

UNSC



GNIMUN 2025

**DIPLOMACY  
BEYOND  
BARRIERS**

**BACKGROUND  
GUIDE**

Est. 2025

**GNIMUN**

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## **AGENDA**

**‘Nuclear Proliferation with Reference to the Breakdown of UNSC Resolution 2231 and its Implications for Middle Eastern Security.’**

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## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

### **Guru Nanak Institutions Model United Nations (GNIMUN)**

Dear Delegates,

On behalf of the Executive Board of the Guru Nanak Institutions Model United Nations, we are excited to welcome you to this year's conference! We are eager to see the innovative ideas, diplomatic skills, and solutions you'll bring to the table as we dive into the challenges of "Debate, Diplomacy, Development".

We've worked hard to create a stimulating environment where you'll engage in productive debates, collaborate with fellow delegates, and work towards meaningful resolutions. As you prepare, ensure that you research your country's position and the issues at hand so that you can contribute effectively to the discussions.

Remember, this conference is not just about representing your country's interests, but also about learning, growing, and making connections with future leaders from around the world. We look forward to seeing you in action and are excited for the impactful debates that lie ahead.

Best Regards

Unnati Pande - Chairperson UNSC

Abhishyant Reddy - Vice Chairperson UNSC

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## Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations and holds a position of paramount authority. It serves as a crucial committee in Model United Nations (MUN) simulations, especially due to its unique mandate of maintaining international peace and security. Unlike the UNGA, the UNSC consists of 15 member states — five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) with veto power, and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms.

In MUN conferences, the UNSC committee provides delegates with a dynamic and challenging platform to address urgent global crises. These topics often involve armed conflicts, threats to international security, sanctions, peacekeeping missions, and nuclear non-proliferation. Because of its smaller size and the presence of veto power, debates in the UNSC are intense, fast-paced, and highly strategic.

During a typical MUN session, UNSC delegates represent their assigned countries and work to protect national interests while striving to build consensus on pressing security issues. They must negotiate, draft, and pass resolutions that authorize measures ranging from diplomatic interventions to military action. This process demands strong analytical abilities, diplomacy, and persuasive communication, reflecting the real-world significance of the UNSC.

Resolutions passed by the UNSC are legally binding on all UN member states, giving this committee a level of authority unmatched within the UN system. For MUN participants, the UNSC offers a unique opportunity to engage with real-time international challenges, enhance crisis-management skills, and experience the complexities of high-stakes diplomacy.

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## Mandate of UNSC

According to the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council is authorized to:

- Maintain international peace and security as the primary organ responsible for addressing threats to global stability.
- Investigate disputes or situations that may lead to international conflict and recommend methods of peaceful settlement.
- Determine the existence of threats to peace, acts of aggression, or breaches of peace, and decide on appropriate measures to be taken.
- Impose binding measures such as sanctions, arms embargoes, or severance of diplomatic relations to prevent or respond to conflicts.
- Authorize the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces, military action, or other collective security operations when necessary.
- Recommend the admission of new members to the United Nations and approve any changes to the UN Charter.
- Recommend the appointment of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly.

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## 1.Introduction to Agenda

### 1.1. Background of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) & UNSC Resolution 2231

- In 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed between Iran and the P5+1 (China, France, Russia, the UK, the US, and Germany).
- Endorsed by UNSC Resolution 2231.
- Aimed to limit Iran's nuclear activities (e.g., uranium enrichment, stockpiling) in exchange for sanctions relief.
- Initially seen as a diplomatic success and step toward regional stability.

### 1.2. Breakdown of the Agreement

- In 2018, the United States withdrew from the JCPOA.
- Following this, Iran reduced compliance, resuming and increasing uranium enrichment.
- Iran has now exceeded the JCPOA limits, raising concerns about its nuclear weapons capability.

### 1.3. Regional Reactions & Concerns

- Israel: Believed to possess nuclear weapons (under policy of ambiguity); sees Iran's actions as a direct threat.
- Saudi Arabia & UAE: Have hinted they may pursue nuclear capabilities if Iran acquires them.
- Risk of a nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

### 1.4. Historical Context

- Iraq (under Saddam Hussein) and Libya (under Gaddafi) previously attempted to develop nuclear weapons.
- Israel's nuclear ambiguity complicates efforts for a nuclear-weapon-free Middle East.
- Repeated UN efforts to establish such a zone have failed due to mistrust and geopolitical tensions.

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## 2. Proliferation in Middle East

2.1. The Middle East remains one of the most sensitive regions in the world when it comes to nuclear proliferation, with both historical attempts and current developments shaping its fragile security landscape. Israel is widely believed to possess between 80 and 90 nuclear warheads, yet it has never signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and maintains a policy of deliberate ambiguity.

