. These issues can manifest in all political systems and through various means such as restriction of news outlets and firewalls. Reporters Sans Frontiers (Reporters without borders) created the World Press Freedom Index which gives an indication of information availability within states.
- One example of complex media restriction in China which ranks 172nd in the world²⁰²⁴, falling from 179 in 2023.³³ The Great Firewall is a well-known aspect of Chinese media control, which has only become stronger after groups connected with the Hong Kong protests were found to have used banned social media platforms to organise.³⁴ However, the Chinese government itself uses social media to its advantage, orchestrating posts to detract and flood social media discussions.³⁵ Additionally the government sanctioned use of

³² (United Nations, n.d. United Nations Global Principles for Information Integrity)

³³ (RSF, 2024)

³⁴ (Uren, Thomas, and Wallis 2019)

³⁵ (King, Pan, and Roberts 2017)

Facebook to “tell China's story”, with many propaganda accounts becoming popular on the site.³⁶

- However, this issue also spreads to countries with better scores, such as the UK which ranks 23rd.³⁷ Three companies own 90% of the national newspaper market and account for more than 40% of audience research.³⁸ News plurality is important for increasing public awareness and the capability for critical thinking and opinion forming to occur. It allows for varied viewpoints and event coverage to be published and combats corruption and bias within new media. It is estimated that 11.5 million people live in news ‘desert’ areas, where they get little to no coverage of local events.³⁹ That being said it can also be that state ownership of media outlets can lead to heavy censorship and lack of media transparency.

Issues within social media (echochamber)

- Social media plays a large role in the spread of information, with around 86% of Americans getting their news from digital platforms.⁴⁰ While this makes news and information more easily accessible for people around the world, it also poses a number of issues.
- One of the main reasons experts think social media is catalyzing the spread of misinformation and disinformation is “social platforms structure of rewarding users for habitually sharing information”.⁴¹ A study by USC found that 15% of the most habitual news sharers were responsible for around 30-40% of fake news.⁴² This can contribute to the frequency of incorrect information being shared on social media platforms, and thus exponentially the issue.
- Another aspect is the idea of an echochamber. An echochamber is when a person is exposed to the same information or content continuously, without exposing the user to alternative views. These

³⁶ (Timmons and Horwitz 2016)

³⁷ (RSF 2024)

³⁸ (Media Reform Coalition, n.d.)

³⁹ (Media Reform Coalition, n.d.)

⁴⁰ (Pew Research Center 2023)

⁴¹ (Madrid 2023)

⁴² (Madrid 2023)

are often driven by algorithmic design and experts state that “social media may limit the exposure to diverse perspectives”⁴³ through these means.

- Once the information is on the platform, the last line of defence against its spread is fact checking. Many platforms have been criticised for their lack of effective factchecking, reemphasising this issue.

MAIN ACTORS/STAKEHOLDERS:

Promoting responsible information sharing and combating disinformation involves a diverse array of stakeholders, each playing a crucial role. These stakeholders, working together, create a robust defense against disinformation, ensuring that accurate and reliable information prevails in the public discourse.

Governments and Regulatory Bodies:

- The European Union (EU) has been proactive in developing policies and frameworks to combat disinformation, such as the Digital Services Act and the Code of Practice on Disinformation.
- Governments are at the forefront, implementing policies and regulations to curb the spread of false information. They work on creating frameworks like the European Union’s Code of Practice on Disinformation, which sets guidelines for online platforms to follow. Governments also collaborate internationally to share best practices and coordinate responses to disinformation campaigns, ensuring a unified approach to this global challenge.
- Various countries have implemented their own measures within their national governments, such as the UK’s response to COVID-19 disinformation and Finland’s media literacy education.

Social Media Platforms and Tech Companies:

- Social media platforms are another key player. Companies like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have significant influence over the information that circulates online. These platforms have taken steps

⁴³ (Cinelli et al. 2021)

to adjust their algorithms to prioritize credible sources and reduce the visibility of misleading content. They also partner with fact-checking organizations to label or remove false information, helping users make informed decisions about the content they encounter.

- Facebook has collaborated with independent fact-checkers to reduce the spread of false information.
- Google implements fact-check labels in search results and news articles to help users identify verified information.
- Twitter has introduced measures like labelling misleading tweets and reducing their visibility.
- To curb the spread of misinformation, WhatsApp introduced limits on how many times a message can be forwarded. This measure has been particularly effective in reducing the virality of false information during critical times, such as elections and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Facebook's Third-Party Fact-Checking Program is an example of how social media platforms can collaborate with independent fact-checkers to identify and reduce the spread of false information. When a post is flagged as false, its distribution is significantly reduced, and users are notified if they try to share it.
- AI companies and their programmes are increasingly being used to fact check, however they are solely algorithmic based. If the information they source is biased or incorrect, the algorithms will reflect it. ⁴⁴

Media Organizations and Fact-Checking Networks:

- Fact-checking organizations are essential in the fight against disinformation. These independent entities verify the accuracy of information and debunk false claims. Their work is critical in providing the public with reliable information and countering the spread of falsehoods. Organizations like Snopes, FactCheck.org, and the International Fact-Checking Network play a pivotal role in maintaining the integrity of information shared across various platforms.
- BBC Reality Check investigates and debunks false claims circulating in the media. However the BBC is a state owned broadcaster with private stakeholder with significant political interests.

⁴⁴ (AIContentfy 2024)

- Another example is the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) which is a global network of fact-checkers that sets standards and promotes best practices in fact-checking.

Educational Institutions:

- Educational institutions and non-profits contribute significantly by promoting media literacy. They develop programs and curricula that teach individuals how to critically evaluate the information they consume. By equipping people with the skills to identify credible sources and recognize disinformation tactics, these organizations help build a more informed and resilient society. Media literacy initiatives are crucial in empowering individuals to navigate the complex information landscape of the digital age.
- Schools and Universities integrate media literacy into their curricula to teach students critical thinking skills and how to evaluate information.
- Libraries and Community Centers offer workshops and resources on media literacy and responsible information sharing.

