Houston Area Model United Nations
General Committee

SPECPOL



Chair | Kiersten Hua

Topic A: Addressing Forced Migration and Humanitarian Protections in African States

Houston Area Model United Nations 52

February 4 & 5, 2026

Atilgan Ozdil/Anadolu Ag

Chair Letter

Delegates,

Welcome to the 52nd Annual HAMUN, and the best committee, SPECPOL!

My name is Kiersten Hua, and I will be serving as your chair! I am a sophomore at Southern Methodist University (pony up!), majoring in Biology and minoring in Business, on the Pre-Dent track. Throughout high school, I took part in numerous conferences, both as a delegate and chair. I also served as treasurer for my school's MUN club! After graduating, I wanted to stay involved with MUN, so I joined the awesome at HAMUN staff! Last year, I served as the World Bank chair. Needless to say, I love Model UN, and if you do not already, hopefully, after this conference, you will too!

HAMUN is not only an incredible experience, but also a chance to explore international politics, make meaningful connections, and a time practicing skills that will benefit you long after high school. I implore you to take advantage of all the opportunities this two-day conference has to offer.

My advice for delegates is to start strong and early, even if it seems scary or overwhelming! Everyone makes mistakes, whether it's their first conference or last. Just try your best, learn from failures, and you will be golden! Good luck, and I can not wait to meet you in February!



Kiersten Hua
Chair of SPECPOL
kiersten.hua@icloud.com

Vice Chair Letter

Delegates,

Welcome to the 52nd Annual HAMUN, and it is my pleasure to welcome you to SPECPOL!

My name is Daniela Gonzalez Landino, and I will be your SPECPOL vice chair for this conference! I am a freshman at the University of Texas at Austin, and I am a Government and Plan II major. I was a delegate for Model UN at my high school for all four years, mostly staying within DISEC, so I'm excited to join a new committee for my first year as a staffer! Being able to continue with something I've enjoyed so much for the past few years is amazing, and I hope I can make sure you all have fun too.

HAMUN definitely helped strengthen many of my skills, including my paper-writing, research, and public speaking skills. Hopefully, this conference will bring you all some of this same help like it did to me and many others before you.

My advice for delegates is to not be afraid to do something new. Regardless of how big or influential your country is, everybody has a role and can do equally well. All you need is a leap of faith and (preferably) something to write notes on so you know what you're talking about. Good luck to all delegates!



Daniela Gonzalez Landino
Vice Chair of SPECPOL
dig633@my.utexas.edu

Background Information

What would you do if your house was bombed, your neighborhood invaded, or your country was at war? Hopefully, it is a question no one reading this will have to answer, but unfortunately, too many do. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that during 2025, 117.8 million people were forcibly displaced, including roughly 41.6 million refugees, 9 million asylum-seekers, and 68.7 million people displaced due to conflict within their own country (also known as IDPs).[1] Africans represent approximately 67% of the world's forcibly displaced[2]- a crisis disguised as a statistic- but why, and what can be done to change this?

Africa has an eclectic background marred by foreign involvement and colonization. While most people assume European occupation of Africa began in the 1800s with imperial colonization, it began long before. Even before Portugal began the practice of chattel slavery in the 1440s, and all the way back to Ancient Greece, and later the Roman Empire. In Africa alone, thousands of Ancient Greek and Roman ruins rival those in Greece (*see images below*). Beyond leaving behind beautiful architecture, the Hellenistic and Roman periods of history left behind parts of their own culture, which eventually synthesized much of Africa's own. In fact, the town of Thugga (*see second image below*), in northwest Tunisia, existed through Numidian, Punic, Hellenistic, and Roman eras.[3] The remains of the city demonstrate the influence of each culture. However, it is important to note while researching that prior to these foreign occupations, ancient Africa had its own blend of distinct and advanced societies, with traditions and history, apart from its history of imperialism.

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1. UNHCR. "Figures at a Glance | UNHCR." Unhcr, 2024, https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/figures-glance.
2. "Africa's Colliding Conflicts Compound Forced Displacement Crisis – Africa Center." Africa Center, 23 Sept. 2025, https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africa-conflicts-compound-forced-displacement/.
3. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. "Dougga / Thugga." UNESCO World Heritage Centre, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/794/.



