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Topic: Canada's Position on the Global Refugee Crisis

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Foreign Policy Brief

Introduction:

In this policy brief, I will be stating the current situation pertaining to the global refugee crisis in terms of statistics and evidence, in addition to the assessment of Canada's current strategy to this situation. Going forward, I will then be addressing one out of the three key policies that I believe will be in the best interest of Canada in regard to the global refugee crisis. My three policies pertain to the allocation of volunteers in refugee camps, improve the current border process and the third policy I will be pursuing is having Canadian troops stationed in high-risk refugee camps. The global refugee crisis has gone beyond the borders of war-torn regions as it now affects countries in the West. Refugees are looking to seek safe haven in North American and European countries. This global situation has resulted in not only nations that are at the heart of this crisis to take actions but has also led countries in the west to take certain measures. These include border control, refugee support and overall safety measures domestically and internationally. Canada has been a leading example of how nations should respond to situations such as this current one by providing resources while maintaining the security of Canadians both internally and externally. The policy that I will be recommending is for Canada to allocate its docile troops in the most dangerous refugee camps to ensure the safety of marginalized groups such as women and children. Furthermore, this policy will help ensure

Canada is taking an active part internationally to assist in the global refugee crisis and to offer humanitarian aid for the betterment of refugees.

Background:

The global refugee crisis has recently been on the rise with many of the conflicts occurring in the Middle East and Africa as the numbers of refugees increases. A refugee is defined according to the CARE organization as someone who is fleeing their own country because of dangerous and violent circumstances such as war, genocide or persecution (CARE). The current statistics surrounding refugee data is provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or known as the United Nations Refugee Agency in which 70.8 million people have been forcibly removed from their countries for many different reasons and the number of refugees within that number is 25.9 million (UNHCR). About 57% of these refugees come from the top three countries which are Syria (6.7 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million) and South Sudan (2.3 million) (UNHCR). The top countries that hold the highest number of refugees are Turkey (3.7 million), Pakistan (1.4 million), Uganda (1.2 million), Sudan (1.1 million) and Germany (1.1 million) (UNHCR). These numbers are at an all-time high especially with the current Syrian Civil war, the Sudan conflict in addition to those running from persecution in Myanmar and Afghanistan.



Figure 1. Somali refugees in Kenya
Retrieved from: UNHCR, n.d
<https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/refugees/>

Canada has been vocal in supporting refugees with their foreign policy pertaining to helping them settle into Canada and restart their lives. Canada's response to various distinct historical catastrophes' that have occurred across the globe illustrate its ability to be a middle power in offering assistance. This includes their strong peacekeeping initiatives. As one of the signatories of the 1951 Refugee Convention, in order for Canada to fulfill its international legal obligations, it must put forth a productive refugee program to accept a number of them. Indeed, Canada has opened its borders to those seeking asylum within that program. However, Canada should be a stronger force internationally in helping battle the global refugee crisis. Currently, Canada has a resettlement policy that is managed by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (Government of Canada). In the UNHCR resettlement book, the government of Canada released its policy plan pertaining to refugees in where they state,

“The objectives of Canada's refugee program are to save lives, offer protection to the displaced and persecuted, meet Canada's international legal obligations with respect to refugees,

and respond to international crises by providing assistance to those in need of resettlement”.
(UNHCR)

The two main programs that Canada has is the Government Refugee Assisted Program and the Private Sponsorship Program (Government of Canada). The current policies Canada has in place selectively deals with resettlement and not having a stronger presence in assisting refugees overseas. The following options will be stated in which the government body of Canada can look into while taking into consideration the third policy that I will recommend.

Option 1: Canadian Volunteers in Refugee Camps

Canada is able to establish itself as a nation that provides humanitarian aid by allocating volunteers overseas to the most populated refugee camps. Refugee camps are temporary housing in neighbouring countries for those fleeing their home country due to violent circumstances (Norwegian Refugee Council). The Kutupalong is the most populated refugee camp in the world which is located in Bangladesh with 740,000 Rohingyas that fled from Myanmar from persecution (Norwegian Refugee Council). The highly populated area makes those living in this camp vulnerable to certain circumstances such as limited access to food, clean water and educational opportunities for children to name a few. In addition, the people of Bangladesh and the government are suffering in terms of their resources being limited while trying to aid the Rohingyas minority. For the Canadian government to provide resources such as an efficient team of well-equipped volunteers to assist in food distribution and offer daycare services; that would help aid in providing essential services to those limited. Helping with food distribution, as well as offering educational services to children is needed for the betterment of child development and to lift a little burden off Bangladesh.



