



HUMUN IV



STUDYGUIDE

SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN, AND
CULTURAL COMMITTEE



MAHAD AKBAR

SECRETARY GENERAL

Greetings Delegates,

My name is Mahad Akbar, and I am honored to welcome you all as the Secretary-General of HUMUN IV. This conference has meant a lot to me, and to a lot of other people who have been involved with it. In the past three editions, I have gone from an ACD, to a USG to becoming Secretary-General and I have come to cherish every single one of those experiences. HUMUN is a place where having actually productive conversations is prioritized above all else. I hope that you spend your time here, actually trying to learn, grow and become better equipped to live in a world that needs critical thought. Our commitment to making this conference about more than just winning is not a gimmick, we take a lot of pride in ensuring that all of you gain something from your committees. The most valuable thing you can take away from this conference is not a trophy, it's the ability to look back on your time here and remember actually having learned something. The majority of our current EC have been where you are now, I think that fact alone speaks volumes to the kind of impact this conference has on people. My only request to you is to respect yourself and the people around you. Don't be afraid to ask for help, and don't make anyone feel worse if they need help.

Best,
Mahad Akbar
Secretary-General,
HUMUN IV.



HAFSA KHURRAM

UNDER-SECRETARY GENERAL

Dear Delegates,

I am a sophomore at Habib University's Dhananji School of Sciences, majoring in Computer Science. It is my honor to be serving as Under-Secretary-General at this year's edition of HUMUN for SOCHUM and PNA.

The world as we inherit it is plagued with problems and potential, with humanity striving to solve the former and exploit the latter. But the global community as we know it coming from all corners of the world across lines they once wrote fables about crossing, disagrees on how to approach both of these. It is the art of diplomacy that helps us to reach a consensus on these and to understand each other when we don't, we have seen with unanimous goals like SDGs, etc that a lot of what humanity wants to achieve is similar if not the same. At HUMUN this year we hope that you witness and learn the art of diplomacy to be implemented not only within your future roles as leaders but also within your current roles as students of the world.

I hope you have a great time at HUMUN both learning and practicing new skills. I look forward to seeing you at the conference with good research and positive attitudes.

Looking forward to an amazing conference,

Hafsa Khurram
Under-Secretary-General



MESSAGE FROM THE COMMITTEE DIRECTOR



QAZI TALHA

COMMITTEE DIRECTOR

Dear delegates,

It is my absolute honor to welcome you all to the fourth iteration of Habib University Model United Nations. This year, one of the biggest themes of HUMUN IV is to maintain equity in all realms of life. And we are just not referring to gender equity. By equity, we understand that some of us require more facilities and resources than others to thrive in a world laced with systemic inequalities. Such individuals are historically, socially, and economically disadvantaged. We live in times that are characterized by the COVID-19 pandemic. And the need for equitable measures has never been as dire as today. Our generation faces challenges that are profoundly new to us, and it is incredible how we have adapted to the new age.

It was only fitting that this year, SOCHUM encompasses the two key humanitarian issues that are integral to mark the end of a decade and to start a new one. Vaccine equity and inequality is the fundamental, inalienable human right of every individual, regardless of their geographical presence. Inaccessibility to the vaccine is an irrefutable obstacle in overcoming the socio-economic implications of the pandemic. Another obstacle in this regard was the systemic spread of misinformation regarding the pandemic and the use of the vaccine. Thus, the committee staff for SOCHUM conceptualized the issue of press suppression and freedom in a much broader and holistic concept.

In all fairness, this year's SOCHUM is also a platform for all of you to understand the issues with an equitable lens. And one part of incorporating equity into our debates is acknowledging the privilege that comes from standing in SOCHUM as a vaccinated individual. Moreover, research well. Do your country justice. Understand that despite categorizing the developing countries in one umbrella term, the challenges are unique and non-uniform. Progress your debate with feasible equitable solutions and not just emotional rhetoric's. Trust me; it is long due now.

All the best!
Regards,
Qazi Talha



MESSAGE FROM THE COMMITTEE DIRECTOR



HAFSA KHURRAM

COMMITTEE DIRECTOR

Hello Delegates,

I am a CS sophomore at Habib University and will be joining you all at HUMUN IV as a committee director. My journey with MUNs started at HUMUN, as my first official MUN I attended, so it was only natural that a lot of my MUN philosophies were similar to those HUMUN has a legacy of upholding.

