

European Union

*Novice
Specialized*



TOPIC: Belarus-Poland Border Crisis

CHAIRS: Noah Huang, Jaymeson Rapone

LAIMUN XXIX

December 2-3

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Letter from the Secretariat

3

Introduction to the USG

4

Introduction to the Dais

5

Committee Description

7

Topic: Belarus-Poland Border Crisis

8

LAIMUN XXIX

December 2-3

Letter from the Secretaries-General

Dear Delegates,

On behalf of our entire staff, it is our pleasure to welcome you to Session XXIX of the Los Angeles Invitational Model United Nations (LAIMUN) conference. LAIMUN XXIX will take place on Saturday, December 2 and Sunday, December 3 of 2023 at the Mira Costa High School (MCHS) campus.

Our staff, composed of over 120 MCHS students, has been working tirelessly to make your debate experience the best it can be. You will find your dais members to be knowledgeable about the issues being debated and MUN procedure. We pride ourselves in hosting a conference that is educational and engaging, and we hope you take advantage of that as you prepare and debate.

At LAIMUN, we value thorough research and preparation. We ask that delegates write position papers following [these directions](#). The deadline to submit position papers to be considered for Committee and Research Awards is Friday, November 24 at 11:59 PM PT. The deadline to submit to be considered for Committee Awards is Thursday, November 30 at 11:59 PM PT.

We also encourage all delegates to read the [LAIMUN Rules of Procedure](#) for conference-specific information and as a reminder of points and motions that can be made during committee.

Feel free to reach out to our staff with any questions or concerns you may have. Delegates can find their chairs' contact information next to their committee profile and the Secretariat's email addresses on the staff page. Any member of the LAIMUN staff will be happy to assist you.

We look forward to seeing you in December!

Sincerely,

Akash Mishra and Lily Stern
Secretaries-General, LAIMUN XXIX
secretarygeneral@mchsmun.org



Introduction to the USG

Hi Delegates!

My name is Aidan Tacinelli and I am honored to welcome you to LAIMUN XXIX! In my fourth and final year of Model UN at Mira Costa, I am the Under Secretary-General of the Specialized Branch, and I cannot wait to see what everyone has prepared for debate.

In the Specialized Branch, we have selected extremely current and pressing topics that will require research and preparedness. Be sure to bring your creative solutions, accurate country policy, and active enthusiasm to each of your respective committees. All of our chairs are excited to see the level of debate brought about by delegates, and are ready to accommodate you in any way that they can.

With that being said, we want to create a safe space for everyone to share their ideas and form solutions as a community. Please do your part in being respectful to other delegates and your chairs. Every staff member is held to a high level of professionalism, which you can return by dressing appropriately and following LAIMUN's guidelines.

We do not tolerate plagiarism or pre-written resolutions in any aspect. If any delegate is found to have plagiarized on their position paper, resolutions, or even speeches, they will be disqualified from receiving committee awards.

Don't forget to submit your position papers, prepare your speaking, and print out any papers you may need.

I can't wait to see each committee's resolutions and the passion that comes along with them. If you have any questions, you can reach me at specialized@mchsmun.org! You can also look on the LAIMUN XXIX website to email any of your chairs or other members of our secretariat.

Best of luck,

Lily Stern and Akash Mishra
Secretaries-General

Aidan Tacinelli
Under-Secretary General

Introduction to the Dias

Hello Delegates!

My name is Noah Huang, a current junior and co-chair for this year's LAIMUN committee! This is my third year of MUN at Mira Costa and second year chairing a committee. I have gained so many valuable experiences from MUN, and I'm excited to continue debating through highschool. I've also been extremely lucky to be invited to various travel conferences like UC Davis and Yale. I'm so excited for LAIMUN this year, and here is a little bit about me.

