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**UNITED NATIONS YOUTH AND STUDENT ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRIA**

GRAZ - INNSBRUCK - KLAGENFURT - LINZ - SALZBURG - VIENNA



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## Abstract

### Human Rights Council

### **“Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons”**

## **Introduction**

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) debates the issue of “Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons”. We will focus on the following topics:

- Natural Disasters and Internally Displaced Persons (Case Study Haiti)
- Armed Conflicts and Internally Displaced Persons (Case Study Somalia)

In the end of the discussion we want to put forth a resolution containing adequate propositions for the international community on finding a durable solution for the problem of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

## **United Nations Human Rights Council**

The UNHRC was established by the UN General Assembly Resolution 60/251 on 15 March 2006 as the successor of the UN Commission on Human Rights with the main purpose of addressing situations of human rights violations. It is an inter-governmental body within the UN system made up of 47 States and responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights. The “Institution-building package”, adopted by the Council in 2007, provides elements to guide it in its future work. These elements include a Universal Periodic Review mechanism which will assess the human rights situations in all 192 UN Member States.

## **Internally Displaced Persons**

Even though there are twice as many IDPs as refugees, they still receive less international attention. Many IDPs are exposed to violence and other human rights violations during their displacement. Recognizing the gap in international law, former Secretary General Boutros-Boutros Ghali appointed Francis Deng as the Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons in 1992. Since 2004, Walter Kälin holds this position. One of the most important contributions made by Francis Deng was the development of international standards for IDPs, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. They were presented to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1998 and seek to protect all IDPs in internal conflict situations, natural disasters and other situations of forced displacement. The Principles also offer the first definition of IDPs.

## **Natural Disasters and Internally Displaced Persons**

Natural disasters are defined by the UN as “the consequence of events triggered by natural hazards that overwhelm local response capacity and seriously affect the social and economic development of the region”. Poverty therefore is an important factor in understanding the effects of natural disasters. Poor people tend to live in less safe environments and in less safe shelters.

Slums are more vulnerable to earthquakes, landslides and flooding than the homes of the rich. Of the 200 million people whose lives were affected by natural disasters, about 36 million were forced to leave their homes in 2008 and are considered to be IDPs. Unlike those displaced by conflicts, this displacement is usually temporary.

## **Armed Conflicts and Internally Displaced Persons**

At the beginning of 2009, the number of IDPs as a result of armed conflicts, generalized violence or human rights violations was at approximately 26 million according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). Reported returns of about 2.6 million people in 2008 were outweighed by a new internal displacement of about 4.6 million people during the same period. New internal displacement was reported mainly from the Philippines (600,000), the Sudan (550,000), Kenya (500,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (at least 400,000), Iraq (360,000), Pakistan (over 310,000), Somalia (300,000), Colombia (270,000), Sri Lanka (230,000) and Georgia (128,000).

### **Case Study Haiti**

The horrifying earthquake that hit Haiti in January 2010 caused the internal displacement of 1.3 million people who lost their homes and their entire property and have no place to go. They try to survive in spontaneous and organized settlements under most challenging circumstances and still depending on international aid with no change in sight.

### **Case Study Somalia**

In Somalia, over 1.5 million people, most of them women and children, have been forced from their homes and are struggling to survive. These 1.5 million people make up 13% of the country's population. A major reason for the unbearable situation is the high level of violence and general insecurity in many parts of south and central Somalia. Atrocities are committed by all actors engaged in hostilities in south and central Somalia in a climate of impunity.

### **Durable Solutions**

In many countries, practical problems such as the systemic failures in bringing humanitarian and development actors together to work hand in hand at an early stage of recovery are one of the main problems in finding durable solutions. IDPs are often not a priority in the recovery process and the lack of flexible funding in early recovery, in addition to differences in approaches and cultures lead to the recent failures.

Finding durable solutions for IDPs is a tremendous challenge and strongly requires the coordination and cooperation of a variety of actors from among national and local authorities, and the humanitarian and the development communities.