Civil Society Organizations:

- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as organizations like the Open Rights Group and Meedan work to promote digital rights and combat disinformation.
- Local community groups often engage in grassroots efforts to educate the public about media literacy and the dangers of disinformation.

Journalists and Media Professionals:

- Investigative Journalists play a key role in uncovering and exposing disinformation campaigns.
- Media Outlets are especially responsible for ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the information they publish. However, media outlets are often privately owned by individuals with a personal interest or orientation. This can lead to bias and misinformation, the most famous case of which is William Randolph Hearst's use of his media companies to spread false information about Bruce Ismay after the Titanic disaster.

Influencers and Public Figures:

- Social Media Influencers can help spread accurate information and debunk false claims, especially during crises. However, they can also contribute to echo chambers and omit important information from being spread.
- Public Figures play the role of trusted individuals, such as scientists and healthcare professionals, who can provide credible information to the public. Trusted figures are also capable of misusing this influence to spread false or misleading information.

The general public

- They play a vital role in promoting responsible information sharing. Individuals are encouraged to engage critically with the information they encounter, verify sources, and avoid sharing unverified content. Public awareness campaigns aim to educate people about the dangers of disinformation and the importance of responsible information sharing. By fostering a culture of critical thinking and vigilance, the public can significantly contribute to combating the spread of false information.

CASE(S) OF STUDY:

- Finland's Education System has integrated media literacy into its national curriculum, teaching students from a young age how to critically evaluate information. This proactive approach has been effective in reducing the spread of misinformation among the population.⁴⁵
- Finland's approach to media literacy education is comprehensive and integrated throughout its educational system, from early childhood to adult education.
- Media literacy begins in **early childhood education** through playful and exploratory activities. Children learn about everyday media, devices, and content with the guidance of educators. They engage with stories and express themselves creatively, helping them understand the difference between fiction and reality.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ (UNESCO 2020)

⁴⁶ (Finnish National Agency for Education, n.d.)

- As children progress to **primary and secondary school**, media literacy is embedded in the curriculum. Students analyze and create media content, learning to use media safely and responsibly. They develop critical thinking skills to evaluate the reliability of information and understand the role of media in society.⁴⁷
- Media literacy education continues into **higher education and adult learning**. Universities offer specialized courses and degrees in media education. Additionally, **lifelong** learning initiatives, such as the annual Media Literacy Week, promote media literacy across all age groups.⁴⁸
- Finland has a **national media education policy** implemented by the National Audiovisual Institute. This policy ensures a systematic and high-quality approach to media education. Various stakeholders, including schools, libraries, and civil society organizations, **collaborate** to promote media literacy. Students engage in **practical** activities, such as creating their own media content and participating in discussions about current events. This hands-on approach helps them apply their media literacy skills in real-world contexts. Finland's media literacy education aims to equip individuals with the skills needed to navigate the complex media landscape, make informed decisions, and participate actively in a democratic society.⁴⁹

Other interesting case studies:

- European Union's East StratCom Task Force, established in 2015 to counter disinformation campaigns, particularly from Russia. The task force operates the EUvsDisinfo platform, which identifies and debunks false information.⁵⁰ By publishing detailed reports and engaging with the public through social media, the task force has significantly raised awareness about disinformation tactics and improved media literacy across Europe.
- COVID-19 disinformation response. During the pandemic, misinformation about the virus, treatments, and vaccines spread rapidly. Organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO)

⁴⁷ (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020)

⁴⁸ (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020)

⁴⁹ (UNESCO 2020)

⁵⁰ ("Questions and Answers about the East StratCom Task Force" 2021)

and various national health agencies launched extensive fact-checking and public information campaigns. For instance, the WHO’s “Mythbusters” series addressed common misconceptions and provided accurate information.⁵¹ These efforts were crucial in guiding public behavior and promoting trust in health measures.

- The Election Integrity Partnership (EIP) (USA) was formed to address disinformation during the 2020 presidential election. This coalition of research entities, including Stanford Internet Observatory and Graphika, monitored and analyzed misinformation in real-time. (<https://www.eipartnership.net/>) By collaborating with social media platforms and providing timely reports to the public and media, the EIP helped mitigate the impact of false information on the electoral process. Their work highlighted the importance of rapid response and cross-sector collaboration in combating disinformation.
- The Philippines’ approach to combating disinformation offers another compelling case study. In a country where social media is a primary news source, disinformation has been a significant issue. Initiatives like the “Tsek.ph” fact-checking project, a collaboration between universities, media organizations, and civil society groups, have been instrumental. By verifying claims and educating the public, Tsek.ph has helped reduce the spread of false information and promoted responsible information sharing.⁵²
- Lastly, the African Union’s Digital Transformation Strategy includes efforts to enhance media literacy and combat disinformation across the continent. This strategy emphasizes the importance of digital skills and critical thinking in the information age.⁵³ Programs like Africa Check, a fact-checking organization, work to verify information and educate the public. These initiatives are crucial in a region where digital misinformation can have severe consequences for public health and political stability.

These case studies demonstrate the diverse approaches and collaborative efforts required to effectively promote responsible information sharing and combat disinformation. Each example provides valuable lessons that can be adapted and applied in different contexts worldwide. These examples

⁵¹ (World Health Organisation 2022)

⁵² (Ong 2021)

⁵³ (African Union, n.d.)

highlight various strategies that have been effective in combating misinformation across different platforms and contexts.

IMPORTANT SUPPORT MATERIAL/REFERENCES FOR INVESTIGATION:

- Amer, Karim, and Jehane Noujaim, dirs. 2019. “The Great Hack.” Netflix. Aired January 26, 2019.
<https://www.netflix.com/search?q=the%20great%20hack&jbv=80117542>

REFERENCE LIST:

African Union. n.d. “AFRICAN UNION UNION AFRICAINE UNIÃO AFRICANA.” African Union. Accessed September 8, 2024.