2.2. This “nuclear opacity” gives Israel a strategic deterrent while avoiding direct confrontation with international law, but it also fuels mistrust and sets a precedent for other states in the region to pursue similar capabilities. Israel's nuclear status continues to be one of the biggest obstacles to international efforts to create a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East.

2.3. Iran's nuclear program remains the most pressing concern in the region. As an NPT signatory, Iran maintains that its program is for peaceful energy purposes, but its activities have long raised suspicion among the international community. In 2015, the JCPOA was hailed as a breakthrough, placing strict limits on Iran's enrichment capacity and stockpiles.

2.4. In exchange for these limits, Iran was granted sanctions relief. However, following the U.S. withdrawal from the deal in 2018, Iran began reducing its compliance. Today, Iran enriches uranium up to 60% purity, dangerously close to the 90% weapons-grade threshold.

2.6. These developments have alarmed regional actors such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Saudi Arabia has openly declared that it would not hesitate to acquire nuclear weapons if Iran were to do so, signaling a willingness to match Iran's capabilities. The country is also investing in civilian nuclear technology.

2.7. While Saudi nuclear activities are legal under the NPT, they could be diverted into weapons development in the future. The United Arab Emirates has already operationalized its Barakah nuclear power plant, publicly committed to peaceful use, but still drawing international attention as an example of “nuclear hedging.”

2.8. Egypt and Turkey, too, have expressed interest in nuclear energy, reflecting the possibility of broader proliferation if tensions intensify. History shows these fears are not unfounded: Iraq under Saddam Hussein pursued nuclear weapons, Libya gave up its program in 2003, and Syria’s suspected reactor was destroyed by Israel in 2007.

2.9. These events are all evidence of persistent nuclear ambitions in the region. The overall picture is one of growing uncertainty. With one undeclared nuclear power already in possession of warheads, and one state moving closer to potential weapons capability, tensions are escalating.

2.10. Several others are signaling their willingness to follow suit, making the Middle East a potential flashpoint for nuclear escalation. The absence of a functioning regional framework, combined with the collapse of UNSC Resolution 2231, makes the challenge even more severe.

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### 3. Breakdown of UNSC Resolution 2231

#### 3.1. Overview

UNSC Resolution 2231, adopted in July 2015, endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between Iran and the P5+1 group (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States, plus Germany). The purpose of the agreement was to limit Iran's nuclear activities—such as uranium enrichment and stockpiling—in exchange for sanctions relief. The resolution established a strict verification framework led by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), designed to ensure Iran's nuclear program remained peaceful and compliant with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

At the time, the JCPOA was viewed as a significant diplomatic achievement, aimed at promoting stability in a region already prone to political rivalries, proxy wars, and sectarian tensions.

#### 3.2. Events Leading to the Breakdown

In May 2018, the United States unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA, citing concerns that the agreement failed to curb Iran's ballistic missile program and regional influence. Following the withdrawal, Iran began gradually abandoning its commitments under the deal. Uranium enrichment levels rose from the agreed limit of 3.67% up to 60%, approaching weapons-grade levels, while Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium far exceeded JCPOA restrictions.

Despite attempts by other signatories (Europe, Russia, China) to keep the agreement alive, Iran's mistrust of Western powers and lack of enforceable incentives led to further non-compliance. By 2021, Iran openly resumed advanced nuclear activities, effectively ending the agreement's purpose.

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### **3.3.Regional Implications**

The breakdown of Resolution 2231 increased regional instability. Israel, believed to possess a nuclear arsenal under deliberate ambiguity, views Iran's nuclear progress as an existential threat. Saudi Arabia warned that it would pursue nuclear capabilities if Iran continued, raising the risk of a regional nuclear arms race. Other Gulf states, including the UAE, accelerated their civilian nuclear energy programs, signaling potential future military applications.

The failure of the JCPOA also undermined the authority of the UN Security Council and the credibility of the global non-proliferation regime, exposing weaknesses in multilateral diplomacy when major powers act unilaterally.

### **3.4. Interactive Section – Critical Reflection**

Delegates should consider the following questions to develop their position for debate:

- 1.What were the main strengths and weaknesses of UNSC Resolution 2231 in preventing nuclear proliferation?
- 2.How did the U.S. withdrawal in 2018 affect the stability of the JCPOA and global trust in the UN system?
- 3.From the perspectives of Iran, Israel, or Saudi Arabia, what would be the main reason to support or oppose the JCPOA today?
- 4.Prepare short notes answering at least two of these questions with facts, historical context, or analytical reasoning.

### **3.5.Key Takeaway**

The collapse of UNSC Resolution 2231 shows how political shifts, national interests, and mutual distrust can erode non-proliferation efforts, leaving the region vulnerable to further escalation. It highlights the need for innovative diplomatic solutions and renewed multilateral frameworks to manage one of the world's most dangerous security challenges.

