

TBSRJMUN XXI

Junior Human
Rights Council



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LETTER TO DELEGATES

Dear Delegates,

It is an immense honour to be welcoming everyone to the Junior Human Rights Council in the twenty-first edition of the TBSRJMUN. As fellow British School Students ourselves, we are extremely excited to receive all of you at our school and chair the spectacular debate we have ahead. If this is your first or last conference, we hope that this conference is more than special to all of us, thus, feel free to send us any questions or concerns, as chairs we are here to help you, and remember: there's always room for learning.

Without hesitation, we are thrilled to present our topics for our committee, "Discussing the regulations of firearm possession" and "Regulating employment ethics in blue-collar jobs".

Despite all of the initiatives on deciding on what should be done regarding firearm possession, every country has different regulations to this subject. By 2017, The Small Arms Survey estimated that over one billion firearms were circulating worldwide - whilst 85% of them were in civilian use, 13 percent of them were held in military arsenals, and 2 percent were kept in law enforcement agencies. With that in mind, civilian misuse of gun possessions has still been a current issue. Where does the fine line of firearms being a human right for self defence or threat to civil health end?

Human rights and ethics in the workplace have inevitably been a topic of discussion for centuries. Whether or not employers and employees have a good relationship, there should be regulations in all workplaces to make sure everyone is being respected at all times and has their rights. What is the ideal ethics in the workplace, and what rules should be placed in order for a safe work environment?

In order for an initial understanding of the topics, we have prepared this study guide that should be helpful throughout the preparation for the debate, and the conference. However, it is highly encouraged that additional research, as the study guide does not mention all countries and delegates are expected to defend their designated country. This conference is highly anticipated, and we are very excited to meet everyone and have a wonderful and fruitful debate. If there are any other doubts, do not hesitate in reaching out with us. See you soon!

Sincerely,

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Committee Description

The General Assembly of the United Nations established the Human Rights Council in 2006. The HRC council is a UN international organisation, with its main headquarters located in Geneva, Switzerland. The council's 47 member states gather frequently and have as a shared objective to spread and defend human rights throughout the world. It covers every current human rights issue and circumstance that warrants discussion throughout the year. The Human Rights Council made the decision to tackle current topics this year, including firearm possession and illicit trafficking , alongside addressing the worker's rights and ethics in the workplace.

The issues are urgently in need of a solution on a global scale, we wish for a fruitful debate where delegates can find a solution for these ongoing issues!



Illicit firearms collected from child soldiers in South Sudan

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1068451>

Topic A

Discussing the Regulations of Firearm Possession

Background Information

Introduction

The regulation of firearm possession is a pressing global issue that has significant implications for public safety and individual rights. Throughout history, different continents and countries have adopted diverse approaches to control the acquisition and possession of firearms. This section provides a summarized background on the regulation of firearm possession, while also focusing on important treaties/documents that have shaped international relations recently.

Early Firearm Control Measures

Firearms have been in use for centuries, but it was only during the late medieval and early modern periods that governments began to implement firearm control measures. For instance, during the 16th century, Japan adopted strict regulations, known as the "Sword Hunt" policy, which aimed to disarm the peasantry and prevent uprisings. It was against the law for peasants and residents to carry Wakizashi. In order to reinforce this, both an army and a police force were established. However, this policy only prohibited civilians from bearing arms when in public, but they still had the right of possessing one. (Wikipedia, 2023) In Europe, the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 marked the beginning of nation-states, each setting its own regulations on firearms possession.

Treaties and Documents

The Hague Conventions (1899 and 1907): These international treaties focused on the conduct of warfare but also addressed the use of specific types of ammunition and weaponry. They banned the use of expanding bullets and dum dum bullets, promoting the idea of controlling certain firearms and ammunition. The establishment of a binding international court to resolve international disputes was discussed - it was seen as required to replace the "Institution of War." However, this effort failed as countries such as Germany vetoed the establishment of international collaboration. Topics discussed included Customs of war on land, maritime warfare, explosives, asphyxiating poisonous gases, recovery of contract debts, and merchant ships.

