

PacificMUN 2017

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

Backgrounder Guide

Topic B: Amnesty for Criminals



PacificMUN 2017

Dare to Speak | February 24-26 2017

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Brandon Zhou and it is my distinct pleasure to be directing the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) this year at PacificMUN 2017. I am currently in Grade 11 at St. George's School and have been involved in MUN for several years. Model United Nations has shaped my perspective of the world, allowing for critical analysis of global issues. Outside of MUN, I am involved in volunteering, debate, and music.

As a specialized agency, the UNODC will deal with two highly controversial issues that are pertinent on the international stage. With a variety of levels of delegates, I seek to create an experience that allows all skill levels to prosper. My goal is to make this committee not only relevant to the events that take place in the world today, but also to deliver a committee that features stimulating and insightful debate.

The two topics I have chosen this year present delegates with a dimensional outlook on the world of drugs and crime, with a focus on the legalization of drugs and the granting of amnesty to criminals. These topics will allow delegates to learn more about the issues at hand and the role of different countries from an unfamiliar perspective. While many countries may have distinct views on certain problems, the final goal of diplomacy and resolution is the light at the end of the tunnel. I feel that these two topics adequately sum up our interaction and prevention of the illicit drug trade and with the continuation and strengthening of human rights.

I hope you enjoy your journey through these topics and are well equipped for the upcoming conference. I am excited to see you all in February and look forward to getting to know all the delegates, whether it is your first or fifth conference. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, or speak with any of the Dais.

Having said this, welcome to the UNODC at PacificMUN 2017!

Sincerely,

Brandon Zhou UNODC Director | PacificMUN 2017 Since 1997, through a merger of the United Nations Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has become a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime. The UNODC operates in numerous field offices located around the world where it is mandated to help member states in the fight against drugs, crime, and terrorism. Employing around 2000 people worldwide and with its headquarters in Vienna, Austria, the office also has two liaison offices located in Brussels and New York City. With an estimated biannual budget of US\$700 million in the 2016-2017 year and no military force, the UNODC relies heavily on support from member countries for funding.

In the Millennium Declaration, one of the goals of the UNODC was to strengthen attempts of fighting transnational and international crime, along with countering the world drug problem. The UNODC's work programme can be summarized in its three pillars.

First, they work to counteract illicit drugs and crime through field-based technical cooperation projects in member countries which overall allow member states to better contribute against the flow of crime and drugs. Second, to broaden our knowledge base and understanding of these issues based on research, analytical work, and evidence based study of implemented policies. Lastly, this office strives to assist states in the ratification and implementation of international treaties regarding the control of crime and drugs through both international and domestic legislation.

The main goals of the UNODC are to help better equip governments to handle crime and drug related issues in the long run while mitigating existing problems in the short term. In the pursuit of these objectives, the UNODC looks particularly at the problems surrounding and stemming from these issues such as human trafficking and the ability of alternative livelihoods for those countries and citizens reliant on drugs. Some of the main themes the UNODC deals with include corruption, criminal justice, drug prevention, and alternate development.

An amnesty is given as a legal measure designed to prospectively bar criminal prosecution and in some cases, legal action, toward individuals for previous crimes they have committed. It is granted in order to retroactively nullify legal liability previously established. However, it does not prevent the legal liability of crimes and conduct in the future and in actions that have not yet happened. Although granting amnesty has often produced favourable outcomes for all parties involved, it nevertheless remains a controversial option for settling dispute on multiple bases, such as in cases that affect a country's political or international image.

As the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), we are responsible for the controls and limits to crimes, especially ones that have a profound impact on the international community and on a broader scale. With an increased prevalence of crimes being committed where there is the prospect of amnesty being granted, a cohesive plan must be made that accommodates for the granting of amnesty in the future with highlights on the treatments of different criminals and crimes.

