

Agenda Item: Enhancing humanitarian efforts to address conflict-induced displacement in the Sahel region of North Africa.

Committee: The Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)

A. Letter from Secretary General:

Dear Delegates and most esteemed participants,

As the Co-Secretary Generals of the BJK Kabataş Foundation Schools Model United Nations Conference, it is our distinct honor to welcome you to our traditional conference, now in its second annual iteration this year.

We are delighted to collaborate with the diligent academic and organizational teams, whose dedication is truly commendable. We have worked extensively with our academic team to prepare engaging crisis and procedural committees where significant global issues will be discussed worldwide. Simultaneously, our organization team has tirelessly prepared to ensure the best conference experience for you, which will enchant these 3 days.

Delegates will have access to a wide variety of committee types and topics. Among these diverse options, delegates will have the opportunity to find a committee that aligns with their interests and select one that fits their preferred style of debate. With such broad spectrum, delegates can explore committees that resonate with their passions and engage in debates that suit their preferred style of discourse.

We aspire for this conference to act as a driving force, broadening your horizons, sparking fresh concepts, and propelling you toward greater strides in your pursuit of global leadership.

Sincerely,

Berra Gümüşler & Dila Bengisu

B. Welcome Letter from the Under-Secretary General:

Dear delegates,

Let me start by introducing myself. My name is Defne Yılmaz. I am a 10th grade student at Istanbul Erkek High School and the Deputy President of the General Assembly at IELMUN'25. This year at BKVMUN'25, I will serve in SOCHUM as both your President Chair and the Under Secretary General. In our first agenda item, we will discuss the humanitarian crisis in Palestine, with a focus on the consequences of the recent Gaza war. Our second agenda item is about the displacement and humanitarian crisis in the Sahel region of Africa. When researching your agenda items, remember that this document is only there to guide you. I highly encourage you to research from many different sources and perspectives. Nevertheless, I hope these documents will help you in your preparations. I would like to thank our valuable Academic Assistant Ayşe Naz Yedikardeş for her support in the preparation of these guides and the whole BKVMUN Secretariat for their efforts in organising this conference, especially my childhood friend and the CO-SG Dila whose invitation to BKVMUN I proudly accepted.

Lastly, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. You can reach me whenever you want (my e-mail: dfnylmzs13@gmail.com). I look forward to meeting you all and hope that this committee will be a very fun, productive and educational experience. And, this is a note to all the first-timers reading this guide, do not stress out. I will do my best to teach you everything you need to know during the conference. Just make sure you are aware of the main problems and know the main actors shaping the problem.

Sincerely,

Defne Yılmaz

C. Introduction To the Committee

The Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) focuses on issues that arise in humanitarian, social development, equality and human rights issues. SOCHUM's main objective is to solve the previously stated problems and preach respect towards basic human rights. SOCHUM, founded in 1945 to uphold the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is the third GA (General Assembly) committee. SOCHUM's Mandate and Responsibilities protect human rights, keeping up with social and humanitarian issues and aiding with cultural affairs. What is the purpose of SOCHUM, then? SOCHUM's goal is to design peaceful settlements for issues within the large spectrum of social, humanitarian, and cultural complications. What

does SOCHUM deal with? Some examples of SOCHUM’S deals are human trafficking, women's and children's rights, and migration issues. The committee is authorized to propose recommendations on peace and security matters to members of the General Assembly, the UN Security Council, and other relevant bodies and agencies. SOCHUM has the authority to request reports from special rapporteurs appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council.

D. Introduction to the Agenda Item

The Sahel is a semiarid region of western and north-central Africa extending from east of Senegal to Sudan. It forms a transitional zone between the arid Sahara (desert) to the north and the belt of humid savannas to the south. The Sahel stretches from the Atlantic Ocean eastward through northern Senegal, southern Mauritania, the great bend of the Niger River in Mali, Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta), southern Niger, northeastern Nigeria, south-central Chad, and into Sudan.

A number of factors are contributing to one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, which affects the Sahel region. Ongoing conflicts, particularly in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, have



resulted in large-scale displacement. The Sahel is dry, hot and vast, making it difficult to govern. This provides room for criminals who've been trafficking people, weapons and drugs for years.