At SOCHUM my hope is that all delegates actively participate in discussions and reflect on every contribution within the discourse. The topics for the committee are such that have affected the global community within the past years, the effects of which we have all seen within our lives in some capacity. With a vaccine, inequality gives rise to newer variants of COVID while also resulting in a spike of death rates actively affecting the most vulnerable of our communities. With misinformation campaigns on the rise government officials and the public at large are thinking critically again of the role the press plays within our lives and democracies. Our goal is for delegates not only to be active problem-solvers but for them to also appreciate the beauty and power of diplomacy when it comes to solving these great global questions.

While good speeches and standing for your own stances is the crux of any good committee this year at SOCHUM we are looking for good diplomats. Those who actively look out for the greater good of the international community while simultaneously being true to their stances. I hope you all have fun while doing that!

Regards
Hafsa Khurram



MESSAGE FROM THE COMMITTEE DIRECTOR



ILMA EVA

COMMITTEE DIRECTOR

Hello! I'm Ilma Eva, I love conversations about absolutely everything but especially art. I have been in the debating circuit since 2015, since then some of my notable achievements have been 2 time Best Delegate at LUMUN, Nationally ranked Parliamentary Urdu Speaker and a few things here and there hehe. I am currently the public speaking coach at Beaconhouse defence and college campus and one of the closest causes to my heart is making public speaking an accessible skill safe, inclusive and equally representable of all genders, ethnicities and races. For that, I offer free of cost public speaking training to low-income background females/trans folk of Pakistan. The way you treat others around you matters to me far more than how much research you have, so if you're on my committee, be kind above everything else. I have 0 tolerance for toxicity or unkind behaviors of any type.



COMMITTEE OVERVIEW & MANDATE

ASSISTANT COMMITTEE DIRECTORS

**ALI ARIF
UZAIR RAFIQ**

The Social Cultural and Humanitarian committee is the third committee of the United Nations General assembly; as with other committees of the General assemblies, the resolutions passed within SOCHUM are not binding. This means that the 193 member states of the General Assembly take the resolutions as recommendations; however, this does not mean that SOCHUM does not play a critical role at the Global stage.

The committee, since its inception in 1945, has tackled various global issues, including but not limited to the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the right to self-determination. The committee also addresses the important social developments globally due to its broad agenda; the committee can work on several issues within these developments. SOCHUM has also contributed broadly towards the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by all United Nations member states under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015.

While the Social Development Goals are universally applicable within these past years amidst a global pandemic and several lockdowns, the global inequality has become more apparent to both the world and the United Nations. The global crisis was intensified largely due to underlying humanitarian crises like vaccine inequity and limited press freedom. Within this committee session, both these topics will be discussed in light of recent developments like the COVID 19 pandemic and the rise of private social media companies.



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TOPIC A: VACCINATION EQUITY AND RIGHTS IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES

■ Definitions

Before proceeding with the topic, we must understand some key terms to get a more nuanced understanding of the topic.

Vaccines: A preparation is used to stimulate the body's immune response against diseases. Vaccines are usually administered through needle injections, but some can be administered by mouth or sprayed into the nose. Within the context of this study, guide vaccines are a reference to the vaccines used for COVID 19, and vaccination refers to the process of distributing such vaccines and administering them.

Developing World: The developing world usually refers to countries with lower GDPs, high mortality rates, and generally speaking, a lower standard of living.

Private entities: Private entities usually refer to organizations, companies, or groups owned by private persons i.e. not the government. These entities may or may not operate for profit and are not directly controlled by the government.

International Public health: International public health, also sometimes referred to as Global Public Health, is the concept of facing health challenges on a global level. The concept is rooted in the fact that with globalization, a health crisis on one side of the world could have economic, social and health impacts on the other side of the world.

■ Historical Background

The last two years have transformed the globe economically, socially, and politically, simultaneously wreaking havoc and highlighting as well as exaggerating pre-existing problems within these domains. The global uncertainty and despair caused due to the COVID-19 virus resulted in a race to develop vaccines to counter its rapid and growing effects.