<https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38507-doc-dts-english.pdf>.

AIContentfy. 2024. “The impact of AI on content accuracy and reliability.”

AIContentfy. <https://aicontentfy.com/en/blog/impact-of-ai-on-content-accuracy-and-reliability>.

Amer, Karim, and Jehane Noujaim, dirs. 2019. “The Great Hack.” Netflix.

Aired January 26, 2019.

Cambridge Dictionary. n.d. “FACT-CHECKING | English meaning -

Cambridge Dictionary.” Cambridge Dictionary. Accessed September 8,

2024. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fact-checking>.

Cinelli, Matteo, Gianmarco e Francisci Morales, Alessandro Galeazzi, and

Michele Starnini. 2021. “The echo chamber effect on social media.” *PNAS*

118, no. 9 (February). <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2023301118>.

Collins Dictionary. 2024. “MISINFORMATION definition and meaning |

Collins English Dictionary.” Collins Dictionary.

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/misinformation>.

Egeberg, Kristoffer. n.d. “Faktisk.no: Norway's pioneering fact-checking

organisation - Beyond Fake News.” *BBC*. Accessed September 8, 2024.

[https://www.bbc.com/beyondfakenews/trusted-news-initiative/faktisk-no-](https://www.bbc.com/beyondfakenews/trusted-news-initiative/faktisk-no-norways-pioneering-fact-checking-organisation)

[norways-pioneering-fact-checking-organisation](https://www.bbc.com/beyondfakenews/trusted-news-initiative/faktisk-no-norways-pioneering-fact-checking-organisation).

Finnish National Agency for Education. 2020. “Media Literacy and Education in Finland,” Government Publication.

<https://toolbox.finland.fi/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/03/media-literacy-and-education-in-finland.pdf>.

Finnish National Agency for Education. n.d. “Multiliteracy and Media Literacy.” Finnish National Agency for Education. Accessed September 8, 2024. <https://www.oph.fi/en/education-and-qualifications/multiliteracy-and-media-literacy>.

Fowler, Gary. 2022. “Fake News, Its Impact And How Tech Can Combat Misinformation.” *Forbes*, August 22, 2022.

<https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesbusinessdevelopmentcouncil/2022/08/22/fake-news-its-impact-and-how-tech-can-combat-misinformation/>.

King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. 2017. “How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, not Engaged Argument.” *American Political Science Review* 111 (3): 484. <https://gking.harvard.edu/50C>.

Lee, Benjamin. 2019. “Countering Violent Extremism Online: The Experiences of Informal Counter Messaging Actors.” *Policy & Internet*. 10.1002.

Madrid, Pamela. 2023. “Study reveals key reason why fake news spreads on social media.” USC Today. <https://today.usc.edu/usc-study-reveals-the-key-reason-why-fake-news-spreads-on-social-media/>.

“Malinformation Definition.” n.d. Law Insider. Accessed September 8, 2024. <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/malinformation>.

Media Reform Coalition. n.d. “Media ownership and control.” Media Reform Coalition. Accessed September 8, 2024.

<https://www.mediareform.org.uk/key-issues/media-ownership-and-control#media-ownership>.

Merkel, Wolfgang. 2023. “What is democratic resilience and how can we strengthen it?” Toda Peace Institute.

https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/t-pb-169_what-is-democratic-resilience_merkel.pdf.

Ong, Jonathan C. 2021. “Building Comprehensive Approaches to Combating Disinformation in Illiberal Settings: Insights from the Philippines.” National Endowment for Democracy.

<https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Combating-Disinformation-in-Illiberal-Settings-Insights-from-the-Philippines-Jonathan-Corpus-Ong.pdf>.

Oxford Reference. n.d. “Media literacy.” Oxford Reference. Accessed September 8, 2024.

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100146592>.

PennState. n.d. “False Narrative.” NewsLiteracy. Accessed September, 2024. <https://newsliteracy.psu.edu/glossary/false-narrative>.

Pew Research Center. 2023. “News Platform Fact Sheet.” Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/news-platform-fact-sheet/>.

Preveny. n.d. “What is a disinformation campaign? - PREVENY®.”

preveny. Accessed September 8, 2024. <https://preveny.com/en/what-is-a-disinformation-campaign/#1-what-is-a-disinformation-campaign>.

“Questions and Answers about the East StratCom Task Force.” 2021.

EEAS. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/questions-and-answers-about-east-stratcom-task-force_en.

RSF. 2024. Index | RSF. <https://rsf.org/en/index>.

Shukla, Vikrant. 2024. “What is Journalism Ethics: Definition, Principles, Relevance in Today's World and Future.” Shiksha.

<https://www.shiksha.com/mass-communication-media/articles/what-is-journalism-ethics-blogId-158267>.

Simplr. n.d. “Communication Strategy: Definition of Strategic Communications.” Simplr. Accessed September 8, 2024.

<https://www.simplr.com/glossary/strategic-communications/>.

“Social Media Research Institute.” n.d. Social Media Research Institute. Accessed September 8, 2024. <https://www.smri.world/dictionary/social-media-regulation>.

Stamper, Joshua. 2024. “Disinformation Definition & Meaning.” Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disinformation>.

Tech Target. n.d. “What is algorithmic transparency? | Definition from TechTarget.” TechTarget. Accessed September 8, 2024.

<https://www.techtargget.com/searchenterpriseai/definition/algorithmic-transparency>.

Timmons, Heather, and Josh Horwitz. 2016. “China's propaganda news outlets are absolutely crushing it on Facebook.” *Quartz*, May 6, 2016.
<https://qz.com/671211/chinas-propaganda-outlets-have-leaped-the-top-of-facebook-even-though-it-banned-at-home>.

UNESCO. 2019. “193 Countries Proclaimed Global Media and Information Literacy Week: It is now official!” UNESCO.
<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/193-countries-proclaimed-global-media-and-information-literacy-week-it-now-official>.