Armed groups, including insurgent groups linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, frequently target civilians and government forces, exacerbating instability. These ongoing conflicts affect civilians in Saheli countries. A lot of civilians had to migrate, which caused widespread internal displacement. Millions of people have been forced to leave their homes due to violence and environmental challenges. According to the UN, the region hosts one of the fastest-growing populations of internally displaced persons (IDPs). In addition to internal displacement, many people are crossing borders into neighboring countries, seeking refuge in places like Mauritania, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The Sahel is on the move and it cannot be stopped, but its movement is forced and involuntary. The Saheli population has to flee the new conflicts due to several reasons such as groups with firearms, inadequate food and supplies, safety, climate change etc.

E. General Overview:

Post-Independence Conflicts in Saheli Countries

While the Sahel region was historically a rich and powerful area of the world, colonialism and border disputes have made the governments in the area lose control and power. When the colonialist forces started leaving in the beginning of the 20th century, a power vacuum emerged. The emerging vacuum would lead to heightened tensions between the nations in the Sahel region and armed groups with extremist ideologies and outside groups arming and supporting both the existing governments and the extremist groups, all of this being heightened by the scarcity of any given resource in the region. The aforementioned fighting is caused by a few reasons, the most major one being underrepresentation of certain minority groups and peoples within their respective governments. This, combined with the lower than average control of land and autonomy the governments of the Sahel region face, lead to the creation of a petri dish of terrorism and outside influence. One of these conflicts, the most forward and well known in international news, is the Boko Haram and its many related and connected allies and regional supporters. Through their reign of terror over the Sahel region of Africa they have amassed a gut wrenching kill count and have committed countless human rights violations against innocent civilians of the Sahel nations. One other major conflict affecting the livelihoods and security of the people of Sahel are the strengthening border skirmishes between the region's major powers. Due to the nations being mostly arid land, unfit for settlement or agriculture by the locals residing, it is difficult for the Sahel nations to easily monitor their borders and many other areas inland of the countries. This, coupled with the reality of rugged and coarse desert terrain which is difficult to navigate and torturous to map out due to its ever shifting nature make the aforementioned nations borders one of the hardest to monitor and defend. The main problem in the Sahel region is the

combination of domestic and international terrorist groups causing civilian casualties. These groups are often driven by religious extremism, baseless sectarianism, racism, and other social pressures. Additionally, the region's difficult-to-monitor terrain and lack of regulatory infrastructure contribute to the problem. The uneven population distribution further worsens the situation, allowing extremist groups to dominate certain areas. All of these factors make the Sahel countries highly vulnerable to both internal and cross-border attacks.

Rise of Jihadist Groups

The rise of Jihadist groups is the biggest human inflicted crisis in the region. This occurred for a few reasons, the most prominent being a rise in extremism, not just in the Sahel region, but globally as well. This rise, most often seen in religious communities within nations that have had negative altercations with major superpowers, such as being occupied, being infiltrated, getting their government coerced or having the opposing country fund a puppet government, have greatly influenced the rise of extremist religious groups and has greatly benefitted them when looking to the people of their homeland for support and aid. This extremism has also been seen in the Sahel region due to their history with colonized nations and involvement from terrorist groups and other backers with ill-intent from around the world. These jihadist groups in the Sahel, with funding and weapons from other larger jihadist groups have been fighting a war for control over select territories, going so far as to claim sovereignty for the land they control. This control is also aided by neutrality or in some cases, support for the jihadist groups. The support observed is due to a few reasons, but many of the supporters' mindsets are rooted in history or religious beliefs. A part of the supporting group believe that military intervention from western powers are inherently dangerous as it gives them a higher likelihood of trying to influence or outright seize the nation and its resources. Due to many of the Sahel countries' independence being very recent, around the late 19th to early 20th century, these claims are not entirely false but are rooted in fear. The other major factor related to these jihadist groups getting support is religious discrimination. This is also the main cause and motivation of Boko Haram, the most dominant jihadist group in the area and one known for it being able to best military forces on some, select occasions.

