

EBMUN 2025:

SOCHUM Topic Guide

CHAIRS:

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Topic A: The Human Rights of Undocumented Migrants

Topic Description:

The intersection of national sovereignty, border security, and human rights remains one of the most complex and divisive issues in global governance. As nations seek to control migration and enforce legal entry requirements, undocumented immigrants often face harsh enforcement measures, including detention, deportation, and criminal prosecution. At the same time, international human rights principles dictate that all individuals, regardless of legal status, deserve basic protections, including freedom from mistreatment, access to due process, and the right to seek asylum.

The criminalization of illegal immigration varies by country, with some treating unauthorized entry as a serious offense, while others handle it as a civil violation. These legal classifications have significant implications for the treatment of migrants, affecting their access to legal recourse, detention conditions, and ability to regularize their status. While nations have the right to secure their borders and regulate immigration, excessive criminalization can lead to human rights violations, including prolonged detention, family separation, and the denial of asylum protections.

Balancing these competing concerns is a pressing challenge for governments and international institutions. The question remains: To what extent should illegal immigration be treated as a criminal act, and how can states enforce immigration laws while upholding basic human rights? Delegates must explore policies that ensure fair enforcement while preventing discrimination, excessive punishment, and humanitarian crises.



Topic History:

Migration has been an integral part of human civilization, with borders becoming more strictly regulated in modern times due to economic, political, and security concerns. The treatment of undocumented immigrants has historically shifted based on economic needs, public sentiment, and geopolitical events.

- **Early 20th Century Immigration Policies:** Many nations, particularly in North America and Europe, established strict immigration laws during the early 1900s, often based on racial and ethnic preferences. Deportation policies were used as a means of social control, with little regard for human rights.
- **Post-WWII and Human Rights Protections:** After World War II, the establishment of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasized the protection of displaced individuals. However, undocumented migrants who do not meet the strict definition of refugees have often been excluded from these protections.
- **Rise of Criminalization:** Over the past few decades, many nations have increased border enforcement measures, leading to a rise in the detention and deportation of undocumented migrants. Some policies have blurred the line between migration control and criminal justice, resulting in mass incarceration, the privatization of detention centers, and punitive legal frameworks.
- **Humanitarian Backlash and Policy Reform:** In response to reports of human rights abuses, certain nations and international organizations have called for decriminalization, arguing that migration should be handled through civil, rather than criminal, legal frameworks. This debate continues to shape contemporary immigration policies.



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Key Considerations:

The debate over criminalization versus civil enforcement of immigration laws requires nuanced solutions that address security concerns without compromising human rights.

Delegates are encouraged to explore:

- **Alternatives to Detention:** Developing community-based monitoring programs instead of mass incarceration.
- **Humanitarian Protections:** Ensuring due process, asylum protections, and access to legal aid for undocumented individuals.
- **Fair and Proportionate Enforcement:** Creating policies that distinguish between different types of migration and avoid excessive penalties.
- **Pathways to Legal Status:** Examining amnesty, work permits, and legal residency options for long-term undocumented immigrants.

The SOCHUM committee seeks to facilitate a comprehensive dialogue on how nations can enforce immigration policies while upholding the principles of human dignity,

fairness, and international cooperation. Delegates must work toward sustainable, humane solutions that recognize migration as a global reality while ensuring that security concerns do not override fundamental human rights.



Topic B: Climate Change and the Right to Asylum

Topic Description:

As climate change accelerates, extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and environmental degradation are displacing millions of people worldwide. From Pacific island nations threatened by rising tides to regions facing prolonged droughts and desertification, entire communities are being forced to flee their homes in search of safety and stability. Despite this growing crisis, international law does not currently recognize **climate refugees** as asylum seekers, leaving those displaced by climate disasters in legal limbo.

The **1951 Refugee Convention** defines a refugee as someone fleeing persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. However, individuals displaced by climate-related events do not fit within this framework, meaning they lack formal protections under existing asylum laws. Without legal recognition, climate migrants often face deportation, statelessness, and restricted access to essential resources.

The increasing frequency and severity of climate-induced displacement raise urgent questions about the adequacy of international refugee law. Should nations expand the legal definition of asylum to include those fleeing environmental disasters? How can countries balance national sovereignty with humanitarian obligations? This topic challenges delegates to assess the legal, ethical, and practical implications of recognizing climate refugees within the global asylum system.



Topic History:

Climate-driven displacement is not a new phenomenon, but the scale and urgency of the crisis have escalated in recent decades. Historical patterns of migration have often been influenced by environmental factors, with communities relocating due to droughts, floods, and food shortages. However, modern climate change—driven largely by human activity—has intensified these threats, leading to mass displacement at unprecedented levels.

- **Small Island Nations:** Low-lying nations such as Tuvalu, Kiribati, and the Maldives are experiencing rising sea levels that threaten to submerge entire communities. Residents face becoming **stateless** as their homelands disappear.
- **Droughts and Desertification:** In Africa's Sahel region, prolonged droughts and land degradation are forcing rural populations to migrate, increasing regional instability.
- **Hurricanes and Extreme Weather:** Coastal regions in South and Central America, as well as Southeast Asia, are facing stronger hurricanes and typhoons, leading to repeated cycles of displacement.
- **Legal Precedents:** In 2020, the **UN Human Rights Committee** ruled that governments cannot deport individuals back to countries where climate change threatens their right to life. However, no binding international framework currently grants asylum to climate-displaced persons.

As environmental disasters intensify, existing legal frameworks remain inadequate to address the unique challenges faced by climate refugees. Delegates must consider how international law can adapt to recognize and protect those fleeing climate-related dangers.



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Key Considerations:

Delegates must consider sustainable, long-term strategies that address both the immediate and structural challenges of climate displacement. Possible solutions include:

- **Expanding the Legal Definition of Refugees:** Amending international agreements to formally recognize climate-induced displacement as grounds for asylum.
- **Humanitarian Visas and Protected Status:** Establishing new legal pathways that allow climate migrants to relocate legally without relying on traditional refugee status.
- **Global Climate Responsibility Agreements:** Developing international frameworks that require high-emission countries to contribute to the resettlement and adaptation of climate-displaced populations.
- **Regional Agreements for Climate Migration:** Encouraging neighboring nations to create coordinated response plans for cross-border climate displacement.

The SOCHUM committee seeks to explore innovative, rights-based solutions that balance **legal protections, national sovereignty, and international cooperation**. Delegates must evaluate the feasibility of policy proposals while ensuring that those displaced by climate disasters are not left without options.