

2013

SOCHUM 2013 BACKGROUND GUIDE

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CONFERENCE V



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LETTER FROM THE DAIS

Dear delegates,

Welcome to MITMUNC 2013! It's a great pleasure to serve as your committee chairs for SOCHUM, and we are very excited about meeting you in February.

I am Halide Bey, a sophomore majoring in Biology at MIT. I come from the Northern part of Cyprus (wait, you must have heard of that country before!) and it's my first time participating in MITMUNC. I have previously attended MEDIMUN and THIMUN, and also thoroughly enjoyed my time at the European Youth Parliament national and international sessions. This is my third time chairing, but first time chairing at a MUN conference. I wish you all an amazing experience with MITMUNC, and I hope to get to know many of you during the session.

I'm Anisha Gururaj, a sophomore majoring in Chemical-Biological Engineering and minoring in Energy Studies here at MIT. I'm originally from St. Louis, MO, and this is my first time participating in MITMUNC. This is also the first year I have ever participated in MUN in general, and so far I love it! I was a policy debater in high school, so I truly enjoy discussing a lot of these issues. I can't wait to meet all of you in February and I hope you have an amazing experience here at the conference and at MIT.

We hope you will approach this conference with critical mindsets and fresh

perspectives as you look to tackle some of humanity's greatest problems.

Sincerely,

Halide Bey

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Topic1:**HONOR KILLINGS****Introduction**

Honor killings are murders committed upon those who are perceived to have brought dishonor to a family or community. Most often they are discussed in relation to women, for whom male members of the family commit acts of violence against the women due to the belief that she has done something immoral. This can include a variety of acts, such as flirting, wearing revealing clothing, rape, adultery, being seen with another man, or engaging in a relationship with someone against the desires of the family. Although this guide focuses primarily on honor killings against women, it is important to keep in mind that they are not the only victims. Men who are perceived to have an inappropriate relationship with a woman may be attacked by members of the woman's family.

It is estimated that there are hundreds if not thousands of victims of honor killings each year. Often, completely accurate numbers cannot be obtained because the killing is hushed or attributed to another cause. Particularly in violence against women, officials in cultures that maintain certain attitudes about women will often condone or overlook these acts of murder.

Although these cultures are typically attributed to areas of the Middle East and South Asia, reports have found cases of honor killings in countries varying from Bangladesh, Brazil, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Turkey, Pakistan, Uganda, the UK, and even a few in the

United States and Canada. In 2000, the United Nations Population Fund estimated that approximately 5000 females are murdered each year in such honor killings.

Background

The motivation behind honor killings lies in a culturally-rooted belief in the value of honor, and particularly a woman's honor, above all else. Additionally, of the cultural groups in which honor killings are most prevalent, a general belief in viewing women as objects who do not possess rights equal to men tends to also prevail. These are patriarchal societies in which the honor of the women reflects the honor of the families, and thus a breach in the docility and modesty expected in women resonates strongly with those who commit the killings.

Moreover, honor killings are often an act of community. Sections of communities tend to share the mentality described above toward women and honor, and thus condone the killings. Even other women, such as the mother of a daughter killed, will accept and even take part in the killing. This community attitude toward honor killings also makes it more difficult for officials and other law enforcement to engage in specific cases.

The belief remains that this is a private issue, and thus, the legality of it should be ignored. Thus the perpetrators of honor killings can rely upon a culture of acceptance and even support for these acts against their own family members. Moreover, these are acts which would have been condemned if they were committed against strangers.

For example, in Jordan, the government has ordered its judges to prescribe the same punishment for honor killings as for normal murders, but the mostly Bedouin Parliament has been hesitant to establish these standards because they claim it will increase the promiscuity in the country.

Legal Enforcement Challenges

The UN human rights chief notes that the issue of honor killings is made worse due to the domestic legal systems of these countries that either completely or partially excuse the perpetrators of honor killings. The punishment for the same crime, which would normally be a harsh sentence, is significantly lessened or even fully waived, simply because of this communal acceptance of the issue. The perpetrators may even be admired and looked up to within the community.

Additionally, the lack of support centers or the availability of legal protection for these women leaves them very little opportunity to escape from the honor killings.

Even in countries such as the United States and Canada, both of which have extensive legal systems, the presence of honor killings is astounding. In January 2008, two teenage girls were shot by their father who was assisted by their mother in their Texas home, because the father was upset by the daughters' "Western ways." In 2007, a girl was murdered by her father in Toronto for not wearing a head covering. Thus the issue of honor killings is fast becoming an international one which must be grappled with.