UNESCO World Heritage Centre. "Dougga / Thugga." UNESCO World Heritage Centre, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/794/.



"11 African Ruins You Need to See Besides the Pyramids." Matador Network, https://matadornetwork.com/read/best-african-ruins/.



"UNESCO World Heritage List – Travel Guide at Wikivoyage." Wikivoyage.Org, 2025, https://en.wikivoyage.org/wiki/UNESCO_World_Heritage_List.

Another key cultural influence is Islam. It is said to have been brought to Africa by Muslim refugees escaping persecution in the seventh century. Later, numerous Islamic kingdoms ruled over parts of Africa. Even though these kingdoms were primarily contained in West Africa, Islam spread north, then west, and south. Eventually, it became one of Africa's most popular religions.[4] Today, Africa is dotted with mosques and Islamic art from both the past and present.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean blue and thus began the fight for Atlantic dominance and European imperialism. This half-millennium trade inequality between Europe and Africa originated when Portugal started trading along the West African coast in the fifteenth century. At first, it was a trade of equals, for goods such as ceramics or gold. Around 1650, though, after the European fight for the Americas had mostly concluded, goods were no longer enough, and with the dawn of chattel slavery, a trade disparity was born. Countries began purchasing prisoners of war

4. "The Story of Africa| BBC World Service." Www.Bbc.Co.Uk, https://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/index_section7.shtml.

and enslaved labor to ship to America, commencing what is now considered the Atlantic Slave Trade. Thousands of Africans were transported out of the continent, alongside gold, diamonds, and other goods. As the slave trade grew, so did the trade imbalance between Western European countries and Africa. European powers began occupying coastal towns and ports. Then, over time, the once powerful African empires faded out of the global economy, and international politics.[5] These combined led to what is called the "Scramble for Africa," a period known for the competition between European countries to take over the entire landmass of Africa.

The Scramble for Africa occurred from the late 19th century to the early 20th century. This was a time of many foreign invasions, multinational partitions, and colonization by European states. In 1884-1885, the countries of Britain, Germany, France, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Italy, and seven others (note: no nations from Africa were represented) joined to diplomatically distribute Africa, in what became known as the Berlin Conference of 1884.[6] The stated intention was to prevent any militarized disputes between the European countries, prevent slave trading, improve humanitarian rights for Africans, and institute a framework to colonize and claim 'available' land. Despite the ideals of this conference, only the statements regarding land declarations and trade routes were upheld. After this conference, the rate of colonization rapidly increased, and by the start of the Great War, the Scramble for Africa concluded with the entire landmass of Africa- excluding Liberia and Ethiopia- being controlled by European nations.[7] [8] To this day, the invisible lines drawn during this conference are reflected in the current map of Africa (*see images below*).

5. T. Green. A Fistful of Shells : West Africa From the Rise of the Slave Trade to the Age of Revolution. The University Of Chicago Press, 2021.
6. Papaioannou, E., and S. Michalopoulos. "The Scramble for Africa and Its Legacy." Lbsresearch.London.Edu, edited by M. Vernengo et al., Palgrave MacMillan, 28 Dec. 2016, https://lbsresearch.london.edu/id/eprint/759/.
7. "The Berlin Conference | South African History Online." Sahistory.Org.Za, https://sahistory.org.za/article/berlin-conference.
8. The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Berlin West Africa Conference | European History | Britannica." Encyclopædia Britannica, 2019, https://www.britannica.com/event/Berlin-West-Africa-Conference.
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Africa's rich history has defined the socio-political and economic landscape seen today. The borders outlined by the Berlin Conference of 1884 disregarded the plethora of African nations and their respective cultures and politics, leading to many disputes and conflicts. Not to mention forced labor, whether it be in the Americas or in Africa, is also a critical cause for the political climate in Africa. However, that is not all; the effects of racial and ethnic discrimination still influence Africa to this day. The colonization of Africa permanently changed African culture through the unwanted imposition of Western European cultures, the erasure of oral histories, genocides, and the eradication of the pre-colonial way of life. It is also important to note that colonization is still seen through the effects of modern neo-colonization, which is when a state has independent sovereignty, yet its economy and political policy are dependent on and controlled by foreign powers. Altogether, these have led to the civil and political unrest that plagues Africa today. [9]

9. Parashar, Swati, and Michael Schulz. "Colonial Legacies, Postcolonial 'Selfhood' and the (Un)Doing of Africa." Third World Quarterly, vol. 42, no. 5, Apr. 2021, pp. 867–81.