Multiple countries and private entities were able to develop vaccines over time, but after this hurdle, how will these vaccines be distributed globally? A huge factor within the solution was the nationalistic and diplomatic elements of the problem, with the scientific approach usually kept as an understudy. This approach, especially when held by important officials and elected representatives, have consequently contributed to a global vaccine divide whereby this divide has contributed to multiple variants of COVID 19 being produced (Smith, 2021).

Unlike the successful development of the COVID-19 vaccines worldwide, the production and distribution were a disappointment, as the distribution of the vaccines was unequal and catered largely for the populations of first-world countries. Furthermore, the capital costs to produce vaccines and handle the cold-chain aspects of vaccines are more expensive in third-world countries; thus, vaccine distribution would require substantial infrastructure development before being administered. The prioritization of national borders rather than taking a global approach resulted in first-world countries being vaccinated at much higher rates than third-world countries, festered the mutation of the virus into different variants.

The figures by August 2021 illustrate the situation quantitatively, where out of 4 billion doses administered worldwide, 84% of all doses that have been administered so far have all gone to people in high and upper-middle-income countries ("'Absolutely Unacceptable' COVID-19 Vaccination Rates In Developing Countries | The Development Podcast", 2021). This vivid bifurcation across the income groups of countries is extremely undesirable due to the aforementioned reasons.

Surprisingly enough, in 2010, the Swine Flu pandemic was tackled expertly with the help of the "WHO Pandemic Influenza a (H1N1) Vaccine Deployment Initiative", which focused on taking immediate action, mobilizing the right stakeholders, and coordinating global support of governments, foundations and manufactures in facilitating access to vaccines. The failure to replicate this cogent response for the COVID-19 pandemic was due to the sheer magnitude of the pandemic compared to the Swine Flu pandemic; however, this response and collaboration provide a perfect microcosm of what should be done in tackling pandemics (World Health Organization, n.d.).

With the World Health Organization (WHO) being a specialized agency within the United Nations directly responsible for international public health, it is imperative to collectively understand and discover where the improvements need to be made to conjure a competent response in the future.

The Root of the Problem

Achieving vaccine equity requires the achievement of the global goal of vaccinating 70% of the entire world's population equally. Unfortunately, vaccine access is not equal across the world, where it is observed that vaccines are widely available in developed countries compared to developing countries. Vaccine inequality was a prospect that was expected to be faced during this pandemic, which is why global programs such as the GAVI COVAX facility had been planned and implemented far before vaccines were even produced; this was a well-oiled, well-funded facility made to tackle this precise vaccine inequality. Unfortunately, the COVAX facility has not been successful in achieving its targets, although the problem with COVAX is quite likely the external actors.

To understand why the GAVI COVAX facility has failed to address vaccine inequality, we must shed light on the donors to this facility. The WHO's Covid-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility (COVAX) was set up to ensure that the developing countries would be able to get a fair share of the vaccine by distributing it on the basis of global population. Disappointingly, the US did not join. With a population of 328m, the US has already ordered 100m doses with plans to acquire 500m more. Even those wealthy nations that did join COVAX are free to have bilateral deals with vaccine producers.

The USA has lavishly funded and promoted the GAVI COVAX facility to allow equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, yet quite contradicting, the United States has also separately funded and ear-marked vaccines being produced by manufacturers, which makes it so that the GAVI COVAX vaccines are only available after most of the United States of America has received its two doses. While the USA has been singled out in this passage, the rest of the developed countries are no different in exacerbating vaccine inequality through policy actions that do not align with their support for facilities such as the GAVI COVAX facility, thus making it critical to address this predicament (Smith, 2021).

