



# Research Report

# Global Mayors Forum

The question of allowing individual cities to operate independently from their government on immigration policies

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## Introduction

Ever since the European Refugee Crisis started in 2015, more and more refugees have sought refuge in the European Union.. As this crisis has been going on for several years now, a great divide has occurred within European countries. Several citizens want to take in refugees and others do not. Consequently, many cities do not agree with the immigration policy that their government is following. Just like in Europe the United States of America (U.S.A.) have had similar issues with refugees from Mexico and recently also from countries such as Honduras.

As a result of this dividedness, anti-immigrant demonstrations have taken place in several cities, such as Amsterdam, Prague, Calais, Dresden, Rome, Warsaw, and Cologne. During these protests, enforcement was often needed to keep the peace. Most of these anti-immigrant demonstrations were organized by the Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West (PEGIDA).

On the contrary, other demonstrations have taken place which protested against immigration policies which were deemed too harsh as well as the anti-immigrants. In the U.S.A., for example, large demonstrations took place in, for example, New York, against President Donald Trump's immigration policies. Oftentimes, when these two groups meet riots as well as heavy debates break out.

Not only the U.S.A. and Europe get many refugees annually. Also countries, such as Thailand, India, and Australia get many refugee requests each year.

There are three main questions within this issue. The first being, how do we want to deal with the many refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)? The second being, to what extent do we want cities to operate independently on this? And the third one being, to what extent is this possible considering existing laws?

## The committee

The Global Mayors Forum (GMF) is one of the newest committees at MUNA. The committee is based on the Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM), which first met in Bristol and London in 2015. About 100 mayors from all over the world gathered to discuss global challenges that every global city faces and that can best be solved together. The GPM is an initiative of Professor Benjamin Barber, who is the author of the book 'If Mayors Ruled the World'. In his book, Barber states that mayors of the biggest cities of the world are better equipped to deal with the global problems of the 21st century than sovereign nation states themselves.

At MUNA, we put this idea to the test. Delegates in the GMF do not represent nations or states, which is the case in all the other committees, but mayors of the biggest cities in the world. Together, all the mayors will discuss and try to solve intricate, intricate and pressing urban issues of the 21st century.

In the GMF, delegates do not have to prepare resolutions beforehand, as the resolutions will be created during the debates. This is called an ad-hoc committee. Therefore, it is *crucial* to do thorough research on all the topics, for instance through writing policy statements. Furthermore, it is crucial that you possess good knowledge on the perspectives of your city with regard to the issues that are to be discussed. Good knowledge is essential as you will be representing the political perspective of your city during these debates. Due to the fact that the GMF is an ad-hoc committee, lobbying time before the debates will be shorter and there will be more time to focus on the resolutions themselves.

## Keywords

### Anti-immigrant

Opposed to welcoming immigrants and/or refugees to ones country.

### Article 13.1 (of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR))

“Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.”

### Article 13.2 (of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR))

“Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.”

### Article 14.1 (of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR))

“Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.”

### City council

The local government of a city which has the authority, given by the national/federal government, to make laws governing activities within the cities.

### City ordinance

A law made by city council.

### Municipality

A region with its own government. The municipality can be under full or partial control of the national government but can also have complete sovereignty.

### National/Federal government

National government is the government of a sovereign state. A federal government is the government of a federation (a combination of a national government and a state government into one political system like in the USA).

### National/Federal Law

Laws made by the national or federal government.

### Immigration policy

A statement of intent on the issue of immigration, which is used as a protocol to deal with immigrants and refugees.

### Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

IDPs are people that need to flee a dangerous situation but stay within their country when seeking protection. In contrast to refugees, IDPs are not protected by international law and have to rely on their own government for protection.

### International Law

Laws made by supranational organisations.

### Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West (PEGIDA)

A German Nationalist movement with anti-Islamic tendencies. This movement has organised many demonstrations throughout Europe and is still spreading through Europe and beyond.

