

Human Rights Briefing Papers



The Issue of Integration of Refugee Populations into Society

The United States of America and many other developed countries have been built on immigration. Refugees and immigrants in all their roles make indispensable contributions to the economy and they compose an increasingly essential part of the global workforce. However, the influx of more migrants in search of safety, better life and work in the developed world continues to create deep social and political cleavages.

The moment immigrants settle in a country, they have to acquire a place in that new society. This is true not only for physical needs such as housing, but also in the social and cultural sense. Integration is the process by which immigrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups. This definition of integration is deliberately left open, because the particular requirements for acceptance by a receiving society vary greatly from country to country. The openness of this definition also reflects the fact that the responsibility for integration rests not with one particular group, but rather with many actors—immigrants themselves, the host government, institutions, and communities, to name a few.

Migrants are societal newcomers, who are often regarded as alien and treated as such. Such prejudices may be based on legal grounds, physical appearance or race, perceived cultural and religious differences, class characteristics, or on any combination of these elements. Such beliefs have been used politically - for example by the anti-immigrant movement - and express themselves in discriminatory practices, deteriorating inter-ethnic relations, and weakening of social cohesion in communities, cities, and states.

In this context, it is critically important that the two actors in the integration process; immigrants and the receiving society, become connected by a sound integration policy. Formulating the appropriate policy depends greatly on conditions and regulations at all levels, from village halls to national capitals. A long-term framework that balances the concerns of both sides may succeed; a short-sighted policy that puts politics before realities can lead to losses on all sides.

Refugees currently constitute 40% of the total population 'of concern' to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The people of concern for UNHCR are also asylum seekers, internationally displaced persons (IDPs) and stateless people. At the start of 2007, the number of people 'of concern' to UNHCR rose to 25.1 million from the 2006 total of 20.8 million.

Points to Consider:

- How can hostility towards refugees across the world been lessened?
- What steps should the UN take in order to ensure refugees fleeing war zones are properly integrated and welcomed into a new society?
- In what circumstances should refugees return to their homelands once the crisis is over?

Useful Links:

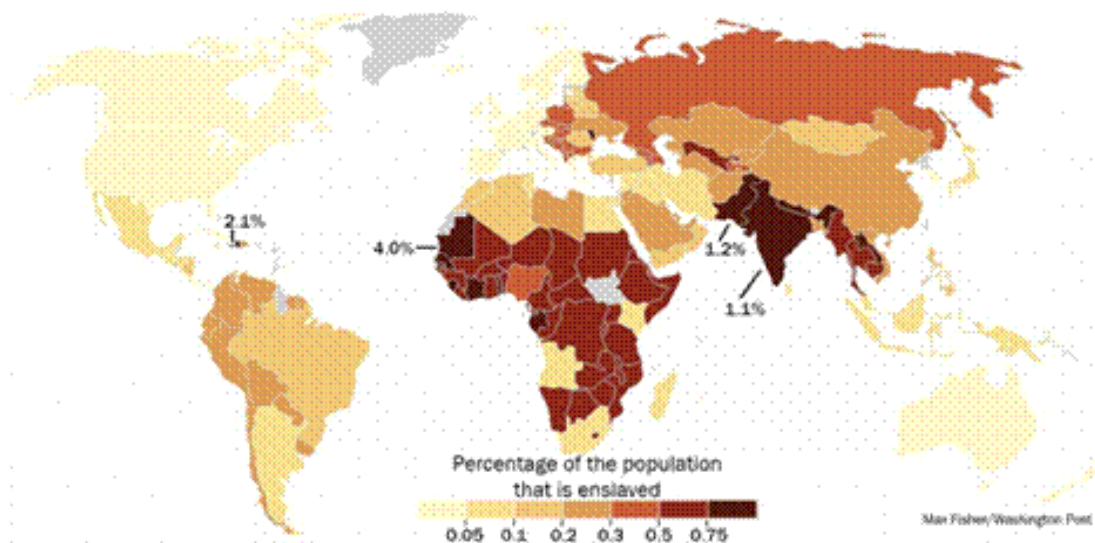
http://emigration.ro/jims/Vol3_no1_2009/MANOJLOVICI_JIMS_Vol3_No1_2009.pdf

The Issue of Combating Modern Slavery

Slavery is defined as: "The condition in which one person is owned as property by another and is under the owner's control, especially in involuntary servitude."