Moreover, wealthy nations have also refused to waive the intellectual property rights so that vaccines can be manufactured elsewhere; this is driven by keeping stakeholders such as the private pharmaceutical industries satisfied. Economists argue that a free vaccine cannot be provided as it violates intellectual property rights. IPR like patents and trademarks are said to provide the correct set of incentives for research and development of new technologies. A strong IPR regime is also considered a necessary foundation for efficient markets. Economists, however, have also long recognized "public goods" which are a special class of goods that benefit everyone. Generally, people cannot be excluded from enjoying a public good like clean air or a public park. For this reason, public goods are provided by the state as markets often undersupply public goods. Social and political decisions influence which vaccines become public goods. Life-saving vaccines have not always been hidden behind patents. Jonas Salk's polio vaccine was never patented. Moreover, 110 countries around the world produce the flu vaccine that is funded almost entirely by governments. In the case of the Covid-19 vaccine, there is an urgent need for identifying policies for ensuring fair access for developing countries.

Moreover, wealthy nations have truly neglected the act of collaboration and decided to exercise their buying power in terms of vaccine procurement, such as Canada, which have ordered enough vaccines to inoculate its entire population four times (Rastello and Bolongaro, 2020). These sorts of instances push countries without the buying power to the back of the vaccine lines, while wealthy nations deal with situations where procured vaccines end up expiring due to an overload of vaccines (Chesak, 2021). Unsurprisingly, the overload of vaccines is a very rare sight, yet the dominant reason why millions of vaccines are going to waste around the world is vaccine hesitancy. Vaccine hesitancy is a major challenge that must also be dealt with to ensure the inoculation of vaccines worldwide.

Ensuring vaccine equity would require a major shift in policy actions taken by the wealthy nations and improving the collaboration between countries in implementing a global vaccination drive rather than a “free for all” vaccination drive in each country.

■ Case Study

There are exceptions to the case of developing nations. These countries can be looked up as models for the world to follow and take ideas from in the fight against the global pandemic. Cuba is one such country that is doing remarkably well, having a vaccination rate that is higher than most developing nations. A key to its success has been the development of its own vaccine, which was majorly possible through investments in the past in the biotech sector. Below are further details of Cuba’s incredible achievement.

This country that struggles to keep the lights on, has vaccinated more of its citizens against Covid-19 than any of the world’s major nations. More than 90% of the population has been vaccinated with at least one dose of Cuba’s homegrown vaccines, while 83% have been fully inoculated. Of countries with populations of over a million, only the United Arab Emirates has a stronger vaccination record. Cuba, with only 11 million people, and limited income and resources has managed to not only create its own vaccines but effectively disseminate them.

Like most Latin American countries, Cuba knew it would struggle to buy vaccines on the international market. So in March 2020, with foreign exchange reserves plummeting due to the loss of tourism revenue and ferocious new US sanctions, the island’s scientists got to work.

The gamble paid off: this spring Cuba became the smallest country in the world to successfully develop and produce its own Covid vaccines. Since then its well-staffed, if dilapidating universal health service, has rolled out injections at a fast clip, inoculating even young children (all vaccination on the island is voluntary).

Both vaccines are over 90% effective, according to Cuban-run clinical trials conducted last spring. Successful rollout has brought infection rates down from among the highest in the western hemisphere last summer to low levels today. Last August the island reported hundreds of Covid deaths per week; last week there were three. After registering less than 100 cases a day for weeks, infection rates are now rising due to the highly contagious Omicron variant. Cuban scientists have not released data on the efficacy of their vaccines against Omicron but have begun work to update their vaccine against the variant. In the meantime, the Cuban ministry of public health has fast-tracked its booster campaign, and aims to give almost the entire population an extra shot of vaccine this month.

The vaccine success is all the more striking when set against the state of the healthcare service in other areas. With hard currency inflows cut in half over the last two years, antibiotics are now so scarce that 20 pills of amoxicillin trade on the black market for the equivalent of a month's minimum state salary. Out of plaster cast, doctors in some provinces now resort to wrapping broken bones in used cardboard. These circumstances prove that developing countries, even in poor economic conditions have the capacity to vaccinate their population properly.

Past UN Actions

Solidarity Response Fund: (March 13 2020)

WHO, UN Foundation and partners have launched COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund to raise money to address immediate health needs. The fund supports the work of WHO and partners to help countries respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, raising over \$150 million so far, as part of over \$800 million WHO has raised in total.