Outside of MUN, I love playing different sports and am always listening to music. Basketball has been my main sport and I was able to play my first two years at Costa on the team. Now, I'm exploring other sports including beach volleyball and golf. My favorite genres of music are alternative and indie, although I like to dabble in the art of rap and R&B as well. The main instruments I enjoy playing the most are the piano, drums, and guitar, as I also play the drums for my church's worship team. I'm so excited to hear from you guys at LAIMUN this year, so make sure to be prepared and familiar with the topic!

The Poland-Belarus border crisis is constantly changing, so make sure you are addressing the most recent events and staying updated on the topic. We expect all delegates to be well-researched and bring a variety of solutions that are applicable to the real world. If you have any questions or comments, feel free to reach out to either me or Jaymeson.

Best of luck,

Noah Huang

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Hello Delegates!

My name is Jaymeson Rapone and I will be one of your chairs along with Noah. I am a junior in high school, and this is my third year in the MUN program. I have participated in many local conferences, and also have had the opportunity to go on travel trips, including to Berlin, Germany. I have loved my time being a part of the MUN program for the past few years, because of its emphasis on current events, and the help it has given me with public speaking skills!

While in school, I am on the Mira Costa varsity dance team, and dance at football games, basketball games, pep rallies, and community events. I love being able to support my school's spirit through the team and have met so many amazing people. I am also a part of several clubs, including I-LOVE Club, which focuses on appreciation of various ethnicities, and Digital Truths club, which works to combat misinformation and disinformation.

Outside of school, I have been doing ballet since I was three years old. I have been in many productions over the years, my favorite being Swan Lake. Some more of my hobbies include reading and listening to music. My all time favorite book is Harry Potter, and going to concerts is one of my favorite things to do. I also enjoy going to the beach, especially at sunset, and worked as a counselor for a children's beach camp over the summer. I additionally love dogs, and in my free time, volunteer at the LoveJoy Foundation, a local animal shelter.

I am so excited to meet you all, feel free to reach out at eu.nov.laimun.xxix@gmail.com with any questions or concerns you may have!

Best,

Jaymeson Rapone

Committee Description

The European Union is a collection of 27 countries on the European continent that have formed a supranational organization for the betterment and economic prosperity of all of Europe. Unlike international organizations like the United Nations, the European Union has significantly more enforcement powers over member states. Delegates should take this into account when crafting solutions, as they can often create policy instruments that are much more effective.

However, the European Union's stronger power over its member states has proven to be more controversial in recent years. For example, tensions over refugee quotas for member states have contributed to the United Kingdom's exit from the EU, famously termed BREXIT. Contrary to EU solidarity, national and cultural divisions on the European continent are stark, especially when comparing Western and Eastern Europe. Therefore, while acting as one unified entity, the European Union is also forced to account for the varying forces that could serve to sever EU nations' ties with one another.

Recent events in Europe have come to question the European Union's vision of a unified commonwealth in Europe, particularly with nationalist uprisings in Poland and homophobia spreading in Eastern Europe. Therefore, it is crucial, now more than ever, that the European Union factors in the cultural differences of European nations to make informed decisions on how to best move the continent forward.

Topic: Belarus-Poland Border Crisis

I. Background:

The Belarus-Poland border crisis began in July of 2021, with the influx of thousands of migrants crossing the border between Belarus and Poland. It was triggered by an array of issues, with the primary cause coming from the deterioration of Belarus-European Union relations. A year prior, in 2020, Alexander Lukashenko— who had held power in Belarus for more than a quarter century— won his sixth term as president in an election that was widely viewed by other European states as rigged and fraudulent.¹ The election results provoked a wave of repercussions by citizens in Belarus, where there were numerous anti-government demonstrations intended to display political dissent, and aim to topple Lukashenko. These were violently shut down, however, and in response, the European Union began imposing sanctions against industries crucial to the country as punishment for the evident government repression. The union later stated that Belarus had encouraged migrants to illegally cross member states' borders, specifically Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia as revenge for the sanctions placed on Minsk in 2020.