The resolutions brought forth in committee sessions will have clear implications on the future of crimes taking place and will go on to influence the actions of criminals, both past and prospective. In the short term, this topic and resolutions will change how countries act on the global level and affect the immediate granting of amnesty to criminals. This will impact the future of criminals where in some cases they may not be able to find protection from the implications of their crimes. In the long run, this will morph the actions of the criminals in their decision to commit crimes and the prosecution of such criminals. Amnesty for criminals will change the actions of countries which will go on to influence their global relations.

Many issues and challenges arise for the international community in implementing a solution that encompasses all the different facets of the situation. Countries must take into account their individual stances and the role they play in giving or receiving amnesty. They should also consider the effect this will have on crime in the future both across the world and specifically in their country. Some of the challenges of a resolution include the possibility of the raised prevalence of crime in the future and the alternative methods of dealing with such illegal activity.

1795	George Washington granted the first instance of amnesty in the United States for those involved in the Whiskey Rebellion.
1872	In the Amnesty Act, the Confederacy was given amnesty after the American Civil War to encourage loyalty and help toward the reconstruction of a nation. This granted certain groups of confederate citizens amnesty and the return of their property or homes.
1945	The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is established as the principal judicial forum in the United Nations with the primary role of settling legal dispute from states by giving advisory opinions and establishing legal precedence in accordance with international law.
1948	The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide prevented countries from granting amnesty to criminals who have committed the crime of genocide which placed one of the first restrictions on the crimes in which amnesty can be granted for.
1949	The Geneva Conventions were created regulating the conduct of armed conflicts such as war, in order to limit the effects of such conflicts.
1961	Founded by Peter Benenson, Amnesty International's main goal is to work toward the protection of human rights. It was also designed to provide amnesty for prisoners of conscience around the world.
1984	The Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment gave countries the obligation to criminalise and punish such crimes prohibiting the granting of amnesty for such criminals, in addition to providing countries the obligation to extradite or prosecute these individuals.
1986	The Immigration Reform and Control Act, signed by President Ronald Reagan granted temporary legal status to immigrants who have been living in the United States since 1982 and have demonstrated good morality. This act allowed immigrants to be eligible for green cards after living 18 months in the United States.
2002	The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court obligates countries to punish and prosecute crimes against humanity and other serious violations of laws and customs applicable in international armed conflict. These crimes can also never be amnestied.
2006	The Military Commissions Act gave amnesty to politicians and government officials for war crimes before the amendment. Its purpose is to "authorize trial by military commissions for violations of the law of war, and for other purposes".
May 2012	In the landmark trial of Southern African Litigation Centre and Zimbabwe Exiles Forum v. National Director of Public Prosecutions and three others, the South African High Court ruled that governments have the legal obligation, because of the Rome Statute, to pursue and prosecute suspected instances of crimes against humanity.



Amnesty for Illegal Immigrants

On the idea of immigration and the granting of amnesty to criminals such as illegal immigrants, there have been multiple overhauls in immigration law within the United States with the most recent in 1986. Specifically, Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush extended amnesty to family members, such as spouses and minor children, of immigrants who were not covered under the 1986 law overhaul. In 1986, Reagan, in partnership with the Congress, enacted a change in immigration law that gave legal status to up to 3 million previously illegal immigrants if they had came to the United States before 1982. In that case, there were complaints and protests of the new law breaking up families. In 1987, Reagan's Immigration and Naturalization Service commissioner granted amnesty to minor children of parents, allowing them to gain protection from deportation. However, in 1989 when Senate acted to broaden the legal status to families, the House never took up the bill. Similar actions are being taken today by President Barack Obama, with attempts to shield millions of immigrants from deportation. Despite similar actions by Republicans decades ago, there is much outrage by the Republican Party today.

Criminal Accountability in Individuals and Government

The concept of individual criminal accountability, one of the major aspects of granting amnesty to criminals, has been slowly changing and being developed. The 1945 military tribunal at Nuremberg and the Tokyo tribunal created precedence that individuals, including state leaders, could be held criminally accountable for their actions. This advancement of international legal concepts surrounding accountability and amnesty led to the establishment of the United Nations International Law Commissions (ILC). In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly drafted the ILC in creating a statute for a permanent international criminal court. With the Rome Statute being adopted by over 120 members of the UN, this established an international court with jurisdictions over crimes such as genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and aggression. This International Criminal Court (ICC) entered into force in July 2002. In the aftermath, this led to developments on an international level with the creation and initiation of domestic trials and truth commissions in countries like Argentina, Greece, and Portugal looking to hold their leaders criminally accountable for human rights violations. However, only a handful of state leaders have been indicted for their human rights violations before 1990 but afterwards more than 40 heads of state have been prosecuted for their human rights crimes.