Figure 2. *Photo: Ingebjørg Kårstad/NRC, Kutupalong Refugee Camp, Bangladesh*
Retrieved from: Norwegian Refugee Council (August 25th, 2019)
<https://www.nrc.no/perspectives/2019/trapped-in-the-worlds-largest-refugee-camp/>

However, this policy is not the best option seeing that a revised budget plan for Canada could take time to approve and the funds toward this mission would have a strain on Canada. Canada's economy is not in the best position currently with the Alberta economy suffering from the pipeline debate. It is important for Canada to consider its domestic issues before taking on such an astronomical task. As of right now, the budget towards refugees is only being utilized for the resettlement program that Canada has. Canada's 2019 budget plan towards improving refugee resettlement is set at \$1.18 billion for over a five-year period starting from 2019-2020 (Government of Canada). Canada only has a claimed budget plan for resettlement, not for overseas projects pertaining the refugee crisis. Moreover, the budget constraint, the burden of taking on such a big task of training these volunteers to be well equipped in handling a situation

as complex is this, is simply not realistic enough. Looking at the figures, the number of refugees compared to how many volunteers needed in addition to resources would simply not be practical. Training volunteers to be tasked in dealing with the possibility of rebel groups, government enforcement and other risks infiltrating these camps is not plausible. Volunteers are simply not able to deal with high intense situations that come with working in refugee camps. There would be a decent amount of logistics and resources that would be needed to successfully operate this policy into action. Canada would be better qualified into putting their funds and resources to other projects seeing that the logistics and timeframe to successfully put this together are too substantial.

Option 2: The strengthening refugee process for borders in addition to families

As mentioned earlier, Canada refugee policy pertains to resettlement programs and putting forth a cohesive process for refugees when crossing the border. There are two different refugee programs for getting assistance as a refugee by Canada. The current process that is laid out by Canada is concerning refugees that have already left their countries of origin, currently in Canada and would further be in danger if they were to leave the borders. These dangerous circumstances include torture, risk to life and risk of dangerous punishment (Government of Canada). Canada has a set of criteria for eligibility to qualify as a refugee when completing the application process. Canada has a set of forms that acquire information pertaining to individual's background including their family, history, and the reasoning behind a refugee request. The individual is then able to hand in the many forms to either at the Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Office or when arriving in Canada at any entry ports they have access to (Government of Canada). The last process is being at a hearing in which the applicant

will be notified of the date and location. Canada's second refugee program is the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program, and this concerns those outside of Canada that are attempting to flee due to violent circumstances (Government of Canada). The next quotation is taken from the Government of Canada website in regard to how this program works:

“The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), along with private sponsors, identifies refugees for resettlement. A person cannot apply directly to Canada for resettlement. After they are identified, it takes time to process the cases” (Government of Canada).

Within the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program, one is also able to look at sponsorship as an option. The Government of Canada writes the following on their website,

“private sponsors across the country also help resettle refugees to Canada. Some do this on an ongoing basis. They have signed sponsorship agreements with the Government of Canada to help support refugees. These groups are known as Sponsorship Agreement Holders” (Government of Canada).

As one can observe the problem with the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program is the individual being unable to apply directly for resettlement and the lack of a cohesive process outside Canada. There must be a procedure, in place, at the initial stage for a refugee entering the borders of Canada. It would be an exhaustive process for an individual to reach the borders of Canada when most of those fleeing countries from persecution are on the other side of the world. What this policy would entail is to help give out forms on the behalf of Canada to not only those near our borders but those in refugee camps or countries where the individual is stranded. There should be three forms, one for the individual if one is not connected to an immediate family, the

other form pertaining one per family and the last form for children. The current forms Canada has is perfect the way it is given for individuals. This policy wants to look more into the forms given out family to family in refugee camps so that it is a more cohesive method to get in refugees. To fill out individual by individual is not efficient enough to help those in dangerous situations if they are all from the same family. Most face life and death situations therefore, the faster the process Canada makes for those wanting to enter, the safer it is for the fleeing. There have been many reports of families being separated when fleeing and this process needs to prioritize that concern.

The forms should also include children application. One of the most concerning problems with the global refugee crisis is children being separated from their families when fleeing their nation. Children often get placed in refugee camps with no parental support alongside. The forms provided by Canada for the child to fill out should help give information to the government of Canada on the child's connection to a family background. When the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada get a hold of all these forms, they would be tasked with connecting all applications.