Only sixteen African countries are responsible for 44.8 million forcibly displaced individuals, with the top seven representing 38 million of the aforementioned total.[10] What does forced displacement really mean? Forcibly displaced is defined as the movement of people away from their homeland, involuntary or coerced, because of discrimination, violence, political or economic unrest, environmental degradation, etc. There are many different types of forced displacement, such as refugees, IDPs, and asylum seekers. [11]

- **Refugees** are people who have fled their home country to escape persecution, war, conflict, or violence. They are also protected under international law. [12]
- **Internally Displaced People (IDPs)** are those who have had to flee their home region, but remain within their country.
- **Asylum Seekers** are people who are in the process of requesting refugee status or a similar international protection status. Only certain asylum seekers will receive refugee status. [13]

Countries Most Contributing to Forced Displacement in Africa

Country	IDPs	Refugees and Asylum Seekers	Total Displaced	Percentage of Country's Population Displaced
Sudan	8,598,420	3,718,269	12,882,418	25
DRC	5,111,000	1,371,668	6,482,668	6
Somalia	3,495,058	940,431	4,435,489	23
Nigeria	3,711,314	427,152	4,138,466	2
Burkina Faso	3,548,780	451,220	4,000,000	17
South Sudan	945,000	2,504,149	3,449,149	28
Ethiopia	2,378,032	186,153	2,564,185	2
Central African Republic	428,226	749,035	1,177,261	4
Cameroon	1,004,257	127,320	1,131,577	21
Mali	408,646	464,545	873,191	4
Eritrea		673,335	673,335	19
Niger	548,386	97,101	645,487	2
Mozambique	506,214	7,326	513,540	1
Burundi	10,000	276,500	286,500	2
Rwanda		264,629	264,629	1
Chad	219,595	20,765	240,360	2
Total Forcibly Displaced in Africa: 44,804,597				

Data sources: IDMC (2025), World Bank (2025), IOM and UNHCR (mid-2026 figures)

Africa Center for Strategic Studies. "Africa's Enduring Conflicts Deepen Population Displacements." Africa Center, 15 Sept. 2026, https://africacenter.org/spotlight/conflicts-pressure-population-displacements/.

This is a humanitarian crisis that has been perpetuated by a lack of long-term solutions, an unstable political environment, and long-lasting conflicts. There are currently

10. Africa Center for Strategic Studies. "Africa's Enduring Conflicts Deepen Population Displacements." Africa Center, 15 Sept. 2026, https://africacenter.org/spotlight/conflicts-pressure-population-displacements/.
11. "Forced Displacement." International Partnerships, 2023, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-forced-displacement/forced-displacement_en.
12. UNHCR . "What Is a Refugee?" Unhcr UK, 2024, https://www.unhcr.org/uk/what-refugee.
13. UNHCR. "Asylum-Seekers." Unhcr, 2024, https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/asylum-seekers.

