

Disarmament and International Security (DISEC)

MetMUNC XLVIII

Topic: Strengthening Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean

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The word “Mediterranean” originates from the latin word *mediterraneus*, meaning middle of the world.¹ In today's world, after the discovery of the Americas, we know the Mediterranean Sea to not be the center of the world, though it is still a massive epicenter of world trade activity, population density, and culture.

Acting as the meeting point of the three most populated continents, the Mediterranean is also home to numerous challenges of security, economic stability, and political cooperation in not only the region, but the world. The region contains a refugee crisis (dubbed the “European



Map of the Mediterranean Sea and the surrounding area.

Migrant Crisis”² a.k.a. the “refugee crisis” and “mediterranean crisis”),³ human rights violations (primarily against women), maritime piracy, and numerous religious and cultural conflicts made worse by terrorism. While the outlook for the region's future at the moment is grim, there are groups already working to solve the numerous issues plaguing the region. These groups include other United Nations committees such as the Security Council, and region-grown organizations such as the Union for the Mediterranean—an international body with 43 member states from the

¹ un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2017-11-17/security-challenges-medeteranian-region-remarks

² bbc.com/news/world-europe-32395181

³ hrw.org/tag/mediterranean-crisis

Mediterranean region, Africa, and Europe.⁴ The piracy in the region can prevent global trade and cripple a nation's ability to trade with the rest of the international community. Terrorism threatens not only a nation's inhabitants but also many nations not in the Mediterranean. Fighting these groups takes arms, soldiers, and money—a large cost and perhaps something which could be done collectively more so than it is today. A mass flow of migrants threatens the European Union's civil infrastructure and budget. Asylum seekers flowing out of the middle east towards Greece, Italy, and Turkey may pose a serious security threat.

The issues in and around the Mediterranean Sea are large, but DISEC hopes that bright minds of the world can come together in the committee and find innovative ways to tackle these problems.

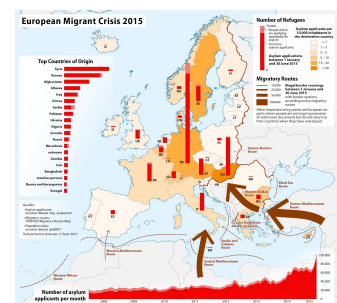
Greece

The Greek islands, all 6,000 of them, boast the largest coastline in the Mediterranean Sea.⁵ The nation's close proximity to the Middle East, long coastline, and EU membership status makes Greece the perfect destination (or first destination) for people displaced by the Syrian Civil War, and terrorism in the Mediterranean.

During the peak of migration to Greece, the islands took on over 210,000 refugees in a single month.⁷ This figure represents a significant percentage of the Greek population. Additionally,



Map of the Greek islands (above).
Map of the movement of migrants in the region (below).



⁴ ufmsecretariat.org/who-we-are/member-states/

⁵ visitgreece.gr/en/greek_islands

⁶ worldatlas.com/articles/countries-in-europe-with-the-longest-coastline.html

⁷ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>

Germany's domestic intelligence agency has reported that ISIS has sent terrorists disguised as refugees through Europe's southern borders.⁸ In November 2015, in “the worst attack on French soil since WWII,” ISIS terrorists detonated suicide vests in Paris. They killed 130 people. These attackers posed as migrants when arriving on the Greek island of Leros. Just over one month later they were in France, committing their attack.⁹ While these instances are rare, and should not be looked at as the norm but rather the exception, it is important to recognize these instances as a possibility, and meet the security challenges that accepting these migrants poses.

It may appear as if the worst of the refugee crisis has passed, but there is strong evidence to suggest otherwise. Not only does the Syrian Civil War appear far from over, it may ramp up as the Syrian government forces will likely continue to see military and monetary support from both Russia and Iran.¹⁰ In addition, despite having lost their territory, ISIS may still resurge and ramp up attacks in the Middle East and abroad. Even recently, there has been a large amount of migrants arriving on the shores of the Greek islands, with more than 600 arriving on the island of Lesbos in a single day.¹¹ And despite the European Union giving Greece more than 1.5 billion dollars, the migrants still live in extremely poor conditions,¹² and it is uncertain how many more refugees the European Union could handle.

Syria

The Syrian Civil War is an ongoing conflict which involves the Ba'athist Syrian Arab Republic led by President Bashar al-Assad, along with domestic and foreign allies, and

⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-security-idUSKCN0VE0XL>

⁹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/how-europes-migrant-crisis-became-an-opportunity-for-isis/2016/04/21/ec8a7231-062d-4185-bb27-cc7295d35415_story.html?noredirect=on

¹⁰ <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/6006649/russia-support-syria-air-strikes-response/>

¹¹ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/08/30/500-refugees-arrive-lesbos-one-day-record-high-since-migrant/>

¹² <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-this-greek-island-proves-european-migrant-crisis-isnt-over>

numerous domestic and foreign forces opposing both the Syrian government and each other in various combinations. The war began after Syrian citizens, who had gathered to show discontent with the high unemployment, corruption, and lack of political freedom under the Assad presidency, were inspired by the “Arab Spring” protests in other countries and took to the streets in Syria.¹³ The government authorized deadly force, a back and forth escalation took place between protestors and the government, and the country erupted into civil war. These groups include numerous small groups such as the “Free Syrian Army” and “National Front for Liberation,” as well as foreign nations such as Russia, Iran, and Turkey. Turkey is backing rebels, using them to contain a Kurdish militia in the nation. Iran has deployed hundreds of troops to the nation and given monetary support to Assad. Russia has deployed private military contractors and soldiers to Syria to assist Assad. Saudi Arabia and Qatar, in an attempt to counter Iranian