UNESCO. 2020. “Media literacy in finland – national media education policy.” UNESCO. <https://www.unesco.org/creativity/en/policy-monitoring-platform/media-literacy-finland-national-media-education-policy>.

UNESCO. 2021. “International community gives a strong push to media and information literacy.” UNESCO.
<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/international-community-gives-strong-push-media-and-information-literacy>.

UNESCO. n.d. “Media and Information Literacy for Global Communication and Learning.” UNESCO.
<https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy/global-communication-learning>.

UNESCO. n.d. “TVETipedia Glossary.” TVETipedia Glossary. Accessed September 8, 2024.
<https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVETipedia+Glossary/lang=en/show=term/term=Digital+literacy>.

United Nations. 1948. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations.” the United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

United Nations. 2021. “Officials Outline United Nations Fight against Disinformation on Multiple Fronts as Fourth Committee Takes Up Questions Related to Information.” press.un. <https://press.un.org/en/2021/gaspd734.doc.htm>.

United Nations. n.d. “Countering Disinformation | United Nations.” the United Nations. Accessed September 8, 2024. <https://www.un.org/en/countering-disinformation>.

United Nations. n.d. “Countering Disinformation | United Nations.” the United Nations. Accessed September 8, 2024. <https://www.un.org/en/countering-disinformation>.

United Nations. n.d. “Information Integrity | United Nations.” the United Nations. Accessed September 8, 2024. <https://www.un.org/en/information-integrity>.

United Nations. n.d. “United Nations Global Principles for Information Integrity | United Nations.” the United Nations. Accessed September 8, 2024. <https://www.un.org/en/information-integrity/global-principles>.

Uren, Tom, Elise Thomas, and Jacob Wallis. 2019. “Tweeting through the Great Firewall.” Australian Strategic Policy Institute. <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/tweeting-through-great-firewall>.

USA Government. n.d. “Information Manipulation Infographic.” CISA. Accessed September 8, 2024.

https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/information_manipulation_infographic_508.pdf.

World Health Organisation. 2022. “Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public: Mythbusters.” World Health Organization (WHO).

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>.

Yang, Chris. 2024. “Algorithms should not control what people see, UN chief says, launching Global Principles for Information Integrity.” UN News. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/06/1151376>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (not cited):

Mason, Jessica. 2018. “7 Steps to Combat Disinformation.” InterAction. <https://www.interaction.org/blog/7-steps-to-combat-disinformation/>.

Bateman, Jon, and Jennifer McCoy. 2024. “Countering Disinformation Effectively: An Evidence-Based Policy Guide.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/01/countering-disinformation-effectively-an-evidence-based-policy-guide?lang=en>.

Pamment, James. 2020. “The EU's Role in Fighting Disinformation: Taking Back the Initiative.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2020/07/the-eus-role-in-fighting-disinformation-taking-back-the-initiative?lang=en>.

“Disinformation: sources, spread and impact - POST.” 2024. UK Parliament POST. <https://post.parliament.uk/research-briefings/post-pn-0719/>.

McCorkindale, Tina, and Vahe Arabian. 2019. “How responsible are social media platforms for spreading and fixing disinformation?” State of Digital Publishing. <https://www.stateofdigitalpublishing.com/opinion/social-media-responsibility-for-spreading-and-fixing-disinformation/>.

West, Darell M. 2017. "How to combat fake news and disinformation."
Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-to-combat-fake-news-and-disinformation/>.

Topic B - Ensuring the Right to Healthcare Access Among Refugees and Asylum Seekers

INTRODUCTION:

Around 1 billion people are moving around the world at the current moment. Of which, 281 million people are international migrants, 84 million forcibly displaced, with a large percentage being children.⁵⁴ Refugee crises are happening around the world at every moment, and they often catch the attention of the international community. Recently we have seen the displacement of Ukrainians and Russians alike, and the continuing crisis in Syria. While refugees are a specific competency of other UN agencies, their conditions often coincide with the work of the Human Rights Council. This topic will delve into the access and quality of healthcare provided to refugees and asylum seekers (hereby referred to collectively as displaced persons), and how it relates to human rights.

The right to “a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services” is enshrined in Article 25 of the Declaration of Human Rights⁵⁵. This extends to all human beings, including displaced persons who have historically been disproportionately vulnerable to human rights abuses. As a result, when looking into this topic it must be upheld that the right to asylum seeking is inherent (as outlined in Article 14) and no persons shall be alienated from the rights inherent to them upon birth.

The mandate of our council is to protect and uphold these Human Rights, and to provide a “human rights approach to migration”.⁵⁶ In recent years, displaced persons' access to healthcare has become increasingly precarious. With expanding geopolitical and intrastate conflict the number of displaced persons has increased drastically. In addition, domestic and international health crises have placed gradual strain on healthcare systems. Thus, it is of vital importance to find solutions to issues in this topic, and ensure the access to healthcare for displaced persons.

⁵⁴ (World Health Organisation 2022)

⁵⁵ (United Nations 1948)

⁵⁶ (OHCHR 2024)

KEYWORDS/CONCEPTS:

- **Primary Care:** immediate healthcare providers, such as GPs and emergency rooms.
- **Secondary Care:** more specialized care, where one sees a specialist in a field such as an oncologist.
- **Tertiary Care:** specialized care in a hospital setting, usually refers to actual procedures such as heart surgery or dialysis.
- **Refugee:** According to the UNHCR: Refugees are people forced to flee their own country and seek safety in another country. They are unable to return to their own country because of feared persecution as a result of who they are, what they believe in or say, or because of armed conflict, violence or serious public disorder⁵⁷.
- **Asylum seeker:** According to the UNHCR: An asylum-seeker is someone who is seeking international protection. Their request for refugee status, or complementary protection status, has yet to be processed, or they may not yet have requested asylum but they intend to do so.⁵⁸
- **Intra state conflict:** Conflict within a state, between a government and a non-governmental party, with no interference from other states.
- **Asylum estate:** A term for government provided asylum accommodation, usually controlled by the ministry of defence of a country.
- **Digital access:** According to Weebly “the ability to fully participate in digital society. this includes access to tools and technologies, such as the internet and computers, that allow for full participation”⁵⁹
- **Skill barriers:** the inability to cross the minimum amount of skill needed to complete or participate in a task. These can derive from a lack of educational opportunity or language barriers.
- **Country of origin:** the place of which a displaced person has fled from.
- **Internally displaced people:** According to the UNHCR they are people who “have been forced to flee their homes by conflict,

⁵⁷ (UNHCR, n.d.”The 1951 Refugee Convention”)

⁵⁸ (UNHCR, n.d.)