Donations received through the fund will go towards activities such as:

- Suppress transmission through public health and social measures, including detecting and testing cases, tracing and quarantining contacts, shielding high-risk groups
- Managing the info-demic and fighting disinformation and misinformation
- Protect the most vulnerable by building vaccine acceptance, ensuring vaccine deployment in all countries and carrying out vaccination campaigns (covid19responsefund.org)
(Nations, n.d.)

Response and Recovery Trust Fund

The UN Secretary-General established a COVID-19 Response and Recovery Trust Fund to deliver rapid recovery to support efforts in low and middle-income countries. It will enable the UN to provide a coordinated multi-agency, multi-sectorial response to national and local actions that address the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis and enable rapid recovery. (Nations, n.d.)

The Strategic preparedness and response plan (COVID-19 SPRP 2021), published on 24 Feb 2021, guide the comprehensive health response at the national level, supported by a global network of partners led by WHO, and working to support countries, including by catalyzing the development of and ensuring access to vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics. (Nations, (SPRP 2021))



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The Global humanitarian overview 2021 aimed to coordinate the wide-ranging effort to address the devastating socio-economic, humanitarian and human rights aspects of COVID-19. (Nations, (SPRP 2021))

Global Vaccination Plan

The UN and partners have established the COVAX Facility founded April 2020 so that all countries will have access to vaccines, regardless of their wealth. (Zalesov, 17 February 2021). This plan has largely failed to reach its goals.

Appeals and demands: Humanitarian Appeal: The UN launched a \$2 billion coordinated global Humanitarian Response Plan to fight the impact of COVID in some of the world's most vulnerable countries. It aims to protect millions of people and stop the virus from circling back around the globe. It brings together appeals and requirements from WHO, WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat and NGOs, and identifies new needs. Coordinated by UNOCHA. (Nations, n.d.)

Global Ceasefire: On March 23rd 2020, Secretary-General António Guterres issued an urgent appeal for a global ceasefire in all corners of the world to focus together on the true fight – defeating COVID-19. He repeated the call at the 75th UN General Assembly session in September. (Nations, n.d.)

Relevant Stakeholders

The most relevant and important stakeholders are unarguably the vaccine producing corporations and the countries that they are settled in. This affects everything from marketability to availability in different parts of the world. Some notable vaccine producers are AstraZeneca, Sputnik, Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson's Janssen etc. Top of the list is China, with the most vaccines produced, and followed by the USA, Germany, and India and so on. (Air Infinity, 23 March 2021)

An important initiative taken by the UN was the COVAX program founded in April 2020 by the WHO. WHO set a target for all countries to vaccinate 10% of their populations by the end of September. Fifty-six countries effectively excluded from the global vaccine marketplace could not reach this target – and most of them in Africa. (Gavi, n.d.). In the fall of 2020, Covax set a clear goal: Buy 2 billion doses and make them available to nations in need before the end of 2021.

As of now, Covax has delivered just 907 million doses. (Gavi, n.d.). COVAX is spearheaded by WHO.



■ World Health Organization (WHO)

Gavi is a public-private partnership that spearheads immunization efforts in developing countries. The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, an international collaboration (formed as a Gates Foundation initiative after the West African Ebola epidemic), makes vaccines available quickly when outbreaks happen.

All three companies depend on donations, public support and grants from nations and are important stakeholders in the pandemic for developing countries.

Many governments made separate bilateral deals with companies like Pfizer (Pfizer, 22 July 2020) that robbed Covax — which didn't have much money on hand in the early stage of the pandemic — of the opportunity to buy vaccines for less wealthy countries. This is largely why COVAX has failed to deliver within its predicted deadline. Nevertheless, it still remains an important stakeholder in the pandemic, for poor countries at least.

India's case is an important case study when dealing with vaccine equities. The main supplier to Covax is the Serum Institute of India, which produces the AstraZeneca vaccine. But in May of 2020 (Global Fund, 26 May 2021) India faced an influx of covid cases back at home. Oxygen cylinders were short and all the focus was oriented towards domestic issues. Export restrictions mean that Covax is receiving much less vaccine than expected and has had to delay its shipments to countries.