Regional Specific Regulations

Europe

In Europe, firearm possession regulations vary significantly from one country. Countries like Switzerland have a tradition of firearm ownership for military and sports purposes but have strict storage and ammunition access regulations. In France for example, guns are often used in sports, and it is legal for twelve-year-olds for recreational purposes with parental authorisation. On the other hand, the United Kingdom has implemented stringent gun control laws, with tight restrictions on handguns after the Dunblane school shooting in 1996. In general, Europe is very strict on storage, transport, even putting limits on the amount of ammunition to ensure global security and transparency.

North America

In contrast to many countries worldwide, the US Second Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1791, protects the right of citizens to bear arms. This has led to a strong gun culture and a continuous debate between proponents of gun rights and advocates for stricter gun control measures. In contrast, Canada has adopted a more restrictive approach to firearm possession, requiring licensing and registration for all gun owners. In 2019, a law was passed to improve practical, targeted, and measured steps to help keep Canadians safe. The law prioritizes public safety and effective police work, while respecting responsible firearms owners.

Latin America

Firearm regulations in Latin America are characterized by many disparities among countries. Countries like Brazil and Mexico face significant challenges with illegal firearms, contributing to high rates of gun-related violence. In Brazil, In 2015, there were 4,197 intentional homicides in the state of 15 million residents, a rate of roughly 25 murders per 100,000 people. In response, some nations have implemented strict gun control measures, including mandatory registration and buyback programs. In Mexico for instance, Carlos Slim stated that the fund's balance for buyback programs would be 36.8 billion pesos between the period of April 2022 to April 2023.

Africa

Firearm regulation in Africa varies widely due to political security. In countries like South Africa, the Firearms Control Act of 2000 was enacted to address issues of firearm proliferation and misuse. They are one of the leading countries in public safety and crime prevention in Africa. In contrast, areas with ongoing conflicts, such as Somalia, struggle with the illicit circulation of firearms. In 2017, it was estimated over 1,145,000 owned guns, whether it be licit or illicit.

Asia

East Asia generally has the strongest firearm laws, including South Korea, China and Japan. Acquiring a firearm license for shotguns and air rifles involves a rigorous process. Applicants must undergo extensive background checks, mental health evaluations, and firearm safety training. This applies to the police force too. In contrast, India also has laws, though they are less strict. India struggles with maintaining control over this, however, due to regulations that vary by state. An act signed in 1962 prevented civilians from manufacturing and importing/exporting ammunition.

South East Asia

Private ownership of firearms in Thailand is allowed for self-defence, sport shooting, and hunting purposes. However, the process of obtaining a firearm license is strict and requires background checks amongst other regulations. Every 5.6 in 100,000 people own a gun, 11.2 times higher than countries such as Timor Leste with a rate of 0.5 in every 100,000. As many as 610,000 unregistered, or 'loose' firearms are said to be in private hands in the Philippines. Violation of laws could lead to the death penalty.

Current Situation

The use of firearm possessions has been an ongoing conflict throughout the world. In April 2017, the European Union (EU) strengthened its laws for firearm possession. According to the document, the EU focuses on enhancing the trackability of firearms, making the use of semi-automatic guns and more dangerous firearms illegal to civilians, creating measures to activate or deactivate seized firearms, and encouraging all countries to create stricter measures for gun possession.

Currently, the country with the most gun deaths in 2023 is Venezuela with a current rate of 36.75%, having a higher statistic than countries such as Brazil and the United States of America, which were also ranked as the countries with the most frequent gun deaths in the past years. According to the Geneva Academy study, there are currently 110 armed conflicts taking place around the world: more than 45 taking place in the Middle East and North Africa, 35 of them in Africa, more than 21 in the Asian continent, seven occurring in Europe, and six in South America.

It is not surprising that firearm possession and gun violence have been a current topic of discussion due to the increasing numbers of mass and school shootings - with 328 reported school shootings worldwide, with 288 of them being from the US, eight from Mexico, and six of them from South Africa. Despite the political polarisation, the country is being pressured by countries such as China and the UK to tighten the laws over gun violence within the country. According to Time Magazine, Jonathan Lowy, President of Global Action on Gun Violence, has been working alongside the Mexican Government and Canadian Lawyers since October 2022 to address the ongoing issue of illegal firearm trade by gun makers and the increase of guns being carried by people who cross the U.S border.