In Latin and South America, there has been a long history of amnesty laws applied to crimes that would qualify as crimes against humanity or otherwise. In December 1986, the government of Uruguay passed a law known as the Law Declaring an Expiration of the State's Punitive Authority. This law granted amnesty toward acts of repression committed by the military and police officers in their previous period of dictatorship. When this law faced scrutiny and was called into question, it was revealed that sixty percent voters preferred to let the past go. Elsewhere in Brazil, an August 28th, 1979 law allowed the military leadership to cover up and ignore the crimes committed during their worst period of dictatorship.



Usage of Amnesty and the Justice System

There are a few distinct situations in which amnesties are granted. Amnesty can be granted during times of war for the government to forget criminal acts. It is often used as a tool for resolution and peace after the war has ended. On the other hand, immigration amnesty follows the historical concept of amnesty more closely. Simply put, it is the government's pardon for illegal immigration and violation of other immigration laws. Amnesty can also cover crimes committed by individuals for the betterment of society where they are in danger of being unlawfully prosecuted and/or incarcerated. However, there are other instances where amnesty cannot or should not be granted by countries, namely for crimes such as torture, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other gross human rights violations.

Amnesty is often useful when trials are impossible by helping reclaim the truth about past mistakes and aid individual victims or society in general to move forward through remedy and reparations. In many cases, amnesties allow nations to forgive and forget about atrocities of the past and move positively towards the future. For instance, President Lincoln and Johnson granted amnesty to the Confederate soldiers after the American Civil War in order to promote the wellbeing of a nation. Amnesty has also proven to be effective when used to persuade dictatorial regimes to give up power, as it encourages them to leave without being burdened or targeted for retributive action later. Ultimately, when effectively granted, amnesties are a way of bringing conflicts to a close, healing past wounds, and advancing towards reconciliation.

However, when serious violations of the law have been committed on a massive scale, the idea of remedial actions is not always easily nor widely accepted. On a fundamental level, critics argue that amnesties are a miscarriage of justice; pardoning serious offenders of the law from their crimes is not how one should fortify a judicial system. What is more, granting amnesty has been considered abuse of international law, such as the Geneva Conventions, which state that perpetrators of crimes must be prosecuted. Furthermore, in terms of amnesty for illegal immigrants, critics argue that the government is ignoring those who have gone through the proper, tedious process of immigration and providing favouritism to criminals. This would only act as a gesture of encouragement for similar crimes to take place in the future.

Political Prisoners in the Philippines

Currently, in the Philippines presumptive President Rodrigo Duterte, from the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), is set to grant amnesty to all political prisoners in an attempt to end a four-decade long communist insurgency. The chairperson of the NDFP, Luis Jalandoni, welcomes Duterte's gesture: "[I am glad that President-elect Duterte has decided to grant general amnesty to release political prisoners]". In this situation, there are currently 543 political prisoners, with a total of 88 who are sick and elderly. Due to the previous government's refusal to free these prisoners, peace negotiations had failed in 2011. It has been stated that the previous Aquino administration has violated the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) and the Hernandez Political Doctrine which outlines the filing of criminal charges

against political prisoners. Political analysts believe that this move by the government, a first in the Philippines, will bring the country toward better terms with its political prisoners and the Communist party.

Amnesty for Human Rights Violations and War Criminals

On the other side of the globe in Nepal, petitions have been written protesting the amnesty that would be granted to individuals who have violated international law by the government of Nepal. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) bill introduced in early April 2016 contradicts decisions made by the Nepali Supreme Court and does not meet the international legal standards for dealing with people who committed crimes against humanity and for supporting the victims of such actions. Examples of crimes that would be pardoned under this bill include murder, abduction, rape, forced evictions, and torture.