Fleeing from war and persecution, the majority of these migrants were from Iraq, Syria, Iran, Yemen, and Afghanistan, and were attempting to seek asylum in the EU. Relaxed visa rules and “tourist visas” offered by the Belarusian government had lured them into the country with the impression that Belarus was an easy and convenient gateway into the European Union. There were numerous false advertisements circulating from travel agencies in their home countries—

¹ Neuman, Scott. “What's causing the crisis at the Belarus-Poland border.” *NPR*, 17 November 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/11/17/1056129127/poland-belarus-eu-migrant-border-crisis>. Accessed 9 June 2023.

specifically in Iraq— where “tourist trips” with significantly lower prices to Belarus were organized, promoting this immigration into Europe. Belarus was then accused of driving migrants down to the Polish border, and even encouraging them to clash with Polish Authorities. Poland’s Deputy Foreign Minister expressed that Lukashenko and Russian President Putin, a close ally of Belarus, intended to test the resilience of the E.U. and NATO, through constructing this surge at the border.² That year, Poland reported 24,500 attempted crossings from Belarus, compared to 120 attempts in 2021.³

These migrants, having hope on the false promise of entering the EU, have become trapped in the inhospitable forest area between borders, experiencing push back and violence by guards on both sides. Additionally, Belarusian guards are reported to express inhumane forms of action, such as degrading treatment. There have been multiple reports of death, rape, extortion, theft, and the ignorance of pleas for asylum. People stranded in the forest have had to wander through swamps in freezing temperatures, with no access to food or water. Belarus has even fired a warning shot to intimidate migrants, and has forced them to cross the border into the EU through cruel tactics and beatings. This treatment is a violation of multiple of Belarus’s treaty obligations, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights (ICCPR), and the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Forms of Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (UNCAT).

In November of 2021, there were 4,000 people placed in makeshift warehouse facilities in Bruzgi, a village close to the border. Living conditions were horrendous, with no heating or

² Roache, Madeline. “How the Belarus-Poland Dispute Became a Geopolitical Crisis | Time.” *TIME*, 17 November 2021, <https://time.com/6119488/belarus-poland-border-dispute-humanitarian/>. Accessed 10 June 2023.

³ Roache, Madeline. “How the Belarus-Poland Dispute Became a Geopolitical Crisis | Time.” *TIME*, 17 November 2021, <https://time.com/6119488/belarus-poland-border-dispute-humanitarian/>. Accessed 10 June 2023.

electricity, one meal a day, and further reports of sexual harassment and violence towards women and girls. This camp was later dismantled, but migrants were either sent back to their home countries, or left in Belarus. Vulnerable groups, such as families, elderly, and people suffering from health conditions were also among the migrants who undertook the journey to Belarus, just to experience violence and brutality at the border.

In addition to the inhospitable treatment from Belarusian authorities, migrants face dire conditions from Polish authorities as well. Poland has been instigating pushbacks, and unlawfully sending people back to Belarus after they have already been driven down to the border. These pushbacks have been violent, and forced without due process, despite the pleas for asylum. There is no formal readmission agreement between Belarus and Poland, so migrants are taken to the razor wire fence, and become trapped between the two borders. During a few instances, Polish border guards have beaten migrants with batons, kicked, and pushed them to cross back into Belarus.⁴ In October of 2021, Poland's Parliament amended the Act of Foreigners, which is a law that lays down the principles and conditions of foreign entries into Poland, as well as the authorities involved with these matters.⁵ The amendment allows for authorities to expel migrants even if they wish for international protection, essentially giving legal cover for pushbacks. Since then, more than 7,000 migrants have been stopped from

⁴ "Violence and Pushbacks at Poland-Belarus Border." *Human Rights Watch*, 7 June 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/07/violence-and-pushbacks-poland-belarus-border>. Accessed 11 June 2023.

⁵ Lesinska, Magdalena. "Act on foreigners of 12 December 2013 | European Website on Integration." *European Commission*, 12 December 2013, https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/act-foreigners-12-december-2013_en. Accessed 12 June 2023.

entering the country– and have since turned back to Belarus– where they face serious abuses. A similar law was also passed in Lithuania, and later that month, the Polish Council of Ministers adopted a bill for the construction of a border wall.