Things have improved since then in India, which has given 1.4 billion doses and approved two domestic vaccines as well amid fears of the Omnicron variant threat. (BBC, 28 December 2021)

America's case is an important case of the other end of the spectrum. America faced a lot of fear-mongering and conspiracies with a respectable amount of the population denying to be vaccinated. America underwent an election amid the Covid-19 and quickly started vaccinating.

However, richer countries like America are crucial to the WHO's aim to make the vaccine more available everywhere.

America currently has stockpiled vaccines that exceed their needs. At least 15m doses were scrapped in the US between March and September, according to one analysis of CDC data. (Schreiber, the Guardian, 16 October 2021) Such countries can afford to share their vaccines with the rest of the world.

These two case studies from both sides of the spectrum provide an interesting “in a nutshell” overview of how both sides of the financial bracket play into the pandemic. Further down the spectrum are impoverished African countries that severely depend on UN efforts and humanitarian aid to combat the pandemic.

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (or simply the Global Fund) is an international financing and partnership organization that aims to end the epidemics of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. The global fund is also an important stakeholder in the pandemic.

In May of 2020, The Global Fund approved US\$75 million in fast-track funding to support India’s response to the COVID-19 crisis in 2021.

As of December of 2021, 72% of the Global fund covid response funding has been used in Reinforcing national COVID-19 response and 15% in mitigating COVID-19 impact on HIV, TB and malaria programs:
Regions that received global fund aid include Africa, south-east Asia, South Asia central Asia etc. (The Global Fund, N.D.)

■ Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

- 1 How do the effects of vaccine inequality on the developed world impact the developed world and how can this data be used to inform policies centering on vaccine distribution?
- 2 How can anti-vax propaganda be countered by the UN outside of the internet?
- 3 How can the UN overcome the shortcomings of COVAX to be better prepared for future waves/ pandemics?
- 4 How can the international committee be encouraged to fight against vaccine inequality and prioritize International Public health actively?
- 5 How can the international community take effective measures to prevent such large scale inequalities within international health crises?



TOPIC B: SDG 16 AND TARGET 16.10: RIGHT TO PRESS FREEDOM AND INFORMATION

Definitions

Before proceeding with the topic here are some key terms we must all understand for an effective debate:

Sustainable Development Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies. Conflict, insecurity, weak institutions and limited access to justice remain a great threat to sustainable development. The United Nations drafted these goals as a benchmark to be reached in 2030 these goals are 17 in total and include goals that would help countries be more sustainable.

Press: For the context of this study guide and committee, the word press refers to news and other media organizations that “press” governments or other institutes to hold them accountable for their actions. The other part of their responsibility or role is to inform the public of current events.

Censorship: Censorship is the practice of limiting access to information such as books.

Target 16.1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

Historical Background

In 2015, a set of 17 interlinked global goals were designed to counteract global problems, such as poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, and justice ("What Are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)??" n.d.). Considering the SDG goal 16, the importance of this SDG is especially prevalent due to the usage of social media and more modern mediums which are prone to heavy censorship and governmental monitoring.

Freedom of the press has been advocated for since the printing press was first discovered, as a by-product of governments deciding to only allow the printing of materials they approved. With time, the freedom of the press was enacted into constitutions of countries (e.g. USA) and implemented. In the past decade, the independent press has been under attack for seeking and disseminating information. Over these years, elected leaders themselves have made direct attempts to suppress press freedom in the hopes of only allowing favorable coverage; democracy across the globe has been on a decline, strong democratic institutions maintain the freedom of the press, and if those strong democratic institutions continue to breakdown, the right to press freedom will deteriorate further (Repucci, 2019).

A recurrent pattern of suppression of the press in democratic countries is through the usage of governmental funding (Or having governmentally run media outfits) to boost the media that is in favor of the government through governmental funds, contacts, and subsidies, while the other media outfits are deprived of such lucrative deals. This method of altering the free market by biasing the funding towards a specific set of media outfits allows for the proliferation of information through government-funded media outlets, which are financially much more secure compared to other private independent media outlets (Repucci, 2019). This has happened in Serbia and Hungary, where both leaders of the nations have been filtering out critical journalists and paving the way for only positive information regarding their regimes. Furthermore, with the champions of press freedom in the USA has built a questionable reputation regarding press freedom during Donald Trump's tenure, due to his public stance, the global leaders of press freedom are also falling behind.

