

GVMUN NEWSLETTER



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Thank you to all of our interns who are involved in the creation of the GVMUN Newsletter!



GVMUN NEWSLETTER

Happy New Year!

Welcome to the January, 2025 edition of the GVMUN Newsletter. We are thrilled to continue working towards understanding, collaboration, and impactful solutions to the challenges faced in our world as we enter into the year.

The contents this month capture some important global developments shaping international relations; from pressing environmental issues to changing political regimes. As young leaders, it is quite important for you to stay informed to make a difference, and we are with you to provide you this.

We are excitedly announcing quite a few upcoming events that you won't want to miss! From essay competitions to trivia challenges, these events are exciting opportunities for you to test your knowledge, engage with global topics, and network with like-minded peers.

The GVMUN Newsletter is not possible without the hard work of our Interns team. Thank you to all the Journalism and Political Science teams for putting this together.

Stay active as always among the GVMUN community; there are plenty of opportunities to grow with conferences, workshops, special events, and many more to hone your skills, see perspectives at a distance, and contribute worthwhile.

Thank you for being part of GVMUN. Let's make 2025 a great year!

- Kush Dave and Ayushmaan Mukherjee, Secretary Generals

GVMUN 

Downfall of Assad Regime

What Happens next ?

Sarah Gbajobi, Journalism Intern

On the 17th of July 2000, Bashar Al Assad became president of Syria, continuing the authoritarian-style rule of his family. Further into the year 2011, tensions peak between the rebel opposition and the Assad government, leading upto a major civil war, and 14 years later, leading to his downfall in late 2024.

Historical Context

The Assad family came into power after his father - Hafez Al Assad, became a follower of the Syrian Ba'athist party and worked up its political ladder. He later formed a military group and performed a successful coup to take over power from the opposing party led by Salah Jadid. Hafez Al Assad was sworn in as president on the 14th of March 1971 and served till his death in 2000. His son, Bashar Al Assad soon succeeded him.

Tipping Point

After the war, Syria faces economic collapse, and a contraction of 1.5% in GDP, fueled by decades of corruption. Due to major economic difficulties, Assad had been unable to pay for guards, weaponry and additional militants and had been relying upon the support of Russia, Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon. However, it had been



Syrian opposition fighters celebrate the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime, December 8, 2024 (Le Monde)

insufficient due to the Russia-Ukraine war, conflict between Iran-backed Hezbollah and Israel, and Kurdish forces who remained up north

Rebels Advance to Cities

Thirteen years after the conflict first began, sparked the end of Assad's regime. On 27th November 2024, a confederacy of opposing fighters led by Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham launched a major offensive against pro-government forces, sparking a flare-up after years. On this day at least 37 people were killed. Three days later on the 30th of

January, opposing rebels swiftly moved to take control of Aleppo—Syria's second-largest city. This was one of the first times rebel groups took to the streets after the Syrian government took control in 2016. The rebels headed to the town of Hama.

On December 5th, 2024, power dynamics dramatically changed as the rebel group strategically advanced towards the city of Hama located within Western-Central Syria occupied by rebel forces. Gaining this upper hand allowed the rebels to continue upwards to take control over the capital city of Syria - Damascus. On 6th December, rebels took over the city of Daraa, which had first sparked the war in 2011. They had long-lasting effects, claiming the lives of 307,000 civilians—over 1.5% of Syria's population—

and leaving over 7.2 million internally displaced (IDPS) and over 5.5 million refugees fled to neighboring countries. On December 7th, in the south, the rebels took over the city of Homs, with people taking to the streets, tearing posters of Assad down, and flooding the streets with celebration.

Trump's well-known track record of anti-climate protection policies, including withdrawing the U.S. from the Paris Agreement in his first term, raise concerns that he may potentially do the same once again in his second term, as well as implement other detrimental policies, sidelining climate action in an already fragile global climate situation.

December 8th, 2024

On 8th of December 2024, revolutionary groups took over Syria, announcing its new government led by Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS), finally toppling six decades of tyranny under the Assad regime. Approximately, 115,000 civilians who sought refuge in neighboring countries such as Türkiye, Jordan, and Lebanon returned to Syria. Many victims who suffered chemical attacks, political imprisonment, and human rights violations speak out for the first time.