Intensification of the Humanitarian Crisis

As a war continues, people's quality of life decreases. The lives of millions of people in the Sahel region are becoming worse as the conflict rages on. A severe humanitarian catastrophe has been brought on by the continued conflict as well as environmental and economic difficulties. Among the numerous challenges that the inhabitants of the Sahel face are food shortages, displacement, and limited access to essential services.

G5 Sahel or **G5S** is an institutional framework for coordination of regional cooperation in development policies and security matters in West Africa. It was created on 16 February 2014 in Nouakchott, Mauritania, at a summit of five Sahel countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. It adopted a convention of establishment on 19 December 2014, and is permanently seated in Mauritania. The coordination is organised on different levels. The military aspect is coordinated by the respective countries' Chiefs of Staff. The purpose of G5 Sahel was to strengthen the bond between economic development and security, and together battle the threat of jihadist organizations operating in the region (AQIM, MOJWA, Al-Mourabitoun, and Boko Haram).

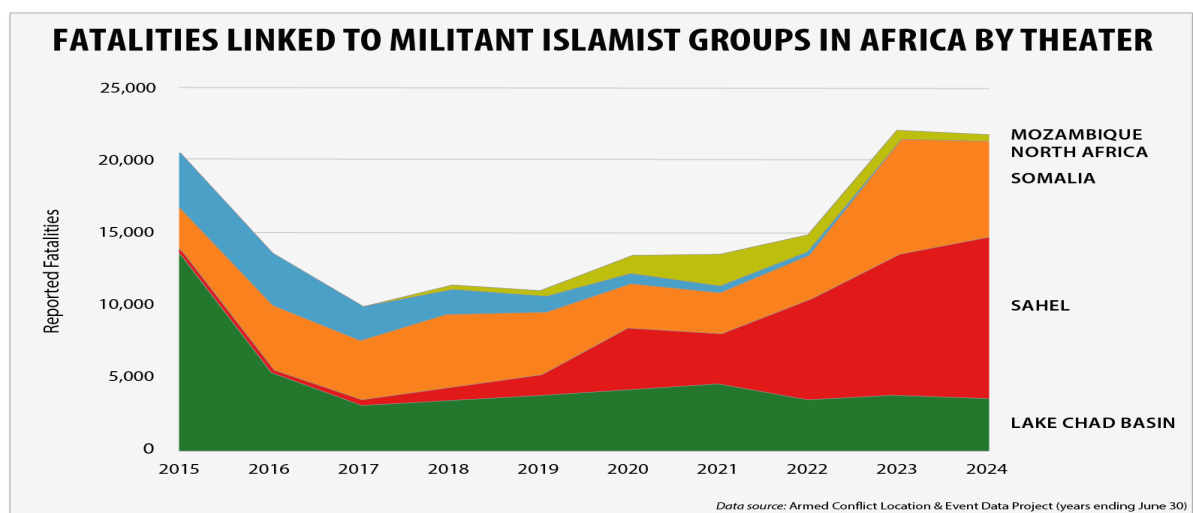
Military coups are common in Saheli countries because of weak political institutions, insecurity and armed insurgencies. Many Sahelian countries have fragile political systems and weak institutions. Once they gained independence from colonial powers in the 1960s, many countries in the Sahel had difficulty when building stable democratic systems and institutions. Political power often remains concentrated in the hands of a couple wealthy individuals or is contested through violent means and citizens find it difficult to rely on their political leadership due to the absence of accountability in government institutions. Because of this, military leaders occasionally defend coups as a means of combating corruption or enacting reform.

Operation Barkhane was a French-led military operation launched in 2014 in the Sahel region of Africa, primarily aimed at countering the growing threat of jihadist terrorism in countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania. The operation was named after a desert in northeastern Mali and was part of France's broader efforts to combat militant groups linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State operating in the region. After nine years in Mali, France has officially left. Operation Barkhane, the French military counter-terrorism campaign which began in 2013, withdrew from its base in Mali this August. Since then, Operation Barkhane has almost universally been interpreted as a massive disaster on the part of the French. How France managed to fail Mali so miserably and whether the already precarious situation of the region will improve is still up for debate.

