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Unaccompanied Minor Migrants

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Currently, the world is facing one of the largest refugee crises in history, with the number of people being displaced due to war, conflict, violence, and persecution growing rapidly every day. A significant portion of these refugees are children, many of them attempting to travel to Europe, Australia, the United States, and Canada in search of asylum without a guardian. This poses the question of how states are responding to the needs of these unaccompanied minor migrants. This paper will examine the various state responses to unaccompanied minor migrants as they are in accordance with the United Nations Human Rights Convention on the Rights of the Child. Additionally, the paper will examine the number of problems children and youth face as a result of these state responses. The research was conducted through a qualitative analysis of government documents and reports, newspaper articles, and non profit and human-rights organizations reports. The results indicate that the majority of state responses to asylum seeking children are not in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention states children should not be deprived of liberty, and if they are it should be for the shortest period of time possible. Despite this, many countries across Europe, as well as Australia and the United States are using reception facilities, detention centres, and in the case of the recently closed Calais “Jungle” camp, converted shipping containers, to hold children for often lengthy and uncertain periods of time. Problems minors in detainment face include lack of access to legal assistance, poor living conditions, invasive age assessment techniques, and most prominently, wide spread abuse. These problems are also in contradiction with the rights of the child as outlined by the Convention. Limitations of this study include questionable reliability of some sources and minimal availability of first-hand accounts. While further research is needed, the study clearly shows that state responses to unaccompanied minor refugees have been inadequate. By understanding current state responses to unaccompanied migrants and the problems

associated with them, better strategies for dealing with this vulnerable group of people can be developed and implemented. Further research may attempt to answer what these better strategies may be.