In the Middle East, on November 17, 2012, the chairman of the Afghanistan's High Peace Council, Salahuddin Rabbani, told journalist that Taliban officials who join peace negotiations with the Afghan government would receive immunity from prosecution and have their names removed from the UN sanctions. However, the Asia director of the Human Rights Watch, Brad Adams, has noted that "future government talks with the Taliban should not hinge upon denying justice to victims of war crimes and other abuses" and that justice and peace should be complementary rather than mutually exclusive. While it has been made clear that providing immunity from prosecution for certain crimes, such as human rights abuses, violates international law, and this is stated in a plethora of international treaties and regulations, Afghanistan has had a troubling history of providing amnesty for war crimes. For example, in 2007 a coalition of warlords in conjunction with the parliament were able to pass the National Stability and Reconciliation Law which protected individuals responsible for human rights abuses from prosecution and took away their liability. Despite having previously pledged not to sign the National Stability and Reconciliation Law, President Hamid Karzai quietly allowed the law to be passed and realized. These actions however, were allowed by the international community to pass through unremarked setting the precedence of other countries turning a blind eye.

In Uganda, the issue of granting amnesty to war criminals reveals two possible thought processes, one that encourages other rebels to surrender by letting them go, contrasted by their prosecution in order to preserve accountability and justice. When the Ugandan army captured the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) commander, Caesar Acellam Otto, on May 12, 2012, they were at a crossroads of what to do next. Being responsible for the "most egregious violations committed against children in the central African region", according to Radhika Coomaraswam, special representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, he hopes that Ugandan authorities would not apply amnesty, instead bringing him to justice. Uganda's 2000 Amnesty Act provides amnesty for LRA rebel combatants who abandon the group and decline to get involved in the war. Since the passing of this Act, around 13,000 LRA combatants have been granted amnesty, according to the Amnesty Commission. This example of a blanket amnesty has been criticized within the Ugandan cabinet. Ruhakana Rugunda, the Ugandan minister for information, communication, and technology, believes that the person in question should

be judged on merit through a clearer examination before being allowed amnesty by the government. Since many previous combatants who have been captured were given amnesty, Acellam is not afraid of the consequences of his actions due to the set precedence. Others in regions affected more greatly by Acellam's actions, and lawyers from around the world, firmly believe that criminals and LRA commanders should be punished for the crimes and atrocities he committed, especially in this particular case since Accelam was the chief of military intelligence. The Amnesty Act undermines efforts of accountability for war crimes and actions taken in times of war. On the contrary, other leaders and analysts favour amnesty because of the incentive for other rebels to surrender as well as the intelligence that can be gained from those who renounce the rebellion. Norbert Mao, a Ugandan politician and lawyer, claims that the option of amnesty has more benefits because the capture of Acellam weakens the LRA, making them more vulnerable.



Figure 1: Commander of the LRA, Acellam Otto seeks amnesty after being captured by the Ugandan government.

Case in South Africa

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission grants amnesty to individuals rather than entire classes or groups of people, a different approach than that of countries around the world. However, the main criteria for this amnesty are to make a full disclosure of the crimes they were involved in the past and to demonstrate the political motives of their crime. With this process in place, only a small percentage of the thousands who apply actually receive amnesty.

¹ Source: http://www.biyokulule.com/admin/pictures/4795.jpg



Previous Legislation and Regulation

The United Nations' current and past involvement in the issue of granting amnesty to criminals is done through writing, regulations, and direct action. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights' (UNCHR) *Principles for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights through Action to Combat Impunity* outlines the UN's stance toward the granting of amnesty. Principle 18 states that the impunity of certain crimes comes from the State's failure to meet their obligation to investigate into violations in order to ensure that criminals are prosecuted, tried, and duly punished. Through this method, victims will be provided with remedies and reparation for the injuries they suffered and future recurrences will be mitigated. Toward the application of impunity on crimes, "safeguards must be introduced against any abuse...pertaining to prescription, amnesty, right to asylum, refusal to extradite, etc". All in all, the Commission does not wish to deprive individuals of the right to an effective remedy, in the form of compensation, rehabilitation, or otherwise.