The Humanitarian Crisis

With terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda, ISIS affiliates, and several local insurgent movements active throughout the region, violent extremism is becoming a greater problem in the Sahel. For the last 3 years, the Sahel has accounted for more than half the reported attacks on civilians by militant Islamist groups in Africa. More than half of all annual reported fatalities (11,200) involving militant Islamist groups in Africa are in the Sahel. The Sahel has accounted for more fatalities than any other region on the continent since 2021. In 2023, the UN reported that violent incidents in the region had

increased by more than 400% in recent years as the Sahelian theater has been experiencing an increasing number of attacks on civilians. Although conflicts due to terrorism are a major cause of civilian deaths, they are not the only reason. There are problems like health crises, epidemics, food insecurity, malnutrition, climate change and drought. Even though global humanitarian organizations try to help, extremist groups, including Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Boko Haram, often view aid workers as collaborators with foreign powers or governments, and thus view them as legitimate targets. That is a major reason why humanitarian aid is being struggled to be delivered due to insecurity.



F. Timeline of Key Events:

1960	Mali, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania gain independence.
1963	First Tuareg Rebellion in Mali
1974	Military coup in Niger
1987	Burkina Faso coup

1990-1995	Second Tuareg Rebellion in Mali and Niger
2011	The Libyan Civil War
2012	Coup in Mali and Jihadist Takeover of Northern Mali
2013	French Military Intervention (Operation Serval)
2015	Jihadist Expansion into Burkina Faso and Niger
2020-Present	Military Coups and French Withdrawal
2022	France Ends Operation Barkhane in the Sahel

G. Major Parties Involved:

Mali: Particularly in the country's north and center, Mali has experienced political instability, multiple coups, and a complicated security situation. The Malian government is negotiating peace with a number of armed factions and fighting terrorism. Mali has suffered greatly from the existence of terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Dine, and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS).

Mauritania: Mauritania has been an important figure in the Sahel region, though it has experienced relative stability compared to other Sahelian countries. Although it has a democratically elected government, it faces political challenges and human rights issues. Mauritania faces the threat of radicalization, especially in its northern regions that border the Sahara. It has been less affected by extremist violence than its neighbors but still faces risks of spillover from conflicts in Mali and the broader Sahel.

Niger: Niger has been a key nation in Sahel problems in northern regions. Nigeria, while not strictly in the Sahel, has significant overlap with Sahelian issues in its northern regions, where **Boko Haram** and **ISIS-West Africa** operate. Ethnic unrest, Islamist insurgencies, and economic difficulties in the north pose major security risks to Nigeria. The humanitarian situation in the northern parts of Nigeria impacts the wider Sahel region.

Burkina Faso: Since 2015, Burkina Faso has experienced a rise in instability with extremist groups such as **Al-Qaeda** and **ISIS** expanding their influence, particularly in the north and east of the country. Burkina Faso is heavily impacted by jihadist violence and displacement of civilians.

Chad: Chad is a key player in the Sahel's security landscape, with its military forces being one of the most capable in the region. Chad has had a strong central government under the leadership of the late President Idriss Déby, who ruled for over 30 years until his death in 2021. His son, Mahamat Idriss Déby, has since assumed leadership. Both internal militants and extremist organizations, such as Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, pose a threat to the nation. Chad also faces issues with the rule of law, poverty, and excessive young unemployment.

France: France has always been a key player in this conflict. Since many of the Sahelian nations were formerly a part of French West Africa, France has strong historical ties to the region. France's political, cultural, and economic ties with the area have been influenced by its colonial past. A number of Sahelian nations retained strong relations with France following their independence in the 1960s, which are frequently evident in their shared language, culture, and economic collaboration. France is a key player not only historically but also militarily. France's military presence in the Sahel has been a critical aspect of its strategy in the region. In 2014, France launched Operation Barkhane, a counterterrorism mission aimed at combating jihadist groups in the Sahel. This operation replaced the earlier Operation Serval, which had been initiated in 2013 to intervene in Mali and stop the advance of Islamist militants. Fighting jihadist organizations such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and their affiliates in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and the larger Sahel area is the main goal of Operation Barkhane. To weaken these extremist organizations and assist regional security forces, the French military have collaborated with regional armies and other allies.