Through the past years, trading and trafficking of arms have decreased in South America except for Brazil, which had a 48% increase in their imports between 2017 and 2022. Currently, in Bolivia, Mexico, and Colombia there are more unregistered firearms than registered, whilst in Argentina and Brazil the numbers are very similar. In March 2021, an operation named "Operation Trigger VI", conducted by the UN and INTERPOL throughout South America seized over 20,000 illegal firearms, components, parts, and ammunition.

Keeping track of mass shootings can be quite difficult as each country can have its own conditions for a deadly shooting to be considered a mass shooting. However, by 2023, the country with the most frequent mass shootings is also the United States of America with 101 shootings as of March 2023. Following the US, Russia and France are ranked after the countries with the most mass shootings - Russia has 21 and France has 8 as of March 2023. Studies such as CNN say that these

types of shootings can usually come from racist or prejudiced intentions. Analysing the BBC statistics on the US, it is evident that mass shootings are becoming more common. This is evident, as there was a large difference in mass shooting numbers between 2019 (417) and 2020 (610), even so, the year with the highest number of mass shootings until 2022 is 2021 with 690 shootings.

Past UN Actions

The United Nations created the Saving Lives Entity (SALIENT), a fund made to aid in the stopping of small arms trafficking with long-term security methods. Countries such as Japan give financial contributions to help the countries in need - Honduras, El Salvador, Cameroon, Jamaica, and others. Methods of SALIENT are to enhance national police knowledge on national guns and trafficking, improve firearm registration, and train women to become disarmament leaders in their community.

The Firearms Protocol created by the United Nations in 2001 aims at promoting and strengthening international cooperation and developing cohesive mechanisms to prevent and combat the illicit manufacturing, possession and trafficking of firearms, their parts and components, and ammunition. By ratifying or applying to the Firearms Protocol, States make a commitment to adopt and implement a series of crime-control measures that aim at:

“(a) establishing as criminal offence the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms in line with the Protocol's requirements and definitions; (b) adopting effective control and security measures, including the disposal of firearms, in order to prevent their theft and diversion into the illicit circuit (c) establishing a system of government authorizations or licensing intending to ensure legitimate manufacturing of, and trafficking in, firearms; (d) ensuring adequate marking, recording and tracing of firearms and effective international cooperation for this purpose.”

To keep track of firearm possession and gun violence, the Small Arms Survey was created in 2003 to keep track of firearm statistics nationally and worldwide. Since then, countries can keep track of their own statistics on a global scale. With that, the Secretariat of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development has found that at least 754,000 individuals are victims of non-fatal firearms injuries every year.

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was established in December 2014 with 113 ratified and 29 signed but not ratified countries, in order to combat and ban illicit trade of firearms by establishing international standards governing arms transfers. “The Arms Trade Treaty is the first legally-binding instrument ever negotiated in the United Nations to establish common standards for the international transfer of conventional weapons,” says the UN website.

Major Bloc Positions

United States of America

The Second Amendment of the US constitution states that “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed” - hence, American civilians have the initial right to own a gun and use it for self-defence. In 2021, there was the highest gun death rate since 1993, of 14.8 per 100,000 people. Studies made by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), show that by 2020, the leading cause of death for teens and infants is gun-related, surpassing accident-related deaths. As mentioned previously, school shootings have increased worldwide, however, the US had 288 school shootings from 2009-2018, according to CNN, through illegal firearm possession. Furthermore, the Small Arms Survey estimated that there are over 393 million privately owned guns in the US, meaning 120 firearms for every 100 Americans. In June 2023, a federal appeal stated that a man that committed a nonviolent crime cannot be legally prevented from possessing a firearm. This year, US President, Joe Biden, signed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, a gun reform law, that funded \$750 million for states to create intervention and laws to prevent the spread of weapons, \$250 million for intervention of violent community-based initiatives, and \$200 million to improve the background check system.

Saudi Arabia

In 2023, Saudi Arabia altered their background check system for firearm possession. For being able to carry a licence or a weapon, the individual must be: a citizen of Saudi Arabia, must be above 22 years old, the citizen must have no mental illness nor have a criminal record. From A worldwide perspective, in 2014 Saudi Arabia was ranked as the 6th country with the highest gun ownership per 100, with an average of 35 per 100 residents, stated in Nation Master. In 2022, firearm shops were temporarily opened within years, for the purpose of improving the country's economy. Currently, a civilian can buy a firearm in the country, however, the civilian must be licensed and the purchase of firearms is not legal for all types of firearms. As dated in the 2023 update of the World Population Review, Saudi Arabia has 5.5 million total firearms in civilian possession, compared to the 481,350 firearms with the military, and 214,000 law enforcement firearms.