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## 4. Timeline of Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East and UNSC Resolution 2231

### 4.1) 1962 – Cuban Missile Crisis

- The world comes close to nuclear war when the US and USSR face off over Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba.
- This event shows the devastating risks of nuclear weapons and influences global thinking about nuclear non-proliferation.

### 4.2) 1970s–1980s

- Israel develops nuclear weapons, but keeps it secret (“policy of ambiguity”). This gives Israel a military advantage and deterrence, but creates mistrust in the region.
- Iran started its nuclear program under the Shah, claiming it is for peaceful energy use.

### 4.3) 1980–1988: Iran-Iraq War

- Both Iran and Iraq look at nuclear technology as a way to strengthen their military power. Nuclear weapons ambitions increase.

### 4.4) 1991 – Gulf War

- Iraq’s secret nuclear program was discovered by UN inspectors after the war.
- Iraq is forced to dismantle its nuclear facilities under strict UN supervision.

### 4.5) 2001 – 9/11 Attacks

- Terrorist attacks on the US heighten global focus on Middle East security.
- Led to the US “War on Terror” and increased military involvement in the region, including Iraq and Afghanistan.

### 4.6) 2003 – US-led Invasion of Iraq

- The US invades Iraq, claiming the presence of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), though none are found later.
- This invasion increases instability in the region and shows how nuclear and WMD concerns can lead to war.

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#### **4.7) 2002–2003**

- Iran's secret nuclear sites were discovered (like Natanz and Arak), raising international suspicion.
- Libya gave up its nuclear program after pressure from the international community.

#### **4.8) 2003–2007**

- Syria's suspected nuclear reactor was destroyed by Israel in 2007.
- IAEA reports that Iran had secret nuclear activities and was not fully following international rules.

#### **4.9) 2006–2013**

- UN and Western countries impose sanctions on Iran to stop nuclear weapons development.
- Iran continues some nuclear work, but within a limited capacity to avoid full international backlash.

#### **4.10) July 14, 2015**

- JCPOA (Iran Nuclear Deal) signed between Iran and the P5+1 countries (China, France, Russia, UK, US + Germany):
- Limits Iran's uranium enrichment to 3.67%
- Reduces Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium
- Allows international inspections by the IAEA
- In return, Iran gets relief from sanctions.

#### **4.11) October 18, 2015**

- The UN Security Council passes Resolution 2231 to support the JCPOA.
- Calls on all countries to respect the deal and avoid actions that could threaten its goals.

#### **4.12) May 8, 2018**

- The United States withdrew from the JCPOA under President Trump, saying the deal was not strict enough.
- U.S. re-imposes sanctions on Iran, putting economic pressure on the country.

#### **4.13) 2019–2020**

- **Iran begins reducing compliance with the deal:**
  - **Uranium enrichment exceeds the 3.67% limit**
  - **Uranium stockpiles grow beyond allowed levels**
- **Regional tensions rise as attacks occur on ships and oil facilities.**

#### **4.14) January 2021–Present**

- Iran enriches uranium up to 60%, which is very close to weapons-grade uranium (90%).
- Iran now has enough enriched uranium that it could build nuclear weapons if it decided to.
- Regional worries grow:
- Saudi Arabia hints it might develop nuclear weapons if Iran does
- Israel sees Iran as a direct threat and could take military action.

#### **4.15) 2022–2025**

- UAE starts operating the Barakah nuclear plant for peaceful energy purposes.
- Other Gulf countries explore nuclear energy, showing potential for more proliferation in the future.
- Efforts to create a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East continue, but Israel's secrecy is a major obstacle.
- Global concern grows: if Iran gets nuclear weapons, other countries in the region may follow, raising the risk of conflict and instability.

## **5. Pathways to Resolution and Strengthening Non-Proliferation Mechanisms**

The collapse of Resolution 2231 shows how fragile even the most celebrated diplomatic agreements can be once political trust breaks down. Preventing further nuclear proliferation in the Middle East requires more than technical fixes. It means tackling the deeper insecurities and rivalries that drive states toward nuclear options. While there is no single solution, several approaches have been discussed in past negotiations, existing treaties, and within the UN framework.

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### **5.1. Reviving or Replacing the JCPOA Framework**

A natural starting point is to consider whether the JCPOA, or a modified version of it, can be restored. This would involve reintroducing strict limits on Iran's uranium enrichment, reducing stockpiles, and granting the IAEA full access in exchange for sanctions relief. The main challenge is the lack of trust between the United States and Iran, and the exclusion of regional actors such as Israel and Saudi Arabia in the earlier framework, which undermined the deal's credibility.