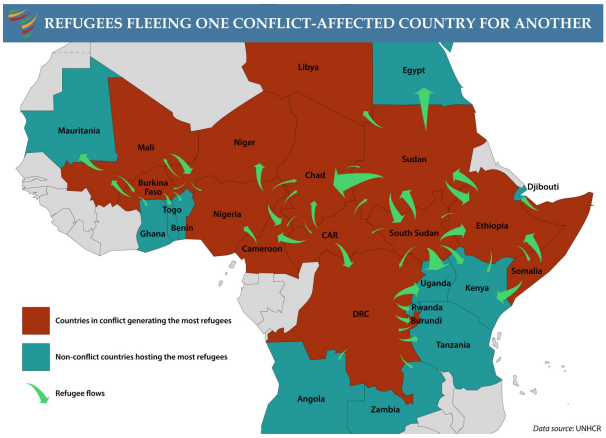
over thirty-five armed conflicts,[14] with some having lasted decades. The most prominent weaponized disputes include the Sudan Civil War, the Ethiopian regional uprising, Somalia's political unrest,[15] the jihadist insurgency in the Central Sahel,[16] and the violence in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).[17] There are also corrupt and dysfunctional governments, which lead to many fleeing; some notable examples include Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria.[18] Religious discrimination is a cause for forced displacement as well, particularly in countries like Eritrea, Egypt, and Libya, among many others.[19] Additionally, there are issues with ethnic persecution and even genocides of a particular ethnic group, which is also known as ethnic cleansing. An example of this is the Sudanese ethnic Masalit and other non-Arab groups,[20] and against Muslim citizens in the Central African Republic (CAR).[21] Together, the displaced-persons crisis in Africa is one large movement driven by many smaller crises. It is hard to solve every problem, but there are some ways to abate the damage.

Solutions are as diverse as the problems, and it is crucial that solutions not only manage the effects of forced displacement but also address the causes themselves. At the highest level, the UNHCR has repeatedly recommended that countries increase the rights and protections of those who are forcibly displaced. Recently, a joint UN-African Union (AU) committee designed the Frameworks on Peace and Security and Sustainable Development. The intention is to give African states an outline to handle and prevent the reasons for mass displacement. The UN also states that this humanitarian crisis is not just a human rights crisis, but a loss of potential, causing many bright minds to flee Africa in a movement called brain drain. UN Special Adviser Bience Gawanas mentions, "Forced displacement is not only a tale of human tragedy, [but] it also poses a

14. "Today's Armed Conflicts - the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights." Geneva-Academy.Ch, 2022, https://archives.geneva-academy.ch/galleries/today-s-armed-conflicts.html.
15. "Conflict in the Horn of Africa." Acled, 13 Dec. 2024, https://acleddata.com/region/conflict-horn-africa.
16. "Conflict in the Sahel." Acled, 5 Sept. 2025, https://acleddata.com/region/conflict-sahel.
17. "Conflict in the Great Lakes." Acled, 12 Dec. 2024, https://acleddata.com/region/conflict-great-lakes.
18. Amnesty International. "Africa 2020 Archives." Amnesty International, 2022, https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/report-africa/.
19. Cato.Org, 2022, https://www.cato.org/commentary/africa-blood-christians.
20. Human Rights Watch. "Sudan: Ethnic Cleansing in West Darfur | Human Rights Watch." Human Rights Watch, 9 May 2024, https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/05/09/sudan-ethnic-cleansing-west-darfur.
21. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Political and Ethnic Violence in Central African Republic - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum." Www.Ushmm.Org, Aug. 2021, https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/central-african-republic/political-and-ethnic-violence.

real threat to achieving peace, prosperity and development."[22]

The Kampala Convention, or as it is known more formally, the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, was a historic landmark in aiding IDPs. It was adopted in 2009, and since then, it has been in full effect. It provides an international model to aid Africa's largest group of forcibly displaced persons. Chaloka Beyani (UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs) states that all African countries, under the Kampala Convention, have "specific obligations to allocate resources, adopt national policies and strategies, and enact or amend national laws to ensure that displacement is prevented, and that IDPs are protected and supported until they reach a sustainable solution to their displacement."[23]



"Africa's Colliding Conflicts Compound Forced Displacement Crisis – Africa Center." Africa Center, 23 Sept. 2025, https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africa-conflicts-compound-forced-displacement/.