Russia

Following a school shooting that occurred in 2021, Russia's President Vladimir Putin signed a law that made gun ownership more strict and changed the age required to bear a firearm increased from 18 years old to 22 years old. In the country, gun possessors must re-apply for their licence every 5 years, and must apply for a separate licence to purchase the weapons, which are valid for six months. Also, firearms should be banned from acquisition by citizens who have not gone through a medical examination, personal evaluation, and experience with firearms. The 2023 World Population Review states that there are 17.6 million firearms in civilian use but with a higher number in military possession of 30,272,900. This statistic emphasises Russia's priority of firearms and weapons for military purposes rather than self-defence. In conclusion, Russia's firearm regulations are more strict when it comes to civilian possession. Most of the firearms produced and handled within the country are sent to the military - in 2018, there were 30.3 million military-owned firearms, being the country with the highest quantity.

China

China has kept strict regulations when it comes to firearm possession. An unlicensed individual who has ammunition or a firearm, should be fined over \$100,000 and face up to 14 years of imprisonment. The Chinese Government criticises the lack of regulation to assort the issues following firearm possession, "It's inhumane for the U.S., which boasts about its human rights record, to turn a blind eye to gun violence, snub increasing calls for gun control and risk more innocent lives," a newspaper controlled by the government said. In order to increase the awareness of firearm restriction, Article 3 of the Laws of the People's Republic of China says that "The State shall severely punish any criminal act committed in violation of the control of guns. Every unit and individual has the obligation to inform against any violations against the control of guns. The State shall protect the informant and reward the persons who have rendered meritorious service by informing against criminal acts committed against the control of guns."

Serbia

In 2023, Serbia is ranked the third country with the highest firearm possession. The 2018 Small Arms Survey Serbia's population is estimated to have 39 guns per 100 people. But due to recent mass shootings, the country has been pressured by other countries to change their laws. President Aleksandar Vucic said that he aims to complete the disarmament of the country soon. "On Friday he said the authorities would aim to decrease the number of legal gun owners by up to 90 percent, to about 40,000 people,"¹ mentioned in the New York Times. In 2015, the country allowed illegal firearm owners to surrender them without facing consequences. Since 2012, at least 171,087 firearms were handed to security voluntarily. As mass shootings have become frequent in the country, over the next six months the police are going to recruit more 1,200 new officers while 1,100 of them would go to schools to avoid school shootings and violence.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/06/world/europe/serbia-shootings-gun-reckoning.html>

Timeline of Events

Ancient Times **4000 BCE - 1 CE**

Development of basic firearms such as fire arrows and early gunpowder weapons in early civilizations i.e. Mesopotamia, Egypt and China.
Regulation of weapon possession emerges as centralized states attempt to maintain power and control over weapons.

Medieval Period **5th - 15th century**

European countries implement localized regulations on weapon ownership to maintain feudal order.
Japan enacted strict controls on firearms during the Edo period to prevent uprisings against the government.

Age of Exploration **15th - 17th century**

European nations explore and colonize new territories, leading to the spread of firearms worldwide.
The Ottoman Empire introduced strict regulations on firearms to control Janissaries, their elite infantry force.

Enlightenment Era **18th century**

The English Bill of Rights (1689) recognizes the right of Protestants to bear arms for self-defense.
The Second Amendment of 1791 influences the US' approach to firearms.

19th Century

The First Hague Peace Conference (1899) addresses aspects of warfare and the prohibition of specific weapons, including certain types of ammunition i.e. poison.

20th Century

The Second Hague Peace Conference (1907) revised and expanded regulations on the laws of war.
Mexico incorporated gun control measures into its constitution in 1917.

Following WW1, several countries implemented stricter gun laws for national safety.

Post-World War II **1945 - 1980**

Post-World War II (1945 - 1980):
The United Nations is established (1945)

The Gun Control Act of 1968 was passed in the United States, regulating firearm sales and restricting certain individuals from owning guns.

Late 20th Century

Australia enacts gun control reforms i.e. the “Buyback Program”, after the Port Arthur Massacre in 1996.