Moving Forward

Assad flees to Russia as Syria's caretaker government works to stabilize the nation, provide services, and prevent power struggles. The US backs it if minority rights, aid access, and anti-terrorism efforts are upheld. Key challenges include rebuilding and ensuring security.



Syrian opposition fighters celebrate the fall of the Syrian government, in Damascus, Syria on December 8, 2024 (NPR)

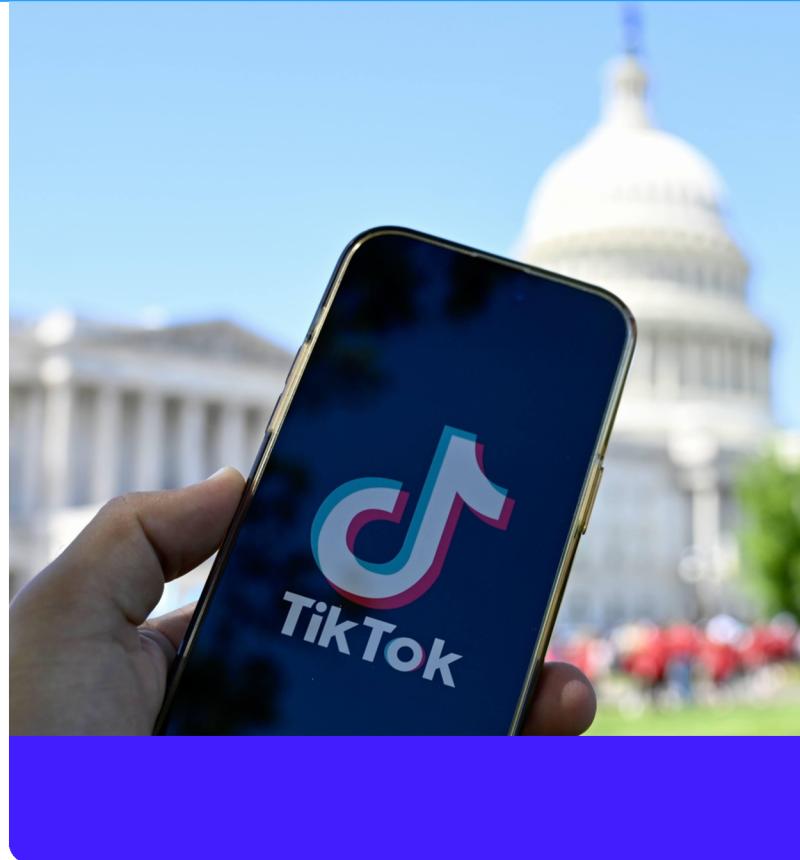
The US Ban on Tiktok

Angela Li, Journalism Intern

The US government's increasing scrutiny of TikTok has led to a ban of Tiktok on January 19th, 2025 due to national security concerns over data privacy and potential ties to the Chinese government. As of January 20th, 2025, however, on the same day of President Trump's inauguration and beginning of his second term in office, Tiktok is back online for American Users. President Trump plans to restore TikTok by delaying the ban for 90 more days to work out "a 50-50 joint venture between TikTok's existing parent company, China-based ByteDance, and a new, American owner". Despite President Trump pledging to reverse the ban, however, it is extremely difficult for him to undo a law passed by Congress and signed by the former president with an executive order.

Battle for Digital Dominance

The potential US ban on TikTok is much more than a matter of data privacy. It is part of a larger geopolitical struggle between the US and China, where influence over digital platforms has become a strategic tool in shaping global narratives. The Biden administration had made two national security arguments about TikTok. One was a



fear that China could access users' information as potential blackmail material. Another was that the company could manipulate content in a way that benefits the Chinese government. President Biden thus signed a law last April that gave ByteDance 270 days to sell TikTok to an owner from the United States or one of its allies or face a ban.

Implications

The rising popularity of Xiaohongshu and other Chinese platforms is part of a broader

strategy by China to expand its digital influence and reshape the global narrative.