The International Criminal Court and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, both of which are part of or have worked with the United Nations, have rejected the possibility of crimes such as genocide. These actions show the UN's role in denying amnesty for certain crimes.

Part of the Charter of the UNODC and the UN is work in the prevention of crime, criminal justice, and the promotion and protection of human rights. Strategies for crime prevention must take a human rights approach and be based on the rule of law. A similar approach is taken by the UN when considering instances of amnesty being granted to individuals and larger groups of people.

Rome Statute and the ICC

On paper, while the Rome Statute's main objective is to end impunity for serious international crimes, there are several exceptions that are given that allow for amnesty to be granted and recognized by the international community and court. In the International Criminal Court (ICC), if it is deemed that a country has jurisdiction over the case following investigation or that there is no reasonable basis for prosecution found, any granted amnesty will be recognized. Furthermore, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has the ability to defer proceedings for a certain crime for 12 months; the deferral and de facto recognition of amnesty is only temporary.



Figure 2: Judges in the ICC are selected from different countries around the world.

Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organizations

The United Nations has also partnered and worked with other non-governmental organizations that have a focus on amnesty or human rights, such as Amnesty International. Amnesty International started over 50 years ago in 1961 when British lawyer Peter Benenson launched a campaign in support for jailed Portuguese students. This organization has now grown to open regional offices in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. In 1978, it won the United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights. Amnesty International deals with multiple key areas, most notable the rights of prisoners of conscience and the protection of human dignity. With a focus on justice, truth, and reparation, Amnesty International has worked with the United Nations in campaigning for an ICC promoting the concept of universal jurisdiction where someone accused of a crime can be tried anywhere in the world, and the establishment of Ad Hoc international courts such as those in Cambodia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone.

² Source: http://ichef.bbci.co.uk/news/660/media/images/82054000/jpg/_82054242_82053641.jpg

Currently the main problem in the granting of amnesty for criminals is in the lack of clarity surrounding the rules and situations in which this could be done. Another issue that must be dealt with is the treatment of victims who are affected by the crimes of those given amnesty and the work that must be done to achieve justice and reveal the truth.

A solution that will adequately tackle the issue of amnesty for criminals will have a large focus on uncovering the truth behind crimes through a thorough investigation of the case. This will provide criminals with an incentive in the future to give themselves up in exchange for amnesty. However, it has been shown in the case of Uganda that this can have dangerous repercussions since it takes away the accountability of criminals and allows them to go free despite the crimes they have committed. An alternative solution would involve a conditional amnesty given depending on the nature and information provided about the case. Whether the resolution to this problem supports a blanket or selective amnesty, it must prevent the occurrence of future crimes.

On the other hand, support and proper reparations must be given to the victims of such crimes, ensuring that they are not forgotten and left behind in the system. Even when amnesty is granted to the criminals and their legal liability is taken away, a possible solution would be to hold them accountable for their own actions in terms of its effect on their victims in the short and long run. It is up to delegates in their resolution to create structures that deal with the victims of those crimes whose perpetrators have been amnestied. Similarly, a resolution would look at the support given to criminals helping them reintegrate into society in the future and becoming productive citizens, in some cases. The resources that are given and dedicated to these victims and criminals should not take away from the justice system or the process of prosecuting such offenders. Because of the uncertainty surrounding international and victim reactions toward amnesties, it can be dangerous for a country's image and the sentiment of victims when certain criminals are granted amnesty despite the severity of their crimes. Care must be taken to look at the potential impacts of amnesties in order to balance the possibly negative consequences.

On the executive level, the international community must observe international recognition of the issue and its solutions, along with their adherence to the rules and regulations. A clear and concise outline should be created that summarizes the instances where amnesty should be granted, the individuals who can be amnestied, and the crimes that amnesty could be granted. A comprehensive process to grant amnesty could be established to ensure the validity and recognition of certain amnesties in different countries and courts. Without this structure, it is extremely hard to effectively prosecute or pardon criminals internationally causing much confusion.