Past UN Involvement/National Laws

In certain countries, the law allows Honor killings to occur. For example, Article 269 in Haiti states "in the case of adultery as provided for in Article 284, the murder by a husband of his wife and/or her partner, immediately upon discovering them in flagrante delicto in the conjugal abode, is to be pardoned." Although some countries have laws like this one, others hold national laws that make honor killings illegal. At this time, the UN has no absolute stance on the issue of honor killings. While it may seem moral to some that honor killings should become illegal across the world, one must be careful not to over-step a nation's right to create their own laws and alter their culture.

Countries of Interest

Although this set of countries is by no means exhaustive, it provides a country-specific look at the issue of honor killings within a few varied countries.

Jordan

Honor killings in Jordan remain one of the most prevalent physical threats to women. Although there is no law granting the right to a man to kill a female relative whom he believes has brought dishonor to the family, the punishment for honor killings is rarely more than one year of imprisonment, and this can often be reduced to six months if the victim's family waives charges. Killers often freely admit their crime, serve six months until their trial and are then acquitted, as courts still accept the perpetrator's excuses that

they acted out of fury. Although the government and the royal family have supported reform, few changes have occurred.

In an extensive report in 2003, the Human Rights Watch also declares that before the actual honor killing, a period of verbal threats ensue from a woman's male relatives. Although the Director General of Public Security in Jordan claimed that such threats are illegal and that if a woman reported them action would be taken,

Pakistan

In Pakistan, honor killings are known as "karo kari," as "kari" literally means "black female." By law the practice should be prosecuted and perpetrators should be convicted as in normal murder, but most officials ignore this in practice. In 2003, as many as 1,261 women were murdered in honor killings. Although under intense pressure by international and domestic human rights groups, Pakistan enacted a law that made honor killings punishable by seven years in prison or the death penalty, it later rejected a bill which would have strengthened laws against honor killing practices because of their "un-Islamic" nature.

In September 2010, Ali Dayan Hasan, the Pakistan director at Human Rights Watch claims that the inability of Pakistan to enforce a rule of law leaves such matters in the jurisdiction of local tribesmen and elders, which increases the number of honor killings. Moreover, honor killings have significant support in rural areas of Pakistan. Honor killings are also touched upon in the 1990 Qisas and Diyat Ordinance which allows the individual and

the family to maintain control over a crime; since perpetrators are usually family members, the family of the victim can pardon the murderer, allowing him to go free.

United Kingdom

In 2009, officials estimated that approximately 12 honor killings occurred each year, often within South Asian and Middle Eastern families. A famous UK case involves Banaz Mahmoud, a twenty-year-old who was forced into an arranged marriage. After she left and started a relationship with another man, she was strangled, hidden in a suitcase and buried underneath a Birmingham property. A more recent case involves Shafiea Ahmed, whose parents were only convicted to imprisonment for life in 2012, though her corpse was found in 2004. The cause for the death involved a forced arranged marriage to a man in Pakistan.

Progress does seem to be occurring in the UK. In 2008, laws to prevent forced marriages and to provide a way out for those in already disagreeable marriages were introduced, and anyone convicted of trying to force someone into a marriage could be jailed for two years. Still however, the number of honor crimes has risen since then, including an increase in the number of young men and boys who are victims of honor crimes.

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Topic 2:**COMBATING RACISM
AND RACIAL
DISCRIMINATION IN
CYPRUS****Introduction**

Inter-communal fighting started in Cyprus in 1963, and the island is under occupation since 1974. Since the border crossings are possible, it's important to promote mutual understanding in both communities so as to prevent any violence.

Some English-medium schools in the Southern part of Cyprus started having Turkish Cypriot students after the border crossings were allowed. The students in these schools are primarily Greek Cypriots, and there have been disputes in some schools in the past.

Questions to Consider

What can be done to minimize racial discrimination, and to promote communication between the two communities?

As representatives from your respective countries, focus on solutions your own country has found beneficial and take solutions from this situation to apply them globally. In order to understand the reasons behind the discrimination in the bicomunal schools in Cyprus, it is important to understand the history and the political situation of the island.

History

The island of Cyprus, having a very important strategic location in the middle east, was ruled by empires of the Assyrians, Egyptians, and Persians, the Roman Empire, the Byzantines, the French Lusignan dynasty, and the Venetians, was followed by the Ottoman conquest in 1571. It remained under Ottoman control for over three centuries. Cyprus was placed under British administration in 1878 until it was granted independence in 1960. When the Republic of Cyprus was established in 1960, it was seen as a victory by the Turkish Cypriot community but as a major loss by the Greek Cypriot community leaders, who wanted enosis (union with Greece). The constitution stated that the President would be a Greek Cypriot, and the Vice President would be a Turkish Cypriot, both having the right to veto. Makarios was chosen as the Greek Cypriot leader, and Dr. Küçük as the Turkish Cypriot leader.