The UN’s Firearms Protocol of 2001 aims to combat illicit firearms trafficking globally

21st Century

New Zealand bans semi automatic firearms, after the Christchurch mosque shootings in 2019.

Canada introduces new gun control measures, banning assault-style weapons in 2020.

2022-2023 gun control acts in the US updated in attempts to regulate mass shootings (i.e. In Delaware, packages were signed by the governor to strengthen background checks; In illinois, regulating ghost guns are controlled and serialization of all firearms)

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

❖ **Acquisition**

Obtaining or gaining possession of something, often through purchase, exchange, or even force.

❖ **Assault**

Refers to a physical attack or an act of violence against another person, often involving intentional harm or threat of harm.

❖ **Buyback Program**

A government initiative that allows individuals to sell their privately owned firearms to the government at a predetermined price. The purpose of such programs is often to reduce the number of firearms in circulation and enhance public safety.

❖ **Centralized states**

Political systems in which significant decision-making authority and power are concentrated in a single central government or authority.

❖ **Export**

Sending goods or services from one country to another for trade or commercial purposes.

❖ **Firearm**

Portable weapon that uses gunpowder or other propellant to expel a projectile. It includes various types of guns, such as rifles, handguns, and shotguns.

❖ **Illegal**

Something that is prohibited or not allowed by law.

❖ **Import**

Bringing goods or services from one country into another for trade or consumption.

❖ **International collaboration**

Cooperative efforts between individuals/organizations/countries sharing and achieving common objectives.

❖ **Regulation**

Rule, law, or directive issued by a governmental authority to control or manage specific activities or industries.

❖ **Trafficking**

Illegal trade or transportation of goods, especially concerning the smuggling or movement of people, drugs, or weapons.

❖ **Uprisings**

Organized movements of resistance or revolt against authority or government, often involving a large number of people seeking political or social change.

❖ **Warfare**

The act of engaging in or conducting armed conflicts or battles between nations, states, or groups.

Further Research

1. US gun policy in comparison with the rest of the world:
<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-gun-policy-global-comparisons>
2. Gun laws in Latin America:
<https://www.as-coa.org/articles/explainer-gun-laws-latin-americas-largest-economies>
3. Recently established firearm laws:
<https://www.firearmssafetyauthority.govt.nz/news-and-regulations/new-firearms-laws-and-what-they-mean>
4. Armed violence and gun laws in Southeast Asia:
<https://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/south-east-asia>
5. Legal gun law services in India:
<https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-6983-firearm-laws-in-india-and-its-current-scenario.html#:~:text=Currently%2C%20the%20Indian%20firearm%20laws,by%20the%20competent%20licensing%20authority.>
6. UN's firearm protocol:
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/firearms-protocol/the-firearms-protocol.html>
7. Armed violence - study guide on the UN:
<https://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/united-nations>
8. UN's regulations on tracking and manufacturing firearms:
https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12-c&chapter=18&clang=_en
9. The Arms Trade Treaty (Historical context):
<https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/att/att.html>
10. Space weapons:
<https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/legal-agreements-space-weapons>

Guiding Questions

- ❖ What is the current state of firearm possession regulations in your country/delegation?
- ❖ What are the primary reasons for civilian firearm ownership in your country (e.g., self-defence, sports shooting, hunting, etc)?
- ❖ How does/would your country approach the balance between individual rights and public safety when it comes to firearm possession?
- ❖ What are the main principles of your country's firearm possession regulations?
- ❖ What are the specific requirements and procedures for obtaining a firearm license in your country?
- ❖ How does your country address the issue of illegal firearm possession and trafficking? (Consequences for breaking the law etc.)
- ❖ What are the challenges your country faces in implementing and enforcing firearm possession regulations?
- ❖ How does your country collaborate with international partners to combat the illicit trade of firearms?
- ❖ What initiatives has your country taken to educate the public about responsible firearm ownership and safe usage?
- ❖ What are your country's perspectives on the role of firearms in addressing armed conflicts and maintaining stability?

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Fabric sweatshop in Vietnam

<https://www.independent.org/publications/article.asp?id=1369>

Topic B

Regulating employment ethics in Blue Collar Jobs

Background Information

Introduction

As the global workforce increasingly relies on skilled and unskilled labour in industries, the issue of regulating employment ethics in blue-collar jobs also increases. Blue-collar jobs are typically associated with manual or physical labour, often in industries such as construction, manufacturing, transportation, and maintenance. Ensuring fair treatment, safety, and ethical standards in these sectors is essential to protect workers' rights, promote sustainable economic growth, and foster social development.