In a modern age where slavery has been legally abolished for decades or even centuries in most countries, there are still 29.8 million people living as slaves. This is not a softened, modern take on slavery; these people may be forced into household work, used as sex slaves or personal servants. They have no choice but to live under threat of violence 24/7, living as forced laborers, prostitutes, child soldiers and in many ways treated as property.

With not a single country currently able to state with 100% certainty that they are completely slave-free, it is becoming more and more of a necessity that the UN acts swiftly to crack down on modern slavery. Countries most commonly associated with slavery have been found to reside in West Africa, particularly in Mauritania, where it is estimated 4-20% of the population are categorised as slaves. The map below highlights the proportion of the population considered to be slaves in countries across the world.



The slavery rate is also alarmingly high in Haiti, in Pakistan and in India, the world's second-most populous country. In all three, more than 1% of the population is estimated to live in conditions categorised as slavery. Sub-Saharan Africa has a number of countries with around 0.7% of the population enslaved.

Two other particularly shocking regions are Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe. Both are blighted particularly by sex trafficking - a practice that bears little resemblance to popular Western conceptions of prostitution. Women and men are coerced into sex work, often starting at a very young age, and are completely reliant on their traffickers for not just their daily survival but basic life choices; they have no say in where they go or what they do and are physically prevented from leaving. International sex traffickers have long targeted these two regions, whose women and men are prized by Western patrons.

Points to consider:

- How can the UN peacefully protect the interests of the 29.8 million slaves worldwide?
- Can slavery be combatted fully and peacefully?
- What methods should the UN use to abolish slavery?
- How do we punish those found to traffick humans?

Useful Links:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/10/17/this-map-shows-where-the-worlds-30-million-slaves-live-there-are-60000-in-the-u-s/?utm_term=.db9010a41fcc

https://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_bales_how_to_combat_modern_slavery#t-134370

The Issue of Human Rights Violations in Police Detention Cells

Since the Human Rights Act was passed in 1998, the world has changed with regards to local, national and global security – this is often attributed to the growing rise of terrorism, inspired by wars still being fought in the Middle East. Nowadays, with terrorism achieving its ultimate goal of frightening the masses, there has been increased pressure on local enforcement, national governments and even the UN to deal with the global threat once and for all.

The struggle has become that it is very difficult to extract vital information from captured terrorists, and indeed make potential terrorists confess they are without violating their human rights, especially the human right to not be tortured. Nowadays, in the context of the War on Terror, many may excuse the actions of interrogators at facilities such as Camp Delta of Guantanamo Bay, but we must remember that this is a complete violation of human rights.

Further to this, Doctors Vincent Iacopino and Stephen N. Xenakis carried out a survey, with the collaboration of PLOS Medicine, in order to discover the scale of torture in custody at Guantanamo. They met with nine former detainees who had all passed psychological tests and asked which types of treatment they had been subjected to. The report highlights that eleven out of the fourteen possible categories had been considered to be torture by the US before the opening of Guantanamo, and still are under the Geneva Conventions.

On a wider scale, some prisoners are beaten, sexually abused and harassed by officers, rather than being allowed their basic human dignities. Less focus is typically being put on rehabilitation, and more on the purposes of deterrent and punishment. Without somebody to defend the human rights of those who cannot afford a lawyer in prison, or indeed those who cannot prove that their human rights have been violated anyways, it has become a very difficult job for the UN to protect their human rights and moreover the principle of Habeas Corpus.

A lack of funding in certain Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) has also led many countries prisons to fall into disrepair due to a lack of maintenance. This can lead to some men and women being sent to the same prison, potentially even sharing a cell and has resulted in cases of sexual abuse and harassment. Indeed, without the proper funding, facilities, medical support (both physical and mental) as well as basic nutrition and safeguarding fall into disrepute.

Points to consider:

- With regards to do extracting information out of prisoners, do the ends justify the means?
- Are there any other alternative methods of interrogation that should be used?
- How should the UN punish police officers who allow brutality in cells?

Useful Links:

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/training5Add3en.pdf>

http://www.ahrchk.net/pdf/HKPA_AHRC-UNReport2006.pdf

http://www.ahrchk.net/pdf/HKPA_AHRC-UNReport2006.pdf