G5 Sahel: G5 Sahel is an institutional framework for coordination of regional cooperation in development policies and security matters in West Africa. It consists of five Sahel countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. The emergence of jihadist organizations like Al-Qaeda in the

Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and ISIS affiliates, as well as the region's increasing instability, prompted the creation of the G5 Sahel. It is a regional attempt to improve Sahelian collaboration in the fields of governance, development, and security.

Boko Haram: Boko Haram is a self-proclaimed jihadist terrorist organization based in northeastern Nigeria and also active in Chad, Niger, northern Cameroon, and Mali. When the group was first formed, their main goal was to "purify", meaning to spread Sunni Islam, and destroy Shia Islam in northern Nigeria, believing jihad should be delayed until the group was strong enough to overthrow the Nigerian government. Boko Haram is responsible for numerous deadly attacks, including bombings, kidnappings, and assaults on civilian and military targets. One of the group's most notorious acts was the 2014 kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls in Chibok, which brought international attention to their activities.

H. Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue:

UNHCR efforts: UNHCR works to save lives and create better futures for millions of people who are forced to flee their homes. As the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR ensures that everyone has the right to seek asylum and find safety, especially those fleeing violence, persecution, or war. The Sahel region is going through a major transformation, which calls for a shift in humanitarian efforts to address the growing crisis marked by rising displacement and increased protection needs. UNHCR has been actively involved in the Sahel, providing vital protection and aid to refugees, particularly those displaced by ongoing conflicts. They've set up refugee camps and displacement sites to offer temporary shelter for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). In addition, UNHCR has implemented health programs and provided psychosocial support to help those in need.

Bamako Peace Agreement: As talks to end the larger war continued in Algiers, representatives of the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) and the Malian government agreed on a new pact on February 19, 2015, which included the halt of hostilities. The peace agreement was signed on May 15 in Bamako by the Malian government, representatives of pro-government militias, and representatives from Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, the African Union, the United Nations, ECOWAS, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the European Union, and France. This agreement offers a comprehensive approach to the conflict in Mali, addressing key political, security, social, and economic issues. It promotes inclusivity, human rights, and development while providing a platform

for reconciliation and the rebuilding of trust between various groups. While challenges remain, the agreement provides a solid foundation for long-term peace.

G5 Sahel Joint Force: G5 Sahel or G5S is an institutional framework for coordination of regional cooperation in development policies and security matters in west Africa. It was created on 16 February 2014 in Nouakchott, Mauritania, at a summit of five Sahel countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. It adopted a convention of establishment on 19 December 2014, and is permanently seated in Mauritania. The coordination is organised on different levels. The military aspect is coordinated by the respective countries' Chiefs of Staff. The purpose of G5 Sahel was to strengthen the bond between economic development and security, and together battle the threat of jihadist organizations operating in the region (AQIM, MOJWA, Al-Mourabitoun, and Boko Haram). G5 is offering a more coordinated, effective, and sustainable approach to combating terrorism and instability.

ECOWAS: The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been actively involved in addressing the security, political, and humanitarian challenges in the Sahel region, especially given the impact of terrorism, conflict, and instability in countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Its involvement in promoting regional cooperation, providing humanitarian aid, and fostering socioeconomic development is essential for stabilizing the region. While many challenges remain, ECOWAS's active role in conflict mediation and peacekeeping.

J. Relevant UN Treaties

1951 Refugee Convention & 1967 Protocol: The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol are the key legal documents that form the basis of UNHCR's work. They define the term 'refugee' and outline their rights and the international standards of treatment for their protection. The 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol form the core legal framework for protecting the rights of refugees and ensuring they are treated with dignity and respect.