⁵⁹ (Weebly, n.d.)

violence, persecution or disasters, however, unlike refugees, they remain within their own country.”⁶⁰

BACKGROUND OF THE ISSUE

Post World War II situation and the creation of modern refugee law

In the aftermath of World War II a new type of crisis emerged for the international community to tackle. Due to the humanitarian impact of the war, from the destruction of settlements to the attempted eradication of communities in Europe and East Asia, there was an uncontrollable increase in displaced persons. In Europe alone it is estimated some 65 million people were displaced after the war.⁶¹ As a result, there was a need to create a new framework and legislative precedent to tackle this crisis. In 1951 the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, gave a legal definition to refugees and asylum seekers and outlined their right to a “dignified and independent life”.⁶² Thus, the first frameworks for providing displaced persons with social services and protection were established.

Escalation of the issue

Throughout the 1980s to the 1990s the situation of displaced persons became exponentially more drastic. The number of severe humanitarian crises increased with events such as the Rwandan genocide and the War in the Balkans.⁶³ Due to this, the international community saw a substantial growth in the number of displaced persons. For example, the number of refugees globally in 1990 was 30 million, but this increased to 43 million in just 3 years.⁶⁴ As a result, healthcare systems became strained and more systematic approaches to healthcare were implemented into refugee camps, with a focus on preventable diseases and nutrition.⁶⁵

Nature of the Issue

⁶⁰ (United Nations, n.d. Internally Displaced People)

⁶¹ (Imperial War Museum, n.d.)

⁶² (UNHCR, n.d. “The 1951 Refugee Convention”)

⁶³ (Toole and Waldman 1993)

⁶⁴ (Toole and Waldman 1993)

⁶⁵ (Toole and Waldman 1993)

The nature of the issue of access to healthcare for displaced persons derives from four main areas. It can be classified into:

- *Legal issues*
 - This can derive, first, from a lack of legal status which can prevent access to domestic healthcare systems.⁶⁶ This is because legal status can only be given by national institutions or a domestic office of the Commissioner for Refugees. Secondly, from legal restrictions which can limit access to solely primary (emergency) care or create pay barriers to accessing any level, but specifically secondary and tertiary, of care.⁶⁷
- *Living status*
 - Homelessness or residency in asylum estates can create a myriad of issues for displaced persons trying to access healthcare. Firstly, there is the dichotomy that they are often moved around by authorities frequently,⁶⁸ making creating a profile at healthcare providers difficult, but they are also often heavily restricted in their movements.⁶⁹ This makes physically getting to healthcare facilities difficult. Finally, they are very rarely given subsistence support by domestic governments which creates further restraints to access.
- *Digital and skill barriers*
 - Digital access can be a prominent barrier for displaced persons access to healthcare. Phones can be either confiscated due to immigration powers or they can't be afforded.⁷⁰ Thus they can't access online medical services or information about healthcare rights and services in the country they have sought asylum. Additionally,

⁶⁶ (Refugee Council 2021, “A note on barriers experienced by refugees and people seeking asylum when accessing health services.”)

⁶⁷ (Safe Surgeries, n.d.)

⁶⁸ (Refugee Council 2021, “A note on barriers experienced by refugees and people seeking asylum when accessing health services.”)

⁶⁹ (Refugee Council 2021, “A note on barriers experienced by refugees and people seeking asylum when accessing health services.”)

⁷⁰ (Refugee Council 2021, “A note on barriers experienced by refugees and people seeking asylum when accessing health services.”)

displaced persons rarely have access to the internet.⁷¹ as asylum estates usually do not provide this service.

- Skill barriers derive mainly from language barriers. Many displaced persons will not speak an official language of the country they are seeking asylum in, which means healthcare advice is less likely to be effective and also that displaced persons are less likely to engage with healthcare systems.⁷²
- *Past experiences*
 - Past experiences and conditions such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can play a large role in whether displaced persons will and can engage in healthcare systems. Medical trauma is a prevalent issue amongst these communities which has led to a mistrust of the medical system. It raises a larger issue of mental health and its lack of focus.
 - In addition, the fear of expulsion should they seek out healthcare undocumented is a vital issue within this issue.⁷³ Also, displaced persons fear that medical conditions or reports could be shared with the government and be sued in the immigration process. While this is most often a perceived reality it is rarely reality.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE TOPIC

3.6% (281 million) of the world's population live outside their country of origin, and this number is only projected to grow.⁷⁴ Various factors outside this committee's competency impact the position of these displaced people. The number of intrastate conflicts have increased the number of internally and externally displaced people.⁷⁵ These people are not inherently vulnerable themselves but are more vulnerable to human rights abuses.⁷⁶ Protracted bureaucratic procedures only catalyze this vulnerability and decrease their access to healthcare. Crucially, it must be emphasized that asylum seekers,

⁷¹ (Refugee Council 2021)

⁷² (Refugee Council 2021, "A note on barriers experienced by refugees and people seeking asylum when accessing health services.")

⁷³ (Refugee Council 2021, "Healthcare for refugees: Where are the gaps and how do we help?")