Certain countries have proven exemplary in handling displaced persons, such as Uganda and Tanzania. Uganda is considered one of the most hospitable countries in the world towards all immigrants. Rather than housing displaced individuals in camps, they are housed in settlements. Not to mention, they have a revolutionary land grant policy, which provides refugees in rural areas with parcels of land. This allows them to grow their own food and build their own homes at little cost. For those who

22. "UN Highlights Need to Solve Growing Burden of Forcibly Displaced Africans." UN News, 21 May 2019, https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/05/1038911.
23. UN News. "UN Praises Africa for Leading Way With Landmark Treaty Protecting Internally Displaced People." UN News, 6 Dec. 2012, https://news.un.org/en/story/2012/12/427562-un-praises-africa-leading-way-landmark-treaty-protecting-internally-displaced.

come with little, sometimes only the clothes on their back, it is life-changing. Additionally, it was in Uganda's own capital, Kampala, that the aforementioned Kampala Convention was organized and signed.[24] In Tanzania, international migrants are allowed and even recommended to immediately begin working. While the majority of displaced persons are unskilled workers, those who are skilled are given managerial roles in their respective sectors, like engineering and finance. It is even encouraged to start new businesses. There are specific laws and policies regarding immigrants to ensure that there is proper governance. For example, Tanzania recently declared that all persons over the age of 18 living in refugee camps were vaccinated- a historic feat.[25]

Unfortunately, this is not the case in most countries. In the past few years, as the displacement crisis worsens, most countries have tightened regulations, limited protections, and decreased viable pathways for immigrants and refugees. With an increase in armed conflicts and political unrest, there has also been increased aggression towards displaced persons.[26] Notably, the UNHCR is warning countries "against apathy and inaction amid [the] spike in forced displacement."[27]

What can be done? Resolutions should include immediate relief for displaced persons, in addition to long-term frameworks that focus on the causes of this crisis. These solutions should include financial outlines that encourage economic autonomy and build enduring monetary infrastructure. Legal policies and legislation are also critical to ensure solutions are long-standing. Additionally, methods of acculturation and integration in

24. "Why Uganda Is One of the World's Most Hospitable Refugee Destinations." PBS News, 19 Oct. 2016, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/uganda-one-worlds-hospitable-refugee-destinations.
25. "Tanzania." Migrants & Refugees Section, https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/tanzania/.
26. "African Refugees Neglected as Crises Worsen | ISS Africa." ISS Africa, 2024, https://issafrica.org/iss-today/african-refugees-neglected-as-crises-worsen.
27. "UNHCR Warns Against Apathy and Inaction Amid Spike in Forced Displacement." Unhcr, https://www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/unhcr-warns-against-apathy-and-inaction-amid-spike-forced-displacement.

local communities are important to address as well. While it is difficult to permanently end many of the conflicts and unrest that are causing this problem, if possible, it is helpful to promote ideas that facilitate peace.

"No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark." - Warsan Shire

Today, there is a man forced to leave the only home he ever knew, watching as its burning remains get smaller and smaller in the distance.

Today, there is a woman gathering all the belongings she once owned, taking only the memories of a place where she can no longer call home.

Today, there is a child who is mourning the stuffed animal that their parents lost as they ran away from their once peaceful country, never to return.

These are not far-fetched stories; they are the lives faced by too many. They are people who wish to be seen not as a statistic, but as a person. While handling a humanitarian crisis, one must not only remember their own humanity, but the humanity of every single person, too often only mentioned as part of a too-large number. As the Somali-British poet Warsan Shire wrote, "No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark."

TOPIC A: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How can African governments ensure that refugees and internally displaced people have access to basic necessities such as food, clean water, healthcare, education, and shelter?
- What responsibilities should neighboring countries have when large numbers of refugees cross their borders because of conflict or persecution?
- How can the African Union and the United Nations work together to improve protection and assistance for refugees and internally displaced populations?
- What policies can African states implement to prevent refugees and displaced people from facing discrimination, exploitation, or human trafficking?
- How can countries experiencing conflict create safer conditions that allow displaced people to voluntarily and safely return to their communities?
- What can the international community do to provide financial and humanitarian support to African countries that host large refugee populations?
- How can African states balance national security and border control with their obligations to protect refugees seeking safety?
- What long-term solutions should be available for people who cannot safely return to their home countries, such as local integration or resettlement?
- How can governments improve cooperation and information-sharing across borders to better respond to large-scale forced migration and humanitarian crises?

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