History

The history of blue-collar work is intertwined with the Industrial Revolution, which transformed societies through mechanization and mass production. The rapid expansion of industries led to increased demand for labour, often under harsh working conditions. Workers faced long hours, low wages, and minimal protections, leading to widespread labour exploitation and social unrest, with many diseases developing. Sweatshops exploited vulnerable populations, including immigrants and impoverished locals, who had limited bargaining power and were willing to work for low wages to secure employment. Over time, labour movements and the advocacy of workers' rights have brought significant improvements to working conditions, including the establishment of minimum wage laws, safety regulations, and collective bargaining rights.

Challenges of Blue Collar Employment

Despite progress, blue-collar workers still face numerous challenges related to employment ethics such as:

1. Labor Exploitation:

In many regions, blue-collar workers, especially migrant workers, are vulnerable to exploitation, including wage theft, forced labour, and human trafficking. Lack of legal protections and fear of job loss often deter workers from reporting abuses.

2. Unsafe Working Conditions:

Industries involving manual labour carry inherent risks. Failure to enforce adequate safety measures can result in occupational hazards, injuries, and fatalities. Approximately 1600 garment workers died in the past 3 years

due to poor conditions in sweatshops. Proper safety training and workplace inspections are essential to safeguard workers' well-being.

3. Unregistered employment:

Lacking formal employment contracts and protections leaves workers without benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, or paid leave. Furthermore, having these unofficial jobs could lead to difficulty in finding training and education for transitioning into higher-paying jobs as they lack proper skills.

4. Poor wages:

Blue-collar jobs are often undervalued, leading to wage disparities compared to white-collar professions. This contributes to income inequality and limits social mobility for blue-collar workers. Many stigmas circulate, alluding to the idea that blue-collar jobs are not important in comparison to other professions. This is particularly dominant in Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

Current Situation

After the pandemic, the whole world suffered issues within the economy, social and political problems, and everyone had suddenly adjusted to their new reality. Especially Blue-Collar workers, which focus on more manual jobs, people faced unemployment during and after the pandemic even with high demand. Therefore, states such as Illinois in the United States have created laws such as the Blue Collar Jobs Act - which gives tax credits to companies according to the wages of their blue-collar workers - to make manufacturing jobs more valuable, especially after the Covid-19 outbreak.

Although Blue-Collar Jobs still had a demand throughout the pandemic, White-Collar jobs had an even higher demand - such as doctors, teachers, social workers. One of the countries suffering these consequences is China, which also has an ageing population. A study from Sixth Tone, says that by 2025 China will face a demand of 30 million skilled workers in the blue-collar market. Also, a new report says that most of their workers have not completed high-school or lack general skills in the area.

The World Economic Forum states that the right to strike in countries is getting more criminalised, with the generating a strike being banned or restricted in 129 from 148 countries reported. The increase can be shown by the banning increasing from 63% in 2014 to 87% in 2022. Also, 115 of the 148 deny the right to union to some kinds of workers, such as migrant and domestic workers. The ban on unions increased from 58% in 2014 to 77% in 2022. In 2022, there were only three countries that had their global workers rights improved in 2022: Niger, El Salvador, and the Middle East.

The Global Rights Index allows an in depth analysis of workers rights in Europe. With that, 31% of the countries in Europe denied their employees access to justice when in need, 72% restricted the right to strike, 54% rejected the worker's rights to collective bargaining, 13% of the countries restricted free speech and assembly. In Serbia, the right to trade unions have tried to renegotiate the General Collective Agreement since its ban in May 2011, but faced strong opposition from the Serbian Association of Employers. Although the bargaining committee of the representative trade unions was formed in time, and negotiations were initiated prior to the expiry of the Agreement, the Serbian Association of Employers interrupted, without an explanation, after the second meeting. In March 2023, the French President Emmanuel Macron forced through a new law on the national pension age without holding a vote in the French Parliament. The President resorted to the use of

anti-democratic special constitutional powers to push forward his government's plan to raise the retirement age of French citizens from 62 to 64, the French population was not pleased and has shown their strong opposition.