At the end of the day, the final solution should be one that balances the benefits and risks for both victims and criminals therefore creating a system of amnesty that is valid across the world where all countries can agree and follow the regulations.



Countries with Unstable Governments and Weak Justice Systems

Although these countries may be keen on solving the issues surrounding the granting of amnesty for criminals, they have unstable and frequently changing governments that result in a weak justice system. As a result of these conditions, they are often unable to provide the necessary resources for the investigation, prosecution, and amnesty of criminals. They seek to be productive members of the resolution but require the help of other nations in order to gain the support system vital in granting amnesties. While these nations are largely impartial about the instances of when to grant amnesty, they support the rights of the victims in achieving the proper reparations and the reconciliation of previous actions.

Countries with Large Scale Crimes and Human Rights Violations

With many large-scale crimes such as human rights violations and war crimes rampant in these countries, they are often quick to grant amnesty to countries in hopes of stopping future and further crimes. Countries like Uganda may also already have a procedure for granting amnesty in place, but overall, they are in favour of granting blanket amnesties to criminals that cover whole groups of people.

Countries with Small Scale Criminals and Crimes

Despite there being a larger number of criminal incidences in these countries, most of the crimes are small in nature and do not have as large repercussions. As a result, these countries are impartial on whether to grant amnesty to criminals and much of their decision depends on the specific case investigation and the criminal in question. For some of these countries, such as South Africa, their amnesty may be conditional on multiple levels. For example, amnesty may only be granted if the truth about their crime is uncovered and surrendered. In other cases, criminals may be forced to distance and detach themselves from a particular resistance or rebel force. These countries favour an approach that deals with amnesty on a case-by-case basis and frowns upon the creation of blanket amnesties.

Countries that have Committed War Crimes

Being countries that have committed war crimes in the past, such as Latin and South American countries, there is already a precedence set in the past about granting amnesty to criminals, especially if they were members of the government. These countries are in favour of granting government figures, such as Presidents, and the police force amnesty for their crimes committed during war periods. However, they are against the giving of amnesty for crimes outside of war and to criminals outside of the reigning government.

Countries with Western Beliefs

In North America and much of Western Europe, countries look to hold all members of society accountable for their crimes, including criminals previously part of the government. Unlike other countries, they are strictly against the granting of amnesty to criminals and firmly believe in holding members of society responsible for their actions.

- 1. In which instances are amnesty acceptable to be given? How should these situations be determined and who should they be determined by?
- 2. What type of regulation should be created and monitored in order to create amnesty that is transferable across countries and courts? Is it possible to make amnesty granted by one country valid for others, if so, how can this be done?
- 3. What are the benefits and downfalls of a blanket amnesty compared to a specific amnesty? Which one should be adopted?
- 4. How is amnesty different when granted to government officials, war criminals, and other criminals? When should they be granted and not be granted?
- 5. How can a balance be struck between holding criminals responsible to their actions and granting them amnesty? Do the benefits of amnesty outweigh the accountability of criminals?
- 6. If amnesty is given, how will the criminals contribute to the lowering of crime rates and the truth? How will the victims of the crime be compensated?
- 7. Do smaller and larger crimes require different treatment in terms of the granting of amnesty? How does this differ?
- 8. What kind of method will there be to create a transparent and corruption-free way of granting amnesty in which the government, victims, and criminals benefit, and to ensure the integrity of the court remains intact?

More Information About Denial of Amnesty in Afghanistan https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/11/25/afghanistan-no-amnesty-taliban-crimes

History of the ICC and Individual Criminal Accountability http://humanrightshistory.umich.edu/accountability/

Additional Information and History of Amnesty www.redress.org/downloads/Amnesty-law---International-Standards.doc

Supreme Court Ruling on South African Case Regarding Amnesty https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/03/south-africa-supreme-court-ruling-shows-there-can-be-no-impunity-for-alleged-war-criminals/

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