Despite operating under legal protection, these pushbacks infringe on European Union laws– including the Charter of Fundamental Rights– which guarantees the right to asylum. Furthermore, the ill-treatment of pushbacks is prohibited under article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Poland also has been criticized for passing an emergency act in Warsaw that bans all aid workers, medics, and journalists from the border area. This has restricted the access to humanitarian aid for the migrants, and has restricted help from non-governmental organizations.

With the more recent war in Ukraine, the situation at the border between Poland and Belarus has become overshadowed, despite it being an ongoing crisis. Reports of pushbacks continue to mount, and while the numbers of migrants crossing are lower than its peak in 2021, Polish guards still report dozens of attempts to enter into Poland daily. The pushbacks and abuses these migrants face also stand in distinct contrast to Poland’s open door policy for people fleeing the war in Ukraine. According to the Human Rights Watch, migrants from Ukraine have been aided by guards and volunteers, while activists providing assistance for people from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa have been banned, and even arrested. These refugees and migrants have been turned into weapons in a political battle between Belarus and the EU, and the situation poses a serious threat to minorities and asylum seekers who need to be protected under international law. The protection of one’s rights should not be determined by nationality or race,

which is why there needs to be more efforts made by the international community to aid this humanitarian crisis.

II. UN Involvement:

The United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was founded in 1950 with goals to aid and protect refugees, as well as forcibly displaced or stateless persons. Today the agency works in 127 countries and is the world's leading organization pertaining to the safeguarding of migrants. The UNHCR has been operating in Belarus since 1995, through advising its government and policies. It has specifically worked on improving the asylum space in the region. For example, in Appl. No. 42120/21⁶, the UNHCR concluded that because of the systematic denial of asylum seekers, and the expulsions without an effective remedy, Belarus and Poland are not complying with certain articles under international law, and are in need to improve their legislation. There has also been the implementation of a global campaign in Belarus, the #IBelong Campaign, to end statelessness in the country. This has been carried out by assisting individuals with legal, financial, and social aid.

On November 9th of 2021, the UNHCR along with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), an additional intergovernmental agency of the United Nations, issued a joint statement calling to ensure the safety and rights of migrants and refugees, specifically referring to the Belarus-Poland Border Crisis.⁷ Both stated that the use of migrants to achieve political

⁶ "Submission by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the case of R.A. and Others v. Poland (Appl. No. 42120/21) before the European Court of Human Rights." *Refworld*, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/621ccfde4.html>. Accessed 5 October 2023.

⁷ "IOM and UNHCR Call for Immediate De-escalation at the Belarus-Poland Border." *International Organization for Migration*, 9 November 2021,

ends must stop, and that there needs to be urgent resolutions and commitment to resolve the crisis. They additionally issued that they were ready to provide support on both sides of the border, and the UN human rights teams paid a visit to Belarus that same year. They were able to distribute emergency aid through the Belarusian Red Cross, but were not granted access to the still restricted border area.

The UNHCR also urges Poland and Belarus to abide by international legal obligations to provide access to asylum seekers, as both states are signatories of the 1951 Refugee Convention. The agencies condemn the pushbacks carried out by Poland and Belarus, but also recognize member states' sovereignty, and the challenge that irregular migration poses, so they stress the importance of a safe and organized border management process, and that a collective responsibility must be taken.

A more recent report titled A/HRC/52/68 was issued by the UN High Commissioner pertaining to the situation on human rights in Belarus in the aftermath of the 2020 presidential election.⁸ It includes updated information, developments, and evidence of different violations committed in the country. The commissioner issued a series of recommendations for the government including effective and transparent investigations into all past violations of human rights, as an attempt to bring accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims in Belarus.

<https://www.iom.int/news/iom-and-unhcr-call-immediate-de-escalation-belarus-poland-border>. Accessed 15 June 2023.