With the global access to the internet booming in the past decades, the dissemination of information through an unfiltered medium is warmly received, especially in third-world countries or authoritarian regimes, where the filtration of information is usually done by the respective governmental offices. The rise of the internet as a source of information has led to historic movements, such as the removal of the Sudanese president Omar-Al-Bashar, whose government was toppled by citizen journalists disseminating information through the internet, while the cable and radio media was largely biased and censored by the government (Repucci, 2019).

The Root of the Problem

Understanding the technicalities of the issues faced in enforcing the freedom of the press is critical, as there are a number of different aspects that are relevant. Firstly, and most importantly, journalists around the world are being imprisoned and killed for their work around the globe. Referring to figures from RSF, 41 journalists were killed and 373 journalists imprisoned for their connection with their journalistic work ("RSF", n.d.), these figures have remained stagnant or increased over the past decade, with no signs of the situation being alleviated. Journalists also face incidents of self-censorship, financial duress that limits their journalistic ability, and lack of authority to investigate and criticize when necessary. Moreover, the constant monitoring and censorship of material that is posted in an online setting also hinder the path of information reaching the citizens of some countries (J. Duffy, 2012).

The SDG 16.10 target has been set and decided upon by the United Nations. However, implementing and ensuring it is on the right track to be achieved before 2030 is a mammoth challenge. To understand how specific and intricate the situations that have to be addressed consider the killing of Shahid Zehri – a journalist at Metro One News – in Pakistan. Shahid Zehri was killed in a car bomb blast, which the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for. A major problem, in this case, is that the Baluchistan province simply does not have any enacted legislation protecting journalists, which gives this case an unstable standing to build upon ("Pakistan: Journalist Shahid Zehri Killed In Car Bomb Explosion / IFJ", 2021). Furthermore, the lack of responsibility taken by the government of Pakistan is also alarming. In a much larger view, this is simply one case within a province of a country. The aim of SDG 16.10 is to ensure the appropriate rights on a global level, thus addressing and understanding these specific situations should be the pathway to achieving the greater goal.

A number of countries around the world are transitioning from oppressive rules and enacting laws that protect the right to information. A perfect example of this would be Uzbekistan under the rule of Shavkat Mirziyoyev: Mirziyoyev has taken over from one of the harshest dictatorships and opened up by freeing imprisoned journalists, unblocking news websites, and allowing for the operation of external news media, moreover, he routinely advocates for the freedom of the press and claims to "stand behind the press". Unfortunately, even with the support of the president, the challenges faced by journalists remain, with a lack of investigative authority given to the press and routine arrests of journalists by using arbitrary and unrelated proofs (Prokscha, 2021). While the dictatorship may have ended, it seems that the system of oppression has remained within the country, with incentives being given to the institutions in charge of limiting the journalistic outreach due to alliances lying with other political candidates than the current president. Furthermore, systems being exposed by investigative journalism would result in the appropriate checks and balances in those systems, thus it remains easier to simply hinder the journalists from ever finding out the details of such systems.

Aside from governments, the global social media platforms also hold the responsibility of ensuring the freedom of speech and press on their platforms. Focusing on Indicator 16.10.2 of the SDG 16: "Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information" (Division, n.d.). Unfortunately, state monitoring and internet censorship have risen over the past couple of years as well, allowing for the targeting of people providing unbiased information on the internet. SDG 16, if upheld and implemented to its complete extent, should be able to provide an unbiased platform through mediums such as the internet.

Past UN actions

The United Nations 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers".

Freedom of the press specifically has been a part of UN's discourse since 1993 when the General Assembly set up an international Press Freedom Day to "affirm the importance of cherishing information as a public good and exploring what can be done in the production, distribution and reception of content to strengthen journalism" (Nations, n.d.)

The purpose of the day was also to assess what can be done about the risks journalists face in their line of work.

Notable steps and resolutions have been taken since then

The UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity is the result of a process that began in 2010 upon request of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). It was endorsed by the UN Chief Executives Board on 12 April 2012, and has been welcomed in resolutions of the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and UNESCO.