### Refugee

As defined by the 1951 Refugee Convention: “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.”

### Refugee population

The number of refugees in a country or region.

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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

A NGO set up by the United Nations after World War II in order to help millions of Europeans who had fled or lost their homes. Now the UNHCR's goal is to help refugees all around the world

**Overview (Body Paragraph 1)**

Currently, there are several big refugee crises going on as defined by the UNHCR, namely the:

- Europe situation
- Central African Republic situation
- Burundi situation
- DR Congo emergency
- Iraq emergency
- Nigeria emergency
- Rohingya emergency
- South Sudan emergency
- Syria emergency
- Yemen emergency

All these crises have a big impact on the refugee situation around the world. However, as can be seen most refugees originate from Africa and Asia which causes dividedness amongst European and Asian citizens as they believe that refugees are not welcomed by other countries but their own.. These citizens often believe that, for example, North and South America as well as Oceania do not do enough to help with these crises, with as effect that more people sympathise with anti-immigrant movements.

The countries that do take up refugees need to spread them over the country, as it would be too much to keep them in one place. Therefore, cities do not want to take refugees in as they cost money and often cause conflict within the city. Moreover, many countries have to deal with high population density, which is only pressured more by the necessity to house refugees. As a consequence, many citizens object to welcoming refugees as this limits housing options for themselves.

However, according to Article 13 and 14.1 of the UDHR, every refugee should be entitled to asylum when he or she is a true refugee. Do not forget that the UDHR is a non-binding declaration other than a treaty, which is binding. Therefore, national governments often do not refuse to accept refugees. Nonetheless, in cities the voice of the people is more outspoken and city council cannot ignore that.

The issue of refugees, as well as the resolutions made on it, rarely takes into account the IDPs which are often more vulnerable than refugees as they are not protected by international law. IDPs play a very important role within global cities as most of them flee to these cities as they are seen as safest. Therefore, it is important to take into account the role of IDPs in immigration policies and a resolution on this issue.

The UNHCR tries to solve the issue at hand by giving protection, food, shelter, and health care. Their ultimate goal is however, to find a way for refugees to rebuild their lives. In the past, solutions to the issue of refugee crises only took into account the

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role of the receiving country and left out the specifics of how this should work within the country.

Another big part of the issue is the role of the city council within the national government. Generally, the municipality is under full or partial control of the national government and the national laws. Therefore, the city cannot operate independently on issues such as refugees. Finding a way to be able to this is one of the hardest, yet most important parts of solving this issue.

### **Arguments (Body Paragraph 2)**

There are two main aspects to this issue:

- Whether or not cities are allowed to operate independently on the issue of immigration and to what extent.
- Whether or not refugees should be helped.

It is important to research thoroughly what the opinion of your city is. For the first aspect looking at the rights of city councils as well as the expertise of both city councils and national governments may be useful. For the second aspect considering the UDHR can be useful, do keep in mind, however, that it is non-binding. Additionally, the impact of refugees on the economy can also be taken into account.

### **Resolution**

During the debate, you should construct resolutions that represent the view of your city. Despite the fact that you should always keep the needs in mind of your own city, it is possible to make concessions when merging resolutions with other cities. Please note that proper/thorough research should be done to allow appropriate implementation of arguments, clauses and ultimately resolutions during the debate. It is your job to implement the opinions of your city on the aspects mentioned above in the resolution.

### **Links and sources**

The following links can be helpful during your preparations:

- [http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview#\\_ga=2.149845747.459650643.1543665363-1885021653.1543665363](http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview#_ga=2.149845747.459650643.1543665363-1885021653.1543665363)
- <https://www.curbed.com/2017/1/30/14440160/refugees-united-states-cities>
- <https://www.unhcr.org/>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pegida>
- <https://www.cigionline.org/>
- <https://www.cigionline.org/publications/refugees-and-city-twenty-first-century-front-line>