⁸ "A/HRC/52/68: Belarus in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and in its aftermath - Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights." *OHCHR*, 3 February 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5268-belarus-run-2020-presidential-election-and-its-aftermath-report>. Accessed 13 June 2023.

The United Nations has addressed the crisis at the Belarus-Poland border through a plethora of committees, reports, and statements, as well as with the assistance in humanitarian aid and support. Despite the efforts of the United Nations to provide legal frameworks to the situation, little has been done to physically prevent violence and harassment across the border. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Ocalenie Foundation provide these resources through medical assistance, housing, and aiding refugees. Actions such as these in conjunction with UN accountability is vital to preventing further abuse and death. It is crucial that member states abide by the efforts made by the United Nations, so there can be progress to ensure that refugees and migrants' rights are protected, as well as balance the actions of NGOs to aid those influenced by the crisis.

III. Topics to Consider:

A. Humanitarian Aid

The Belarus-Poland Border Crisis has turned from a political battle to a humanitarian emergency. One of the greatest threats to migrants and refugees attempting to cross borders are the harsh conditions and extreme living situations. Although the EU is not responsible for the health of the migrants, it is important to uphold the human rights and safety of endangered people. According to the Grupa Granica Helsinki Foundation For Human Rights, there have been 37 confirmed deaths, and 300 missing persons since the border crisis began⁹-- although now--

⁹ Daaboul, Azzam. "EU Eastern Borders: More Deaths at Poland Belarus Border as Reports of Pushbacks, Detention and Crack-down on Solidarity Continue, Council of Europe Concerned over Pushbacks and Criminalisation in Latvia | European Council on Refugees and ..." *European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)* |, 17 February 2023, <https://ecre.org/eu-eastern-borders-more-deaths-at-poland-belarus-border-as-reports-of-pushbacks-detention-and-crack-down-on-solidarity-continue-council-of-europe-concerned-over-pushbacks-and-criminalisation-in-lat/>. Accessed 14 June 2023.

this number is probable to have increased. Additionally, when the Polish border was initially armed by the government, an estimated 2,000 people were forced to live in makeshift housing near the border with lack of proper food, water, medicine, clothes, and shelter.¹⁰ Freezing temperatures have led to hypothermia, and other factors including seizures, dehydration, traumatic injuries, gastrointestinal infections. Additional violence inflicted injuries are a common occurrence, and are often not treated with medical care quickly enough. Furthermore, as seen through the severe circumstances that plague Belarusian migrants, it is vital that immediate healthcare and humanitarian aid is available for those that require help. There are also numerous organizations that are working to provide aid to these people such as INTERSOS, The Red Cross, Human Rights Watch, and more. Even now, migrants surrounding the border face lethal conditions as the situation loses attention due to the Russia-Ukraine War. Delegates should focus on delivering well thought-out solutions that deliver proper necessities to migrants and refugees in these conditions, targeting specific areas such as disease, sanitation, and shelter in spite of the various terrain and obstacles that medical professionals will need to traverse. To prevent migrants being trapped in these conditions, policies need to be adapted towards the health of the individuals affected.

B. Migration Policy

Migration policies within the Belarus-Poland border crisis have played a significant role in the growing tensions between nations. Since 2020, the European Union and the United States

¹⁰ “8 things to know about the EU/Belarus border crisis.” *MSF*, 31 December 2021, <https://www.msf.org/8-things-know-about-eubelarus-border-crisis>. Accessed 14 June 2023.

have imposed sanctions on Belarus to limit migrants and drugs from entering the EU¹¹, as well as to apply pressure on the Belarusian government. Despite the efforts to weaken the Belarusian authorities, at the end of July 2021, Lukashenko declared that Belarus would no longer stop “migrants and drugs” from entering the EU¹², signifying the deteriorating tensions between the EU and Belarus. Most recently, Belarus has been acting more hospitable and fair towards migrants, likely in an attempt to improve Lukashenko’s self-reputation. But, despite that, Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia have taken extreme measures to reduce migration into the European Union. In some camps, attempts to breach the border have led to the usage of thousands of patrolling guards with access to tear gas, water cannons, and sharp wire fences. This has resulted in the severity behind the humanitarian crisis and diminishing relations between European nations. Currently, reactions from both sides of the border have been irrational towards the people and lack efforts to heal the connections between countries, leaving room for new solutions to be developed.