Russia and Syrian soldiers stand guard on a street in Syria.

influence has armed and financed rebels. Israel has attacked Iran's forces in the region to prevent them from arming Hezbollah. The United Kingdom, France, and the United States initially provided support for “moderate” rebel groups, but have since stopped providing lethal support as the rebels are now mainly jihadists. The United States has also attacked ISIS positions in the country. The fighting in the nations has caused many deaths and contributes to the refugee crisis.¹³ At least 371,000 people, but likely more than 570,000 were killed in the



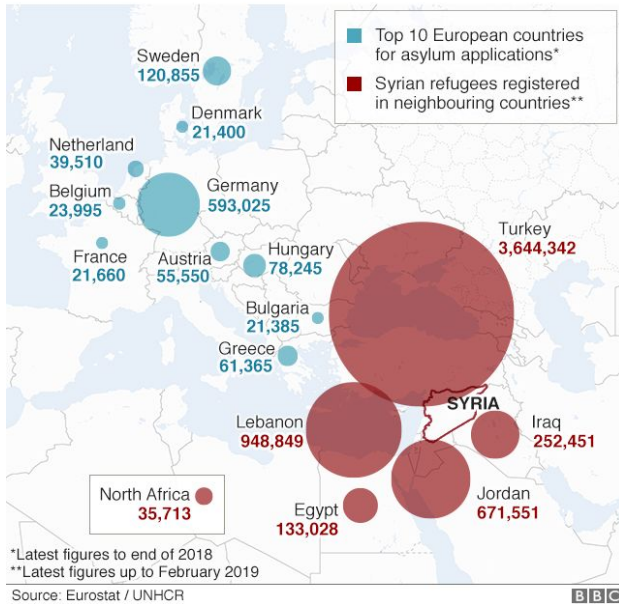
A young girl, a victim of violence from the civil war sits on a hospital bed.

¹³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35806229>

war, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.¹⁴ Additionally, out of the 22 million people living in the nation, over 55% have been uprooted from their homes: 5.7 million as refugees and 6.2 million internally displaced, according to the United Nations Human Rights

Committee.¹⁵ While the war may be coming to an end, there are billions of dollars in damages and the issue of possible human rights violations, should Assad reach complete control over the country again.

Where have all the Syrian refugees gone?



Defense forces clearing debris in Syria after an airstrike in late August, 2019 (Above).
 Map showing where refugees from Syria have applied for asylum (Left).

Italy

Italy is notable for being at the center of the European migrant crisis with Greece. Both countries took in massive amounts of refugees, with some remaining in Italy and Greece permanently. In 2016 alone, over 347,000 migrants arrived in Italy¹⁶. In 2018, the Prime Minister of Italy, Giuseppe Conte appointed Matteo Salvini as Deputy Prime Minister of the Interior. He is from the Populist Party, and is in favor of preventing mass migration. Salvini has accused humanitarian groups who rescue refugees at sea of human smuggling. As such, Italy has been closing their ports to these

¹⁴ <http://www.syriahr.com/en/>

¹⁵ <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/>

¹⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38148110>

refugees and boats.¹⁷ Additionally, when the European Union met to discuss the Mediterranean migrant crisis, Italy boycotted the meeting, tweeting “‘We intend to make ourselves respected’.”

¹⁸ With the amount of refugees that entered Italy since 2013, the question of what responsibility (if any) does Italy hold to accept these refugees, how many *should* they, how many *can* they accept, and how many *will* they accept are raised. While initially it seems clear that the Italians accepted any refugees, they may be forced to change this policy for the future.

Related Documents

In his “Remarks to the Security Council on Security Challenges in the Mediterranean Region,” António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, emphasized the importance of the region and the impact it has had on the world. He also drew attention to the quantity of issues in the region, citing “Illicit trade in narcotics, weapons and petroleum products, large movements of refugees and migrants, maritime piracy, violence against women and girls, as well as terrorism, religious and cultural conflicts”¹⁹. Guterres ends his remarks with a call to action directed not only to the countries of the Mediterranean, but the world, who he believes will have to work together to solve the issues plaguing the Mediterranean.

Objective

DISEC's goals concerning *Strengthening of Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean* are to increase strength and security in the Mediterranean, especially concerning the immigration crisis and war in Syria, but including terrorism, armed cultural conflict, and piracy as well. While

¹⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-48920235>

¹⁸ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/italy-migrant-rescue-boats-turn-away-salvini-boycott-europe-meeting-a9016111.html>

¹⁹ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2017-11-17/security-challenges-mediterranean-region-remarks>

a resolution regarding all, or even most of the aforementioned issues is unlikely, dealing with as many as possible, through as many resolutions as is needed, is DISECs current objective.

Questions to Consider

1. How many migrants has your country taken in?
2. How does your country view the migrant crisis?
3. What role have the citizens from your country played in aiding the issues in the medeteranian?
4. What is your country currently doing both internally and externally to curb the issues in the region?

Helpful Links

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_migrant_crisis#Italy (Not to be used for primary research, but a good starting point for finding out how your nation is affected by the crisis, how many refugees they may have taken on (roughly) and their general response)
- ufmsecretariat.org
- <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/08/30/500-refugees-arrive-lesbos-one-day-record-high-since-migrant/>
- <https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/BG3314.pdf>