Tough Xiaohongshu is scrambling to find ways to moderate English-language content according to Chinese censorship requirements and build English-Chinese translation tools, Chinese state media has overall cheered the trend, with state broadcaster CCTV saying that the TikTok users had found a "new home." This shift could affect how countries view China's role in the digital economy, and the influence of Chinese tech companies could challenge the dominance of Western platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, particularly in markets outside of the US and Europe. The US is evidently wary of China's growing influence and is increasingly focused on controlling Chinese media's reach as a critical aspect of the broader geopolitical battle for media dominance.

As TikTok refugees flood to platforms like Xiaohongshu, they are not just finding new spaces for entertainment, but also contributing to a broader geopolitical shift in a way that aligns with the strategic interests of the US and China.

Resolution Roundup

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is an annual United Nations conference held regularly at the United Nations headquarters in New York City, New York. The sixty-eighth iteration of the conference was held last March, with a focus placed on economic progress to uplift women across the world. This economic framework inspired much of the discussion that occurred at the conference, giving delegates the chance to recognize poverty as a major obstacle to female empowerment. Commitments born out of the conference including the strengthening of institutions and more financial opportunities for women to overcome the hurdle of poverty. The resolution that was adopted, titled "Resolution on women, the girl child and HIV and AIDS", mainly addressed concerns over HIV/AIDS, its prevalence in young girls across the world, and methods to spread awareness to combat it.

Some highlights from the resolution include

- Calling upon member states and governments to address the alarming rate of HIV/AIDS infections in young girls
- Calling upon governments to eradicate gender-based violence through policies and legislation
- Urging member states to implement systems and standards that improve access to education for girls in order to best empower them
- Calling upon member states to develop programs or other methods to defeat HIV-centric stigma that could be potentially harmful to girls
- Urging governments to remove obstacles that hinder access to HIV prevention or treatment in low- and middle-income countries by 2030



The Overlooked Mental Health Crisis Among Rural Women in South Africa

Lesha Pitso, Journalism Intern

In South Africa's rural regions, mental health issues, particularly among women, but especially during the perinatal phase remains unaddressed. This crisis is often ignored because other issues like poverty and lack of healthcare services are at the forefront. However, these issues put so much stress on women and children that it needs immediate attention. Finding a solution would require a thorough diagnosis of the crisis and a pragmatic and multi-dimensional intervention.

Limited access to healthcare is one of the primary causes of poor mental health among rural women. In several rural areas, healthcare facilities are few, while mental health services are almost non-existent. If these services are available, women may come across a number of logistical issues such as transportation, long waiting queues, and not enough staff to take care of patients which can further discourage them from pursuing mental health services. In addition to this, a lack of economic resources and employment opportunities can aggravate stress and feelings of powerlessness.



A satellite image of the impacted area, as a result of the flooded area. (NASA Observatory)

Understanding societal perception towards women seeking mental health services is critical. Traditional gender roles fueled by cultural beliefs can make women shy away from support because they feel they would be perceived as weak. Families often fail to provide such support with the belief that these women should show self-sacrifice and resilience.