C. Violence

Along with health and sanitation concerns of migrants, there has also been violence inflicted on those traveling to the EU border. Thus, another topic revolving around the Belarus-Poland border crisis is preventing violence towards migrants. According to the Human Rights Watch, reports of violence include beatings, destruction of objects, rape, theft, and

¹¹ “Migrant Crisis on the Belarus-Poland Border.” *CRS Reports*, 13 December 2021, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11983>. Accessed 14 June 2023.

¹² “Migrant Crisis on the Belarus-Poland Border.” *CRS Reports*, 13 December 2021, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11983>. Accessed 14 June 2023.

intimidation.¹³ Despite pleas to cross the border, Polish border guards often take action against migrants in which most of the time are violent or threatening. Presently, there have been no repercussions to the border police's actions which promote the use of force to prevent migration. Since Polish and Belarusian government policies lack proper acknowledgement of human rights for migrants along the border, abuse has continued to occur. Additionally— in a personal account of an individual— when caught by the Belarusian government along with a group of 11 other people attempting to cross the border, they were forced onto the Polish side. Hours later, they were arrested and abused violently by the border patrol, destroying phones, and taking bank cards. Government corruption is a key contributor to these events and remains a relevant topic that, when fixed, has the possibility of preventing violence towards migrants. Those that create solutions under this topic should address the underlying causes of violence along the border as well as recognize the thousands that are affected by such actions. Assault, violence, and other forms of harassment are all serious topics that remain at the forefront of the most urgent issues within this ongoing crisis.

IV. Case Study: Conflict in the Aegean Sea

. The European Union's struggles to administer mass amounts of migrants has occurred in the past as well. The conflict in the Aegean Sea between Greece and Turkey has led to hundreds of thousands of migrants trying to cross borders into the EU. Initially, the situation in the Aegean sea was caused by tensions between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Resources in the neighboring waters include four trillion cubic meters of natural gas and two billion barrels of oil totaling up to

¹³ "Violence and Pushbacks at Poland-Belarus Border." *Human Rights Watch*, 7 June 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/07/violence-and-pushbacks-poland-belarus-border>. Accessed 14 June 2023.

one trillion U.S. dollars, displaying the cause of competition between the two countries. In the midst of the fight for natural resources, thousands of migrants attempt to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach safety and refuge. For instance, in a United Nations report writing upon the dangers of crossing the Mediterranean Sea, the UN “counted 3,231 migrants and refugees dead or missing in the Mediterranean Sea, and 945 people so far this year.” In an article by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 60 individuals have died in 2022 alone, showing the danger and importance of protecting the passing migrants. Similarly, common to the Mediterranean sea, thousands of boats go missing every year, especially amongst the crisis in the Aegean Sea. More than a million migrants were eventually led into the EU’s borders¹⁴, although, this conflict has not ended. This situation shows the variation of solutions that could apply to the Belarus-Poland border crisis, and the policies that are needed to create functional relations between nation-states.

V. Guiding Questions:

1. Does your country believe that government laws surrounding migration into neighboring borders are too restrictive?
2. What policies regarding migration need to be updated to reduce the amount of violence and number of refugees?
3. How can members of the European Union prevent future migrant crises with outside countries? What needs to be adapted?

¹⁴Neuman, Scott. “What's causing the crisis at the Belarus-Poland border.” *NPR*, 17 November 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/11/17/1056129127/poland-belarus-eu-migrant-border-crisis>. Accessed 14 June 2023.

4. What is your country's stance on migration and migration policies?
5. How can the international community improve legislation to protect the rights of migrants and refugees?

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