⁷⁴ (Spiegel et al. 2010)

⁷⁵ (Spiegel et al. 2010, #)

⁷⁶ (OHCHR 2024)

by definition, are in a more precarious situation than refugees. Asylum seekers have not been granted refugee status, and in many countries this means they have not been afforded protection and access to services. However, progress over the matter must be recognised, one of which is that mortality has decreased in refugee camp settings.⁷⁷

Additionally, areas for improvement have been identified by academics and experts alike. Firstly, new strategies are needed to reach “intermittently accessible populations” especially in regards to infectious and neonatal diseases.⁷⁸ Secondly, chronic diseases need to be tackled more systematically,⁷⁹ which requires a multifaceted approach. Thirdly, that adequate healthcare coverage does not exist and that states should ensure the quality is up to human rights standards.⁸⁰ Finally, that data collection needs to be more comprehensive in order to monitor progress and compliance. This is a non exhaustive list of issues that require solutions. When looking at this issue, its complexity is obvious. However, focusing on this committee's competencies and scope will be crucial.

COVID-19 Pandemic

When it comes to global health, COVID-19 has become a common thread in discussions. In this topic, this is no less true. The COVID-19 Pandemic highlighted key inequalities in global and national healthcare systems, especially for displaced persons.⁸¹ It placed incredible strain on healthcare systems around the world. As a result citizens had little access to healthcare, and displaced persons even less access. The global response to a health crisis was arguably mismanaged and disorganized, leading to undue stress on health care systems. Thus, highlighting a need for better crisis management and response to protect not only healthcare systems but also institutions as a whole. Finally, the pandemic placed strain on displaced communities

⁷⁷ (Spiegel et al. 2010)

⁷⁸ (Spiegel et al. 2010)

⁷⁹ (Spiegel et al. 2010, #)

⁸⁰ (Spiegel et al. 2010, #)

⁸¹ (WHO 2022)

themselves as their conditions often meant an inability to isolate, as a result leading to higher infection rates.⁸²

Milestones and shortcomings

The UN, specifically the Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner for Refugees, have released major milestones on displaced persons' access to healthcare. One of which is the “Principles and Guidelines, supported by the practical guidance, on the Human Rights Protection of Migrants in Vulnerable Situations’.⁸³ This document was spearheaded by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OCHR) and the Global Migration Group provides a comprehensive guideline for access to healthcare. It outlines access at all stages and the importance of recognising traumas. Most importantly, it outlines that all actions and policies should meet human rights standards. Secondly, there is The Global Compact on Refugees founded in 2018.⁸⁴ It is a framework for “more predictable and equitable responsibility sharing”⁸⁵ and was spearheaded by the Refugee commission. However, there are major issues with focus, as it does not focus on the root causes of issues and also has problems with challenges of implementation.

Despite the list of comprehensive documents, it is clear that there are shortcomings from the UN as a whole on this issue. One common shortcoming is the lack of focus on mental health. While this historically has been omitted, recently it has gained more traction in discussions. Notably the “Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right of Everyone to the Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Health,”⁸⁶ where they state “there is no health without mental health.”⁸⁷ However, a lack of guidelines and frameworks has made implementing solutions difficult. Additionally, there is the concern of a lack of binding agreements and thus variable commitment from states. This results in

⁸² (WHO 2022)

⁸³ (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner and Global Migration Group 2018)

⁸⁴ (UNHCR 2018)

⁸⁵ (UNHCR 2018)

⁸⁶ (OHCHR 2020)

⁸⁷ (OHCHR 2020)

effectiveness and uneven implementation of solutions. Finally, a major identified shortcoming is cultural and language barriers need to be addressed more thoroughly. Assimilation is often difficult and becomes even more so when cultural differences are not addressed.

A positive example of integration however, is the intergration of Venezuelan displaced persons in Latin America and the caribbean. Venezuelans have and are facing increased political and socio economic crisis which limits their freedoms and quality of life. As a result many have fled to surrounding countries in the region. Most countries, notably Chile, Colombia and Peru, have been able to accommodate short term and long term needs for their Venezuelan populations, and have seen a net positive economic impact in return.⁸⁸ However, Venezuelans are working below their education level in most countries and tensions remain high in some places putting strain on their access to services.⁸⁹

MAIN ACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS

The following stakeholders is a non-exhaustive list of key actors in this issue. Within your research you should explore the vast range of stakeholders who hold influence in this topic.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The UNHCR is a key actor in this issue as the main body for refugee rights and actions. It is often closely intertwined with the Human Rights Council in regards to the Human Rights afforded to displaced persons. They are the main point of contact for refugees and host countries alike, with regional offices existing in 135 countries.⁹⁰ They have also been the main body for implementing guidelines and frameworks for states to follow. Their shortcomings and mistakes have a knock on effect on the standard for refugees and asylum seekers as a whole. They are arguably the most influential and crucial actor in this issue, and should be heavily researched and cooperated with in this committee's solutions.

⁸⁸ (Nelson 2024)

⁸⁹ (Nelson 2024)

⁹⁰ (UN, n.d.)

Other Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs) and International organizations (IOs) also play a large role in this issue. Namely organizations such as the European Union, World Health Organisation (WHO) and the UN Children's Investment Fund (UNICEF).

Host Countries

Host countries are major actors in this issue as they are directly responsible for national legislation regarding refugee health care status. They are responsible for implementing frameworks and guidelines outlined by international agencies. However, it is important to note that legislation and position ranges from country to country. Legislation usually varies from the level of care, primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare access. Their position is determined by the number of refugees they hold and how many are fleeing domestically. They are the most affected actors in regards to increasing strain of bureaucratic institutions and healthcare systems. Especially with the COVID pandemic and increasing cost of living, countries are struggling more than ever to uphold the rights of displaced persons. They are a very influential group of actors in this issue, and each will hold a different position on the status of access to healthcare.