Solution Proposed

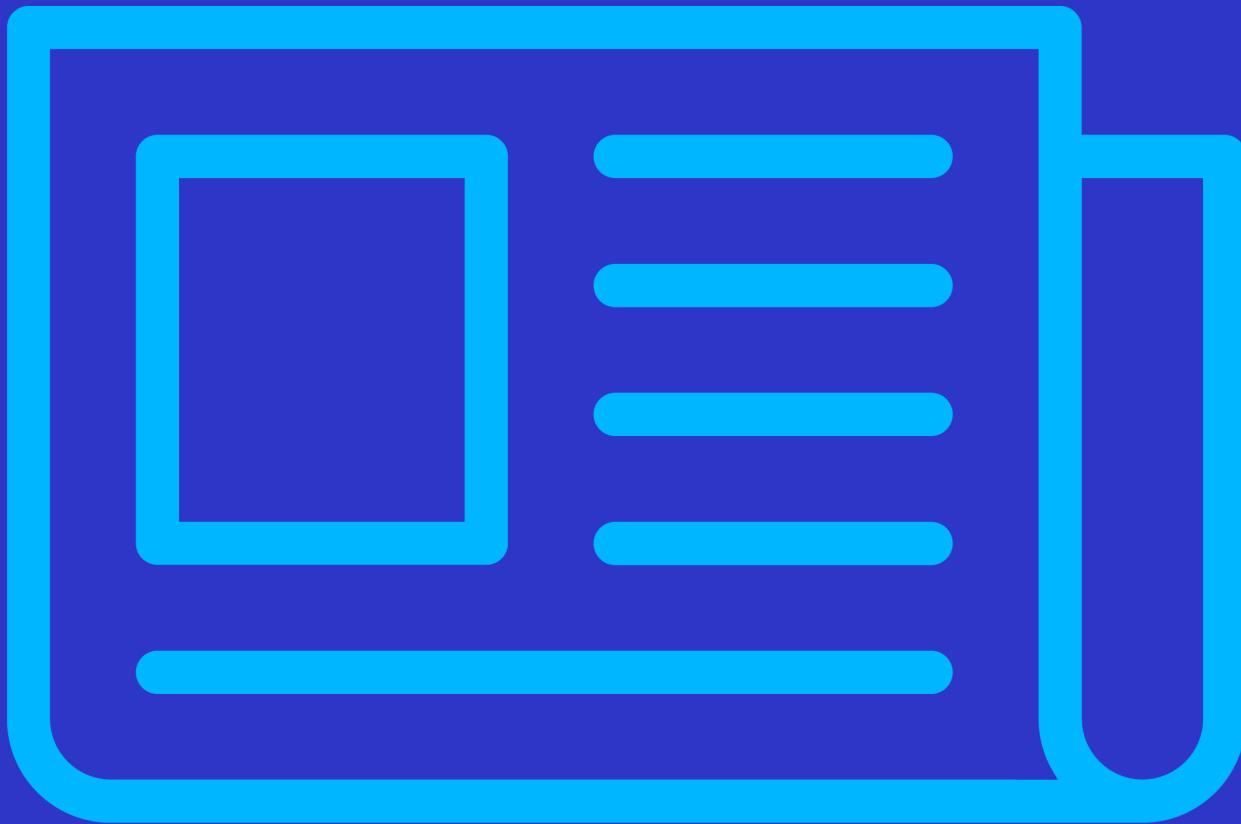
In light of this challenge, South Africa is already taking several very encouraging initial steps toward integration of mental health screening into maternal health care at the primary clinic level. These initiatives are, however, important to scale up, including sensitizing health workers to identify and handle mental disorders. mHealth solutions, for example, can bridge this gap in more remote areas, giving women access to counseling and therapy.

Community-based programs could be transformative in stigma reduction and building support. For example, peer-led support groups may offer a safe space for women to share experiences and seek advice. Educational campaigns in local languages may also fight the deleterious cultural norms that place maternal mental health last in the list of family priorities.

On the policy level, governments need to provide resources for the infrastructure in rural health, ensuring equity in the funding for mental health services. Non-profits and international organizations can also step in with collaboration from local stakeholders to implement sustainable solutions. Such initiatives might not only be applied to the benefit of South Africa but could serve as an example for other countries struggling with similar challenges.

Solution Proposed

The mental health of women, especially in rural areas, needs urgent attention. By addressing the unique challenges faced by South African women and implementing culturally tailored solutions, the country can set an example for the world. This is not a South African issue; it is a call to action for the world. Women's mental well-being is important, not just for themselves but for the future of their families and communities.



Chaos, Clashes, Coups

The Crisis Committee is a resounding success!

Bharath Sathiajith, Journalism Department



INTERNATIONAL PRESS

The fourth edition of GVMUNC took place on December 14th, in which numerous delegates from across the globe represented countries in an array of committees, tasked with seeking solutions to challenging issues. One such committee that was there was the 'Crisis Committee'—a unique format that was introduced for the first time in GVMUNC!