On November 1963, 13 amendments were proposed by Makarios, claiming this would allow the government to work more efficiently. These amendments were seen as a threat by the Turkish Cypriots, as many were constitutional protections against the domination by the majority Greek Cypriots. The Turkish Cypriots left the government as a response, and the fighting between the two communities began. It would be very naïve of us to think that both communities were not secretly prepared for 'self-defence' after the establishment of the Republic.

During 1963-1974, EOKA B (National Organization of Cypriot Struggle) and

TMT (Turkish Resistance Organisation) attacked the Turkish Cypriot and the Greek Cypriot community members, respectively.

Considering the overwhelming majority of the Greek Cypriots over the Turkish Cypriots, it should be clear that the Turkish Cypriot community suffered extensively over 11 years. On July 15, 1974 there was a coup d'etat by the military junta of Athens. Turkey responded to the coup d'etat by taking control of 36% of the island.

Turkish Invasion

It should be noted that Turkey's invasion of Cyprus was seen as a peace intervention by many Turkish Cypriots. Forced to live in caves for years, many were happy to finally start living without fearing their lives every second. Turkey's intervention was long awaited. However, many Greek Cypriots were killed and hundreds of thousands had to leave their houses and fled to the South. Many Greek Cypriots had to leave their houses and business and start everything all over again.

In 1983, the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC) declared independence, which is only recognized by Turkey. The Republic of Cyprus is still the government in the Southern part of the island.

Cyprus and the European Union

In 2004, the Republic of Cyprus joins the EU. This was criticized by the Turkish Cypriots as the prospect of joining the EU could have been a major incentive for both sides to find a solution to the Cyprus problem. Also in 2004, border crossings

became possible so people could travel from the North to the South and vice versa. This was the point when a lot of Turkish Cypriots started going to schools in the South, in order to get a better education.

It should be noted that even now, there are Greek Cypriots living in the North and Turkish Cypriots living in the South. Despite what some nationalists claim, this is a perfect example of how Cypriots are able to live together in peace.

Interestingly, the Republic of Cyprus is a major gain for the Greek Cypriots, who are a member of the EU, and a major loss for the Turkish Cypriots, who think the Greek Cypriots are making use of something that also belongs to them. It is useful to know, though, that after the border crossings were made possible, the Turkish Cypriots were able to get Republic of Cyprus passports and be treated as EU citizens.

After the border crossings were made possible, many bicomunal events have been organized, and there has been a lot of interactions between the two communities. There were also some disturbing incidences, where Turkish Cypriot cars were attacked in the South, or Greek Cypriot cars were attacked in the North (the number plates are different, making it obvious whether you come from the other side).

Education

The English School, Nicosia is the most prestigious high school on the island and is very-well known by all Cypriots. Therefore, a lot of Turkish Cypriots

attempted the entrance examinations after the border crossings were possible. Currently, the school has about 100 Turkish Cypriots (10% of student body). After the Turkish Cypriots were admitted to the school, some Turkish staff also joined (precisely 3). Turkish Cypriots go to the Turkish language classes when the Greek Cypriots go to Greek language classes.

Until recently, religious education was compulsory for the Greek Cypriots (bible was studied and the class was taught in Greek), when the Turkish Cypriots would have a free period in the library. Now, a broader religious education class is offered to all students in English, where they learn about all the religions. Other than these, all classes are mixed and they are taught in English. While the students do interact at an acceptable level in class, during breaks, the Turkish Cypriots gather together and don't spend much time with the Greek Cypriots.

Language Barriers

As it's not easy for Greek Cypriot students to meet the Turkish Cypriots after class, and language is also a barrier at least for the first 3 years at the English School, close inter-communal friendships aren't common. In 2004, a couple of Turkish Cypriot students were attacked by masked men after a huge press release that a Turkish Cypriot spat on the cross of a Greek Cypriot, and that the Greek Cypriots are beaten up in the restrooms by the Turkish Cypriot students (both claims untrue). While this highly physical action wasn't repeated, the Turkish Cypriots are exposed to a lot of discrimination at school, not only by the students but also

sometimes by the teachers. What can be done to eliminate discrimination in such bicomunal schools? Could such bicomunal schools set an example for the whole society? Can we all schools worldwide be affected with the same resolutions put forth in Cyprus?

Aim of the Committee

The aim of this committee is to find a creative, easy-to-implement solutions to increase understanding, tolerance and interaction between the two communities at bicomunal schools. If this is possible, maybe a reunited Cyprus is not far to reach, as well as increasing tolerance between communities in other regions of the world.

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