- One example is Colombia which holds the largest population of people needing protection (2023), in tandem with 6.9 million internally displaced people.⁹¹ This has created a massive strain on services in the country and has fuelled tensions leading to conflicts within the country. the UNHCR has been working in Colombia to improve the humanitarian situation, referring to Colombians for resettlement in the USA.⁹²
- Another example is Bangladesh which houses a large population of Rohingya peoples who have been denied citizenship in myanmar.⁹³ They have received a large amount of funding through the UNHCR and are integrating them into their population. However, Bangladesh is often hit by natural disasters limiting the effectiveness of these programmes.⁹⁴

⁹¹ (Barchfield 2024)

⁹² (Barchfield 2024)

⁹³ (“Bangladesh | Global Focus” 2024)

⁹⁴ (“Bangladesh | Global Focus” 2024)

It is also important to note another state actor, which is donor states. These are states who fund refugee and asylum seeker offices and programmes in different countries.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

NGOs play a large role in any international issue, and arguably more so in human rights issues. They can play an aid giving role or an informational role, both of which are important. Aid giving organizations, such as Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF) (Doctors without borders) and the Red Cross/Crescent, have been crucial in providing supplementary healthcare to displaced persons. Their scope has been majorly in refugee camps and settlements, however their scope does expand on occasion. Informational NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, are key in flagging the reality of conditions and providing data to states and organizations. Both types of organizations are somewhat influential especially for building grassroots support for displaced communities.

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1: Türkiye and the European Union

Türkiye (formerly Turkey) holds the largest population of refugees and asylum seekers in the world, at close to 4 million people mostly living outside of camps.⁹⁵ It has grown to such a massive number due to its geographical position as a transit point from the Eastern hemisphere to Europe, and the funding provided by the EU. The EU promised 6 billion Euros in 2016 alone to Turkey in aid for displaced persons, in return for blocking their passage to the rest of Europe.⁹⁶ This sheer amount of population increase has placed Türkiye in a precarious but currently stable position. However, it is important to note that incidents such as earthquakes threaten the system Türkiye has in place.

Türkiye has a rich history of integration and assimilation for displaced persons, which extends to the healthcare system. In the pre-documentation period, asylum seekers have full and protected access to emergency

⁹⁵ (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations 2024)

⁹⁶ (Euronews 2024)

(primary) and communicable disease healthcare facilities.⁹⁷ Once they have their pre-registration document, they are technically allowed to approach secondary and tertiary care providers, and serious issues can and will be addressed.⁹⁸ Finally when temporary protection registration is complete, they have the same rights to healthcare that are afforded to citizens of Türkiye.⁹⁹ This process usually takes no longer than 6 months.¹⁰⁰

Finally, Türkiye is actively participating with programmes to strengthen its healthcare systems in regards to displaced persons. They are looking to implement skilled healthcare professionals from refugee communities and implement 180 refugee health centers.¹⁰¹ Overall, while not perfect, Türkiye provides an important example for integration and assimilation of displaced persons into health services.

Case Study 2: Australia

Australia has been widely criticized by human rights groups due to their methods and lengths of refugee processing. Their main method is the Offshore Humanitarian Programmes, on offshore islands.¹⁰² This resettlement programme started in the 1970s and is based on a refugee category system. In which, little to no services are provided unless the displaced person is of “Emergency rescue” category.¹⁰³ Additionally, Australia sanctions boat turnbacks which intercepts boats and “turns them back” to their country of origin.¹⁰⁴

These offshore detention facilities have been reported to have a severe lack of adequate healthcare.¹⁰⁵ As a result mental and physical health have been shown to decline in these centres to the point that “there are numerous cases

⁹⁷ (Refugee Rights Turkey 2017)

⁹⁸ (Refugee Rights Turkey 2017)

⁹⁹ (Refugee Rights Turkey 2017)

¹⁰⁰ (UNHCR, n.d., “National asylum procedures for international protection.”)

¹⁰¹ (Ataman 2017)

¹⁰² (Refugee Council of Australia 2024)

¹⁰³ (Refugee Council of Australia 2024)

¹⁰⁴ (Refugee Council of Australia 2024)

¹⁰⁵ (O'Donnell et al. 2023)

of people who were released from detention and died because of untreated or poorly treated medical conditions or from suicide.”¹⁰⁶ These conditions have been reported by multiple NGOs and have been condemned previously by the United Nations.

A catalyzing factor is the extensive process of declaring refugee status and receiving documentation. This process, in comparison to Türkiye, is much longer. In Australia it can take anywhere from 18 months to a few years, with multiple cases spanning almost 10 years.¹⁰⁷ Without this documentation these displaced persons cannot leave these islands or access adequate standards of healthcare. Overall, Australia exemplifies many shortcomings of the international community and requires immediate action.

IMPORTANT SUPPORT MATERIAL/REFERENCES FOR INVESTIGATIONS:

When researching this topic it is crucial for you as a delegate to understand the position of your country. Aim to know whether it is in support of refugee rights, is it a host country or an afflicted country, and which organizations does it recognize and participate in. your base documentation should be as such;

- United Nations Declaration on Human Rights
- Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

However, additional research is always needed so we have provided a non exhaustive list of materials to review:

- ABC News, dir. 2022. *ABC News*. “DISPLACED: The global refugee crisis.” Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWS8g2VLHn8>.
- IOM. 2020. “The Rights and Health of Refugees, Migrants and Stateless Must be Protected in COVID-19 Response.” International Organization for Migration (IOM). <https://www.iom.int/news/rights-and-health-refugees-migrants-and-stateless-must-be-protected-covid-19-response>.
- MSF. 2024. “EU policies promote violence by denying safety and protection to refugees and migrants.” MSF. <https://www.msf.org/eu-policies-deny-safety-and-protection-refugees-and-migrants>.

¹⁰⁶ (O'Donnell et al. 2023)

¹⁰⁷ (ASRC, n.d.)

- Ro, Christine. 2020. "When It Comes To Tech, Refugees Need More Access, Not More Apps." *Forbes*, February 6, 2020. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/christinero/2020/02/05/when-it-comes-to-tech-refugees-need-more-access-not-more-apps/>.
- UNHCR. 2011. "Ensuring Access to Health Care: Operational Guidance on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas." UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/media/ensuring-access-health-care-operational-guidance-refugee-protection-and-solutions-urban-areas>.
- Efird, Jimmy T., and Pollie Bith-Melander. 2018. "Refugee Health: An Ongoing Commitment and Challenge." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 131, no. 15 (January). 10.3390/ijerph15010131.