To the uninitiated, a crisis committee may seem chaotic and unorganized, and while it is true that it doesn't operate in an organized and structured manner like a normal committee, it can be a thrill to take part in. So what is a crisis committee? Well, it is a fast-paced committee whose agenda, the 'crisis,' is picked from the pages of history, usually a highly momentous historical incident that brought the world to a standstill. Delegates are transported back in time and put into the shoes of historical figures as they grapple to resolve this crisis by making impromptu speeches, making press releases, and issuing 'directives'—documents that dictate their course of action, which, unlike 'draft resolutions,' are introduced any time during committee sessions. Other than that, anything is fair game: war, coups, and assassinations galore! That's the thrill of a crisis committee.

The crisis committee in GVMUNC IV, suffice to say, met every expectation one could have had. With an agenda like the Cuban Missile Crisis, it was bound to be dramatic and thrilling. Filled with fiery speeches, high-stakes negotiations, and even a coup. The Cuban Missile Crisis was a crucial incident during the Cold War that brought the world closer to nuclear war than ever before in our history. It was a 13-day confrontation that took place in October 1962 between the superpowers of the US and the USSR, when the deployment of American nuclear missiles in Italy and Turkey was met with similar deployments of nuclear missiles to Cuba by the USSR.



INTERNATIONAL PRESS

Delegates had to walk the tightrope of international diplomacy as they were expected to avoid total global nuclear annihilation and secure peace. It was rather interesting to observe the delegates agree, for the most part, that the Soviet deployment of missiles was, in fact, an act of self-defense by the USSR in response to the US deployment. This sentiment was not only shared by the Eastern Bloc nations (nations belonging to the Soviet sphere of influence) but also by other non-aligned and western nations. One thing was clear: many countries—regardless of whether they belonged to the West, East, or Non-Aligned camps—agreed that peace was necessary and adopted a neutral stance to prevent further escalation.

Ultimately, after numerous rounds of difficult discussions, chaos, and going back and forth regarding the specifics, peace was at last secured as the Non-Aligned Movement bloc, to which most nations belonged, passed their Joint Directive. It was quite interesting to see the delegates chart their own path and handle this crisis in a way different from what actually unfolded, yet diplomatically savvy and tactful. All in all, it was a great experience and, without a doubt, a joy for all the delegates that participated.

*—by Bharath Sathiajith
Reporter, International Press
Journalism Director*



GVMUNC V REGISTER NOW

Sign up for the next **GVMUN** conference, held on March 2nd from **7:30 AM to 3:00 PM** Eastern Standard Time (EST).

The **fifth** Global Virtual Model United Nations Conference will feature **two committees**:

- **United Nations Office of Outer Space Affairs - Beginner**
 - **Topic A:** Addressing Space Militarization to Promote the Peaceful Usage of Outer Space
 - **Topic B:** Regulating the Commercialization of Space Resources
- **9/11 Crisis Committee - Advanced**
 - Historical crisis committee simulating the 9/11 Attacks of 2001.

GVMUNC V will also feature our signature **training sessions**, with more information to come soon.

Register now at

<https://mymun.com/conferences/gvmunc-v-2025>



GVMUNEC II REGISTER NOW

Calling All Aspiring Writers and Changemakers!

Are you ready to share your ideas on global policymaking and share your vision with the world? GVMUN is proud to launch the **Global Virtual Model United Nations Essay Competition II** (GVMUNEC II)—an exciting opportunity to showcase your ideas on pressing international issues. Take a look at the topics on mymun.com.

Submit a 600–800 word essay that sparks meaningful change and inspires global dialogue. Deadline to submit is December 31, 2024.

Why Enter?

- Receive recognition and awards for your ideas.
- Get featured on GVMUN's social media platforms.
- Become a GVMUN Ambassador and join our team of leaders shaping the future.

Register now at

<https://mymun.com/conferences/gvmunec-2024>



GVMUNITE REGISTER NOW

Register for the inaugural Global Virtual Model United Nations International Trivia Event (GVMUNITE), held on March 15th.

Compete in various trivia events, receive recognition, and become part of a growing community!

Sign up now at <https://mymun.com/conferences/gvmunite-2025>

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