### **5.2. Expanding Regional Dialogue**

Instead of focusing solely on Iran, a more ambitious pathway could involve regional talks on security guarantees and arms control. Proposals for a Middle East Nuclear Weapon Free Zone have circulated for decades. While political divisions have blocked progress, reviving these discussions could move the issue away from a single country's compliance and toward a collective regional responsibility.

### **5.3. Strengthening the Role of the IAEA**

The IAEA remains the backbone of nuclear monitoring. Delegates may consider ways to strengthen its mandate through increased funding, technology sharing, and binding commitments from Middle Eastern states to adopt more intrusive inspections under the Additional Protocol. Such steps would help rebuild transparency and trust even if broader political agreements remain stalled.

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#### **5.4. Security Guarantees and Confidence-Building Measures**

Many states in the Middle East view nuclear weapons as insurance against external threats. Diplomatic efforts could include credible security guarantees such as non-aggression pacts, UN-backed assurances, or regional defense dialogues. Confidence-building measures such as nuclear safety cooperation, transparency declarations, and direct communication channels between rivals could reduce the risk of miscalculation.

#### **5.5. Great-Power Cooperation**

Lasting solutions require at least minimal cooperation among the permanent members of the Security Council. Agreement on key principles such as enrichment thresholds and a commitment not to turn the Middle East into a proxy battleground would strengthen non-proliferation norms. Without this, enforcement mechanisms collapse, as the breakdown of Resolution 2231 already demonstrated.

#### **5.6. Leveraging Economic and Energy Incentives**

Nuclear choices in the Middle East are tied not only to security but also to energy demands and national prestige. Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates all promote civilian nuclear power as part of their future. International frameworks that ensure access to peaceful nuclear technology under strict monitoring could address energy needs while reducing the temptation to develop weapons.

#### **5.7. Preventing Escalation through Sanctions and Diplomacy**

Sanctions will continue to be part of international responses, but they work best when combined with diplomacy. Overreliance on sanctions alone risks entrenching defiance and accelerating nuclear activity. A balanced approach that combines targeted sanctions with opportunities for diplomatic recognition and relief is more likely to prevent escalation.

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## 6. Preferable Sources

When conducting research for this committee, delegates are encouraged to rely on credible and authoritative sources. The following are recommended:

**6.1. Official UN Sources and National Government Websites** – Use documents, reports, and press releases from the United Nations, along with official statements and data from your assigned country's government websites. These provide the most accurate reflection of your country's policies and positions.

**6.2. Internationally Recognized Media Outlets** – Platforms such as Reuters and Al Jazeera are considered reliable for global coverage and analysis of current events. These sources ensure factual accuracy and a wide international perspective.

**6.3. Local and Regional News Articles** – For country-specific or region-specific developments, delegates may refer to local newspapers, journals, or credible online news outlets. These can provide valuable context and insight into issues on the ground.

**Note:** Delegates are advised not to cite Wikipedia or other open-source platforms directly, as they may contain unverified information. Instead, always trace information back to primary sources or reputable news agencies.

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## 7. Suggested Citation Format for Background Guide

You can list these under a “Sources and Further Reading” section in the background guide, like so:

1. United Nations Security Council –  
[\[https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/\]](https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/)  
(<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/>).
2. UN Office for Disarmament Affairs –  
[\[https://www.un.org/disarmament/\]](https://www.un.org/disarmament/)(<https://www.un.org/disarmament/>).
3. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) – [<https://www.iaea.org/>]  
(<https://www.iaea.org/>).
4. U.S. Department of State – [<https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-arms-control-and-international-security-affairs/arms-control-verification-and-compliance/>]  
(<https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-arms-control-and-international-security-affairs/arms-control-verification-and-compliance/>).
5. European External Action Service –  
[\[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/iran-nuclear-deal-jcpoa\\_en\]](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/iran-nuclear-deal-jcpoa_en)  
([https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/iran-nuclear-deal-jcpoa\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/iran-nuclear-deal-jcpoa_en)).
6. UK Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office –  
[\[https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office\]](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office)  
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office>).
7. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) –  
[\[https://www.sipri.org/\]](https://www.sipri.org/)(<https://www.sipri.org/>).

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8. Arms Control Association (ACA) – [<https://www.armscontrol.org/>].  
(<https://www.armscontrol.org/>).
  9. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) –  
(<https://www.csis.org/>)(<https://www.csis.org/>).
  10. Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) – [<https://www.nti.org/>]  
(<https://www.nti.org/>).
  11. Middle East Institute (MEI) – [<https://www.mei.edu/>]  
(<https://www.mei.edu/>).
  12. IAEA Press Releases –  
<https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/pressreleases>  
(<https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/pressreleases>).
  13. UN News – Middle East Section  
<https://news.un.org/en/news/region/middle-east>  
(<https://news.un.org/en/news/region/middle-east>).