UNHCR's Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: A more comprehensive, coordinated, and long-term response to refugee crises is what the UNHCR's Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) aims to deliver. It prioritizes integrating refugees into local economies,

communities, and systems in addition to providing humanitarian help. The framework seeks to develop solutions for refugees that are advantageous to both the host nations and the refugees themselves.

UNSC Resolutions on the Sahel crisis: Through a number of resolutions, the UN Security Council has supported the deployment of peacekeeping forces, the creation of regional security initiatives, like the G5 Sahel Joint Force, and political solutions to stabilize the region. The UNSC has also highlighted the significance of development programs, humanitarian aid, and regional cooperation to address the basic causes of instability in the Sahel. The UN Security Council has played a significant role in addressing the Sahel crisis, focusing on both security and humanitarian responses.

K. Questions to be Answered:

- What measures can be taken to ensure long-term solutions for displaced communities in the Sahel?
- How can humanitarian aid be delivered more effectively despite ongoing conflicts?
- What role should regional organizations like the AU and ECOWAS play in addressing displacement?
- How can host communities be supported to prevent further instability?
- How can the international community balance military and humanitarian interventions?

L. Further Reading:

- Demuynek, M. (2022). Mass displacement and violent extremism in the Sahel: a vicious circle. *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Studies*.

<https://www.icct.nl/sites/default/files/2022-12/meryl-policy-brief-final-version.pdf>

- 2024 Sahel Humanitarian Needs and Requirements Overview | OCHA

<https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/burkina-faso/2024-sahel-humanitarian-needs-and-requirements-overview>

- *Watchlist insight: Climate and humanitarian crisis in the Central Sahel*. (n.d.). The IRC in the EU.

<https://www.rescue.org/eu/report/watchlist-insight-climate-and-humanitarian-crisis-central-sahel>

M. Bibliography:

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. “Sahel | Location, Facts, Map, and

Desertification.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 26 Mar. 2025,

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Sahel>

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. “Sahel | Location, Facts, Map, and Desertification.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 26 Mar. 2025

[Migratory Movements Arising from Conflicts in the Sahel Countries : IEMed](#)

Wikipedia contributors. “G5 Sahel.” *Wikipedia*, 3 Feb. 2025,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G5_Sahel#:~:text=It%20was%20created%20on%202016,is%20organised%20on%20different%20levels.

King, Isabelle. “How France Failed Mali: The End of Operation Barkhane.” *Harvard International Review*, 15 Jan. 2024,

<https://hir.harvard.edu/how-france-failed-mali-the-end-of-operation-barkhane/>

---. "Operation Barkhane." *Wikipedia*, 14 Mar. 2025,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Barkhane

Studies, The Africa Center for Strategic. "Africa's Constantly Evolving Militant Islamist Threat –

Africa Center." *Africa Center*, 15 Oct. 2024,

<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/mig-2024-africa-constantly-evolving-militant-islamist-threat/#:~:text=in%20each%20region.-,Sahel,on%20the%20continent%20since%202021.>

International Organization for Migration. "One in Five People in the Central Sahel Needs

Humanitarian Aid: Now Is the Time to Act." *International Organization for*

Migration, 12 Jan. 2024,

<https://www.iom.int/news/one-five-people-central-sahel-needs-humanitarian-aid-now-time-act>

Wikipedia contributors. "Boko Haram." *Wikipedia*, 19 Mar. 2025,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boko_Haram

UNHCR Turkey -. "UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency | UNHCR Turkey."

<https://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/#:~:text=UNHCR%20helps%20to%20save%20lives,persecution%20or%20war%20at%20home.>

Wikipedia contributors. "Algiers Accords (2015)." *Wikipedia*, 4 Feb. 2025,

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algiers_Accords_\(2015\)#:~:text=The%20peace%20agreement%20was%20signed.Cooperation%2C%20the%20European%20Union%2C%20and](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algiers_Accords_(2015)#:~:text=The%20peace%20agreement%20was%20signed.Cooperation%2C%20the%20European%20Union%2C%20and)

UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency. "The 1951 Refugee Convention | UNHCR."

<https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/1951-refugee-convention>