Bibliography

“Bangladesh | Global Focus.” 2024. UNHCR Global Focus.

<https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/operations/bangladesh>.

Barchfield, Jenny. 2024. “Colombia situation | Global Focus.” UNHCR Global Focus.

<https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/colombia-situation>.

Nelson, Rebecca. 2024. “Effective Integration of Venezuelan Migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean.” Inter-American Foundation.

<https://www.iaf.gov/content/story/effective-integration-of-venezuelan-migrants-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean/>.

UNHCR. 2011. “Ensuring Access to Health Care: Operational Guidance on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas.” UNHCR.

<https://www.unhcr.org/uk/media/ensuring-access-health-care-operational-guidance-refugee-protection-and-solutions-urban-areas>.

United Nations. n.d. “Internally Displaced People.” UNHCR. Accessed September 8, 2024. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/internally-displaced-people>

Weebly. n.d. “Digital Access - Digital Citizenship.” Digital Citizenship. Accessed September 8, 2024.

<https://laurabiancoedtech.weebly.com/digital-access.html>.

World Health Organisation. 2022. “Refugee and migrant health.” World Health Organization (WHO). <https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/refugee-and-migrant-health>.

ASRC. n.d. “Fair Process.” Asylum Seeker Resource Centre. Accessed July 16, 2024. <https://asrc.org.au/policies-old/fair-process/>.

Ataman, Tugba. 2017. “Strengthening the National Health System in Turkey.” The Global Compact on Refugees. <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/good-practices/strengthening-national-health-system-turkey>.

Euronews. 2024. “Are billions of EU funds sent to Turkey to help refugees really making a difference?” *Euronews.com*, April 24, 2024. <https://www.euronews.com/2024/04/24/are-billions-of-eu-funds-sent-to-turkey-to-help-refugees-really-making-a-difference>.

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. 2024. “Türkiye - European Commission.” European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/europe/turkiye_en.

Imperial War Museum. n.d. “What Happened To People Displaced By The Second World War? | IWM.” Imperial War Museums. Accessed July 16, 2024. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-happened-to-people-displaced-by-the-second-world-war>.

O'Donnell, Samantha, Sara Dehm, Claire Loughnan, and Jordana Silverstein. 2023. “Creating Sickness and Death: The Health-Related Harms of Australia's Refugee Externalisation Policies.”

Oxford Law Blogs, May 4, 2023. <https://blogs.law.ox.ac.uk/border-criminologies-blog/blog-post/2023/05/creating-sickness-and-death-health-related-harms>.

OHCHR. 2020. “A/HRC/44/48: Right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.” ohchr. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc4448-right-everyone-enjoyment-highest-attainable-standard-physical>.

OHCHR. 2024. “About migration and human rights | OHCHR.” ohchr. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/migration/about-migration-and-human-rights>.

Refugee Council. 2021. “A note on barriers experienced by refugees and people seeking asylum when accessing health services.” *Refugee Council*, March 17, 2021. https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/A-note-on-barriers-experienced-by-refugees-and-people-seeking-asylum-when-accessing-health-services_March_2021.pdf.

Refugee Council. 2021. “Healthcare for refugees: Where are the gaps and how do we help?” Refugee Council. <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/news/healthcare-for-refugees-where-are-the-gaps-and-how-do-we-help/>.

Refugee Council of Australia. 2024. “Resettlement and complementary pathways to Australia.” Refugee Council of Australia.

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resettlement-and-complementary-pathways-to-australia/>.

Refugee Rights Turkey. 2017. “HEALTH CARE SERVICES For Syrian Refugees And Other Persons Under Temporary Protection,” QUESTIONS & ANSWERS.

<https://www.mhd.org.tr/images/yayinlar/MHM-5.pdf>.

Safe Surgeries. n.d. “Access to healthcare for people seeking asylum in initial and contingency accommodation,” Powerpoint Presentation.

Accessed July 16, 2024. <https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Toolkit-for-ICBs-and-PC-commissioners-access-to-healthcare-for-asylum-accommodation-DOTW-2023.pdf>.

Spiegel, Paul B., Francesco Checchi, Sandro Colombo, and Eugene Paik.

2010. “Health-care needs of people affected by conflict: future trends and changing frameworks.” *The Lancet* 375, no. 9711 (January): 341-345. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(09\)61873-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(09)61873-0).

Toole, M. J., and R. J. Waldman. 1993. “Refugees and displaced persons.

War, hunger, and public health.” *JAMA* 270, no. 5 (August): 600-5. PMID: 8331759.

UN. n.d. “Refugees | United Nations.” the United Nations. Accessed July

16, 2024. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/refugees>.

UNHCR. 2018. “The Global Compact on Refugees.” UNHCR.

<https://www.unhcr.org/uk/about-unhcr/who-we-are/global-compact-refugees>.

UNHCR. n.d. “The 1951 Refugee Convention.” UNHCR. Accessed July

16, 2024. <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention>.

UNHCR. n.d. “National asylum procedures for international protection.”

UNHCR. Accessed July 16, 2024.

<https://help.unhcr.org/turkiye/information-for-non-syrians/national-asylum-procedures-ip/>.

United Nations. 1948. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United

Nations.” the United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner and

Global Migration Group. 2018. “Principles and guidelines, supported by practical guidance, on the human rights protection of migrants in vulnerable situations.”

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Migration/PrinciplesAndGuidelines.pdf>.

WHO. 2022. “Refugee and migrant health.” World Health Organization

(WHO). <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/refugee-and-migrant-health>.

UNHCR. n.d. “Asylum-seekers.” UNHCR. Accessed July 16, 2024.

<https://www.unhcr.org/asylum-seekers>.