However, I am not to recommend this policy to you due to the problem in logistics to successfully implement this. The management to implement forms to those fleeing is far too great. Forms going out to refugee camps where there is no guarantee if it would successfully reach those needing them or if individuals in those camps would have the required documentation to fill out the forms. Most refugees when fleeing do not carry a form of identification or passport which makes it difficult to fill out. In addition, expecting children to be aware of personal information such as address, parent's information or to be carrying a form identification is unrealistic. The current border process by Canada set at the moment is fine, it

can of course be improved further on however, for Canada to choose a policy, this should not be one of them.

Option 3: Canadian troops stationed in refugee Camps to implement safety

The last option which I will be recommending is to station Canadian troops in the most dangerous refugee camps to ensure safety for the highest risk groups such as minorities, women and children. Canadian officials to patrol the camps will help ensure the comfort of those that are most vulnerable since most events in refugee camps go unnoticed due to the lack of supervision present. Canadian troops can act on the behalf of Canada and the UN body to showcase that they are a legitimate patrolling agency. These would be different than UN Peacekeepers where the Canadian troops can interfere if such violent measures are to take place in the camps. In addition, Peacekeepers are only associated under the United Nations (United Nations Peacekeeping). The use of force would only be pertaining to situations where it would be deemed necessary such as but not limited to; violent abduction of children, violence against women and minorities and the occurring of human and sex trafficking.

There have been many accusations of unreported illicit acts that occur in refugee camps from malnutrition to domestic violence among children and women especially. In a paper dedicated to research on refugees by Barbara Harrel Bond for UNHCR, she describes the events that occur within the camps. In her findings, it is stated; that “domestic violence always increases in refugee situations and family breakdown is common” (Bond Pg 7). In another study conducted on gender-based violence against refugee women by Jane Freedman, it was found through interviews of NGO workers about the occurrences in refugee camps. The article stated that within the refugee camps located in Calais France, there would be cases of rape by smugglers as

they would coerce the women to sex (Freedman). This is just a fraction of what occurs in refugee camps, there are many stories that go unreported because of lack of evidence or supervision.

This is significant to implement because it puts forth Canada as a humanitarian aid country where it strengthens its relation with the United Nations for future endeavors. It puts Canada in a moral and decent position within the international world where Canada will not be seen as an inactive country. It shows Canada is utilizing its status as a wealthy country and the capability Canada has to help a humanitarian crisis.

With a revised budget plan, the Canadian government based on the advisory of the finance minister will be able to determine how to allocate the funds towards this policy. The Canadian government can have the option to increase the budget or use the current budget plan and choose to divide it in a new format so that most of the budget directed towards this policy.

This policy would be deemed as a smoother execution than the first policy because it encompasses qualified troops who have been through intensive training and recruitment to handle such situations. They would be more equipped with the skills to tackle such difficult circumstances such as smugglers, traffickers, rebel groups and more. Volunteers, as stated in my first policy, would not be efficient enough to take on such large numbers and difficult situations. In addition, Canadian troops come in a larger number therefore when they are stationed at refugee camps, they would be efficient in handling the mass in these camps.

A proposal for research should be the first task at hand, where this team is to handle looking into the most populated refugee camps that experience the most violence. They are to get findings on statistics, figures and conduct studies to figure out which regions have the highest number of minorities within the camps and the ones that are most prone to experiencing unlawful acts such as smuggling, trafficking, sexual violence and more. They are to also research camps

that are prone to rebel groups, authoritarian governments and terrorist organizations to infiltrate these camps. They are to choose the camps that Canada will be patrolling based on the research they have accumulated.

The second team should handle the logistics and planning for the execution of this policy. They are to plan accordingly based on the advice from the research department to the deployment of Canadian troops. This team is to look into how many troops are needed and where they are to be stationed. Based on the statistics from the research department, this team should be able to determine the ratio of Canadian troops needed based on refugee numbers in the certain camps they have chosen to patrol. Furthermore, they should work alongside the finance department for this task by planning based on the budget that is set for this policy.

Once this policy is set in motion, the last team should be handling the intel coming from the troops in the refugee camps and it being delivered to the Canadian government and the UN. This team is to monitor the troops through technological surveillance means and to deliver updates in a timely manner to certain department within UN and the Canadian government. This is to showcase transparency and to monitor progress from this policy implementation.

With the support of every department, this policy can be successfully executed and be one of the most important policies Canada has ever taken. This possesses great advantage to not only Canada but to the refugees and neighbouring countries. This policy will strengthen alliances, protect the vulnerable and put Canada in a respectable position in the international system.

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Figures and Pictures used:

1. Figure 1. Somali refugees in Kenya UNHCR, n.d
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2. Figure 2. *Photo: Ingebjørg Kårstad/NRC*, Kutupalong Refugee Camp, Bangladesh Norwegian Refugee Council (August 25th, 2019)
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