It aims to build partnerships among various stakeholders to introduce and harmonize safety mechanisms designed to reduce the dangers. The plan is implemented on a grand level with roles specified for non-governmental and governmental parties as well as for NGOs, academia and media. (OHCHR, N.D.)

UNESCO marks World Press Freedom Day by conferring the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize, created in 1997 on a deserving individual, organization or institution that has made an outstanding contribution to the defense and/or promotion of press freedom anywhere in the world, especially when this has been achieved in the face of danger. (UNESCO, n.d.)

An organization named Reporters without Borders publishes a Global Press Freedom Index annually to increase awareness of press freedom worldwide and reflect the amount of freedom of expression journalists enjoy in their respective countries. In February 2016, Irina Bokova, then Director-General of UNESCO, was one of the first to support this initiative. Furthermore, during an official meeting with RSF in February 2017, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres undertook to appoint a special representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to protect journalists throughout the world. However, citing RSF here, the "strong support" is "yet to be concretised" (RSF, n.d.)

■ Relevant Stakeholders

An important stakeholder and probably the most mainstream of all is an organization named Reporters without Borders that publishes a Global Press Freedom Index. A brief overview of the organization and its details are present in the “past UN actions” section.

IFEX, formerly International Freedom of Expression Exchange, is a global network of more than 119 independent non-governmental organizations that work at a local, national, regional, or international level to defend and promote freedom of expression as a human right. (IFEX)

IFEX has undertaken many campaigns to uphold freedom of expression and maintain press neutrality. In 2011, IFEX launched the International Day to End Impunity campaign. In 2013, the United Nations designated 2 November as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.

To mark the 2020 International Day to End Impunity on November 2, 2020, IFEX launched its Faces of Free Expression illustration series, profiling over 80 free-expression advocates working in countries across the globe. (Nicolle, IFEX, 1 November 2020)

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) is an American independent non-profit, non-governmental organization based in New York City, New York, with correspondents worldwide. (CPJ”)

Each year, The Committee to Protect Journalists produces a comprehensive list of Global Impunity Index (Dreier Roundtable, 15 November 2020) of all working journalists killed concerning their employment, including profiles of each deceased journalist within an exhaustive database and an annual census of incarcerated journalists. CPJ is the founding member of IFEX.

■ Important press freedom cases

Jamal Ahmad Khashoggi, a Saudi Arabian journalist and columnist for The Washington Post, was assassinated at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on 2 October 2018 by agents of the Saudi government, allegedly at the behest of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. (Toole, AL Jazeera, 2018)

Award-winning journalist Azimjon Askarov, an ethnic Uzbek, has spent nine years in prison on trumped-up charges for his reporting on human rights violations. Despite persistent international condemnation and calls for his release, a Kyrgyz court that had reviewed his case in light of new legislation ruled to uphold his life sentence on July 30. In 2012, Askarov won the International Press Freedom Award of the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Azores Gwanda, a freelance journalist investigating mysterious killings in rural Tanzania, has been missing since November 21, 2017, and the government has failed to conduct an investigation or disclose what it knows. On July 10, Tanzanian Foreign Minister Palamagamba Kabudi said, in an interview, that Gwanda had "disappeared and died" but backtracked amid requests for clarification.

■ Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

- 1 How can the definition of censorship be expanded to include the plantation of mistrust in journalists and related press officials?
- 2 How does the definition of a journalist change with the advent of social media? By extension, what responsibilities do private social media companies have in this realm?
- 3 How is a framework of accountability designed while simultaneously respecting the sovereignty of the individual states involved?
- 4 How can the UN encourage more transparency within the media industry?
- 5 What specific goals can the UN set for states and media agencies by extension to ensure transparency?
- 6 What are certain mechanisms to protect the media and journalism personnel from human rights abuse?
- 7 How to revitalise the role of free press and journalism to curb down issues like spread of misinformation?



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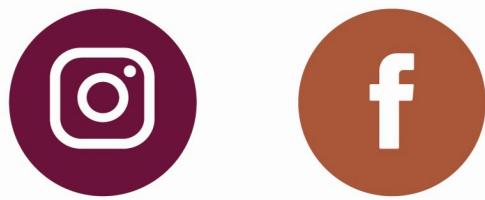
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