Past UN Actions

Establishment of an International Labour Organization (ILO):

The ILO, a specialized agency of the United Nations, focuses on promoting social justice and labour rights worldwide. It was established in 1919, and has founded numerous conventions and recommendations that cover a wide range of labour-related issues, including those concerning blue-collar workers. These conventions set minimum standards for decent work, fair treatment, and protection of workers' rights especially in industries, including manufacturing, and construction, but rights of other professions were also discussed.

Core Labor Standards (1998):

One of the conventions created by the ILO was the Core Labor Standards which are a set of fundamental principles that are applicable to all countries in the UN, irrespective of their level of economic development. These principles include the freedom of association and collective bargaining, the elimination of forced labour and child labour, and the elimination of discrimination in employment. By promoting these core standards, the UN seeks to ensure protection from exploitation and abuse in the workplace.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2012):

As part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN has integrated decent work and promoted economic growth as a central goal. This statement was put under clause 8 of the SDGs. This includes ensuring safe and secure working conditions, promoting equal opportunities, and protecting labour rights for blue-collar workers. This emphasizes the importance of ethical employment practices in all industries while also looking towards future development.

Global Compact (2000):

The United Nations Global Compact is a voluntary initiative that encourages businesses and organizations to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies. Companies involved commit to upholding ten principles, which include respecting labour rights, upholding fair working conditions, and promoting social responsibility. This creates a sense of corporate responsibility and small scale management would also be incorporated into regulations.

Major Bloc Positions

Saudi Arabia

Due to cultural and religious backgrounds, when looking for job's, Blue Collar jobs are not Saudi's priority. Currently, migrants make up over 40.8% of the Blue Collar workforce in countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, and Bahrain. Workers are expected to work 8 hours a day, however, during Ramadan it is shortened to 6 hours a day. According to Article 117 of the Labor Law, employees are allowed to have a total of 120 sick leave days with 30 of them being paid. However, in 2012, after a strike initiated by 100 foreign workers broke down in the country, creating a trade union or a strike is still illegal in the country. In march 2021, the country created labour reforms to allow migrant workers leave their jobs without the employers consent in some circumstances after harassment by employers became common to migrant workers in Blue-Collar factories.

China

China is part of the few countries where Blue-Collar jobs are more common than white-collar jobs. Over 400 million blue-collar workers, the majority are aged over 40. Therefore, China has been focusing on adapting their laws for this sector, so that it does not become an ageing job. In contrast to many other countries, blue-collar workers in the city actually receive well with an average of 100,000 yuan. However, blue-collar workers in less urban areas still suffer from underpayment and low wages. In the country, everything decided for the employees rights should be discussed and approved by the labour union first-hand, although the creation of independent labour unions are illegal in the country. Despite the quantity of laws for formal jobs, the population still suffers from labour of informal and non-registered jobs. Still, China has focused more on addressing their fall of employment in the country, with their workforce dropping 13 million from 2022 to 2021.

United States of America

The United States of America has focused on not only improving worker's rights within their country, but also in countries around the world. According to the US embassy, the country is the largest provider of funds for the International Labor Organization (ILO), including monitoring Uzbekistan's labour conditions and cotton industry. On April 26 2021, President Joe Biden organised a task force from the White House to give the worker's rights to organise collective bargaining more support. Blue-Collar workers receive on average \$34,100 per year, incredibly higher in comparison to other countries such as India, China, and Canada, which was analysed by Thread In Motion. Regarding employment, Statista.com says that over 158 millions of Americans were in some form of employment, and over 3.64% of the total workforce was unemployed by 2022. However, employment in the country has been increasing for years with 9.8 million job openings as for July 2023, and 5.9 million workers without a fixed job.

Timeline of Events

Industrial Revolution 18th-19th century

Blue-collar jobs emerge in industries such as textiles, mining, and manufacturing. Workers face harsh working conditions, long hours, and low wages without proper safety measures or labour protections in overcrowded sweatshops for profit (exploitation).

Unionization 19th to early 20th century

Labor movements start developing, advocating for workers' rights and improved working conditions in blue-collar jobs.

Trade unions are formed to negotiate better wages, reduced working hours, and safer working conditions.

Governments begin to enact labour laws addressing child labour restrictions and minimum wage legislation.

Formation of the International Labour Organization in 1919 (ILO)

The ILO is established as the first international organization dealing with labour issues and workers' rights.

In the USA: the New Deal and Fair Labor Standards Act of the 1930s were signed. Introduced labour reforms including the "Fair Labour Standards Act" setting maximum working hours.

Post-World War II 1945-1960s

After World War II, governments worldwide aimed to improve workers' rights, safety, and collective bargaining.

Social security systems are established to provide support and protections for blue-collar workers.

Equal pay act of 1963, which amended the fair labour standards act, was signed

The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 was signed.

Late 20th century

The ILO implemented the “international labour standards and conventions” to address hazardous work and working conditions.

Companies and organizations begin to prioritize corporate social responsibility, including ethical employment practices and workers' rights.

21st century

Major development in technology and blue-collar employment. Concerns begin to rise about workers' job security (will technology replace blue-collar workers?)

Covid-19 (2020): mass blue-collar unemployment leading to discussions about worker protections, job security and safety measures.

UN implemented the Sustainable development goals

Vietnam: Oragnistion Unilever has led the process of setting up an alliance, aimed at harmonizing standards and building industry (2011)

Australia: the SSAA members increased from 30,000 in 1996 to over 200,000 in 2021

Definition of Key Terms

❖ **Bargaining**

Negotiation between employers and employees or their representatives, such as labour unions, to reach agreements on various employment-related issues, including wages, working hours, benefits, and working conditions.

❖ **Blue-collar employment**

Jobs that involve manual or physical labour, typically in industries such as construction, manufacturing, transportation, and maintenance.

❖ **Discrimination**

Unfair or prejudiced treatment of individuals or groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, or other protected attributes.

❖ **Employment**

State of being engaged in a paid job or work, where an individual performs tasks or services in exchange for compensation, such as a salary or wage.

❖ **Exploitation**

Unjust treatment of individuals/groups for the benefit of others. In the context of employment, it can include issues such as low wages, long working hours, unsafe working conditions etc.

❖ **Impoverished**

State of being extremely poor or lacking the necessary resources for a decent standard of living.

❖ **Industrial Revolution**

Period of significant technological, economic, and social transformation that occurred from the late 18th to the 19th century. It saw the transition from agrarian to industrialized economies.

❖ **Inequality**

Unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, or benefits among different individuals or groups within a society.

❖ **Job security**

The confidence an individual has in retaining their employment without the fear of sudden job loss due to factors beyond their control.

❖ **Labour**

Physical or mental effort exerted by individuals to produce goods or provide services. It encompasses all forms of work, whether manual or intellectual.

❖ **Legislation**

Laws and regulations enacted by governments or legislative bodies to govern various aspects of society, including employment, labour rights, and workplace conditions.

❖ **Migrants**

Individuals who move from one place to another, often across borders, to live and work in a different country or region.

❖ **Stigmas**

Negative attitudes, beliefs, or stereotypes associated with certain characteristics or attributes, often leading to social discrimination or exclusion.

❖ **Sweatshops**

Workplaces characterized by poor working conditions, low wages, and long hours. Workers in sweatshops often face exploitation and may lack basic labour rights and protections.

❖ **Workers' rights**

Legal and moral entitlements of employees in the workplace including fair wages, safe working conditions, the right to form trade unions and engage in collective bargaining, and protection against discrimination and exploitation.

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Guiding Questions

- ❖ What are the ethical concerns related to employment in blue-collar jobs?
- ❖ What are the current labour laws and regulations regarding blue-collar employment in your country?
- ❖ How effective are the current regulations in ensuring fair treatment and worker protections in blue-collar jobs? (If there are any)
- ❖ Which specific groups of blue-collar workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination, or unsafe working conditions?
- ❖ What measures can be implemented to support workers' rights and empower blue-collar employees?
- ❖ How can workplace inspections and enforcement be improved to monitor the practice of these safety standards?
- ❖ What benefits can formalization bring to blue-collar workers and the economy as a whole?
- ❖ How can access to skill development and training programs be improved for blue-collar workers to enhance their career advancement? (Think about the benefits individually but also economically)
- ❖ How can employment ethics be more gender-sensitive and inclusive of diverse populations in blue-collar jobs?
- ❖ How can compliance and consequences be formalized for the long-term future?

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