



UNHRC

United Nations Human Rights Council

Background guide

Agenda: Deliberation on freedom of speech and expression in the Middle East.

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Letter from the executive board

Greetings, the leaders of tomorrow!

We hope that you've started your preparation for this MUN. If you haven't, make this background the basis for your research. The Rules of Procedure will be explained in the committee, but we'd suggest you find out before the MUN. Note that the background, also known as the agenda guide only puts you on the right pathway. Whenever an open-ended question is mentioned or enough information hasn't been provided, you're requested to research on your own. Check out every link given in the footnotes. The more the research the better. Ensure that the research has been taken from credible sources. You don't want any errors in your speeches, do you?

This could be your very first MUN, and there's a high chance that you're afraid. A little tip, take a deep breath. Awards aren't given out based on your experience. Yes experience matters, but not more than your internal strength! Not more than your determination and your power of words! And if you're terrified of the Executive Board: don't be! We don't harm people!

Another tip: approach the conference with a curious and collaborative spirit. Engage in meaningful dialogue, contributing to both problem identification and solution formulation. Your active participation is essential for a productive and fruitful committee session. The Executive Board will maintain a hands-off approach, allowing you to steer the debate. With diligent research, you can guide the committee towards impactful resolutions.

We believe that the solutions for this agenda require an outside-the-box approach. We request you not to use ChatGPT or any other such AI chatbot for the creation of speeches. If they have been used, you may truthfully and sincerely let us know (in private, if you wish), for we believe that honesty is indeed the greatest policy.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Executive Board at any time before or during the conference in case you have any queries about the agenda or the rules of procedure. We are here to help you during the conference at all times. We request the delegates to not view this conference as a zero-sum game. Model UN conferences are collaborative rather than competitive and we would like to keep this spirit alive during our committee.

Executive Board, UNHRC

Laasya Akula and Manognya Kale

Research guidelines

- Read the background guide, at least **15 days before** the conference and make a note of everything that needs to be understood.
- Google everything and find related documents (UN news articles, scholarly articles) for whatever you didn't get.
- **After completely understanding (subject to how in-depth you wish to go for the research), try understanding your allotted country's perspective on the agenda.**
- Make the stance by the country's perspective on the agenda which shall also define your **foreign policy** (history, past actions etc.)
- Understand the cues and hints that are given minutely in the background guide that may come in handy during the presentation of contentions in committee.
- Take a good look at the **mandate of the council** as to what you can discuss and what you can do in this council. This point is placed here, just because your knowledge base shouldn't be limited to the mandate of the council. Know everything; speak whatever the mandate allows.
- **Follow the links given alongside** and understand why they were given. Read the endnotes.
- Predict the kind of discussions and on what sub-topics they can take place, thereby analyzing your sub-topic research and preparing yourself accordingly.
- Download the **United Nations Charter, the Geneva Conventions of 1949** and additional protocols thereto and other relative treaties and documents given.
- Ask questions regarding the procedure to speak something etc., if you have any, on the day of the conference.
- **Under no circumstances will sources like Wikipedia, or newspapers like the Guardian, Times of India, etc. be accepted.** However, notwithstanding the criteria for acceptance of sources and evidence, delegates are still free to **cite** from any source as they deem fit as a part of their statements.

1. **Procedure**¹: The purpose of putting procedural rules in any committee is to ensure a more organized and efficient debate. The committee will follow the **UNA-USA Rules of Procedure**. Although the Executive Board shall be fairly strict with the Rules of Procedure, the discussion of the agenda will be the main priority. So, delegates are advised not to restrict their statements due to hesitation regarding the procedure.

2. **Foreign Policy**²: Following the foreign policy of one's country is the most important aspect of a Model UN Conference. This is what essentially differentiates a Model UN from other debating

¹ For beginners: [Procedure](#)

² Mandatory reading: [Country profile](#)

Also read: [Human rights charter](#)

formats. To violate one's foreign policy without adequate reason is one of the worst mistakes a delegate can make.

3. Role of the Executive Board: The Executive Board is appointed to facilitate debate. The committee shall decide the direction and flow of the debate. The delegates are the ones who constitute the committee and hence must be uninhibited while presenting their stances on any issue. However, the Executive Board may put forward questions and/or ask for clarifications at all points in time to further debate and test participants.

4. Nature of Source/Evidence: This Background Guide is meant solely for research purposes and must not be cited as evidence to substantiate statements made during the conference. Evidence or proof for substantiating statements made during formal debate is acceptable from the following sources:

a. **United Nations:** Documents and findings by the United Nations or any related UN body are held as credible proof to support a claim or argument. **Multilateral Organizations:** Documents from international organizations like OIC, NATO, SAARC, BRICS, EU, ASEAN, the International Court of Justice, etc. may also be presented as credible sources of information.

b. **Government Reports:** These reports can be used in a similar way as the State Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country.

c. **News Sources:**

1. **Reuters:** Any Reuters article that makes mention of the fact or is in contradiction of the fact being stated by a delegate in the council.

2. **State-operated News Agencies:** These reports can be used in support of or against the State that owns the News Agency. These reports, if credible or substantial enough, can be used in support of or against any country as such but in that situation, may be denied by any other country in the council. Some examples are – RIA Novosti (Russian Federation), Xinhua News Agency (People's Republic of China), etc.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Human rights are inalienable entitlements established not by law, but by human birthright, and the history of human rights has been shaped by all major world events and the struggle for dignity, freedom, and equality everywhere. However, it was only with the signing of the Charter of the United Nations (1945), the subsequent establishment of the United Nations (UN) in the shadow of World War II, and the call to “reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights,” where human rights finally achieved formal, universal recognition. The UN has remained committed to “promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all” through charter-based and treaty-based mechanisms. Charter-based mechanisms derive from the provisions of the Charter, most commonly as subsidiary bodies like the Human Rights Council. Treaty-based mechanisms are the human rights covenants and conventions, along with their respective treaty bodies, which take the force of law and monitor the implementation of the provisions of the treaties. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), a treaty-based mechanism, was adopted by the General Assembly as a “common standard of achievement” for all peoples and countries to pursue the protection and promotion of human rights. After decades of standing alone, this cornerstone document was joined by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and its two Optional Protocols to comprise the International Bill of Rights. It was not just these documents that guided human rights in the UN system, but also the Commission on Human Rights, which manifested as “the main subsidiary organ of the United Nations dealing with human rights.

MANDATE:

Recognising the need to preserve and build on the Commission’s achievements and to redress its shortcomings, the HRC was created to ensure stronger system-wide coherence and preserve the value of human life “in larger freedom.” The Council was charged with, inter alia, assuming the roles and responsibilities of the Commission, promoting the full implementation of human rights obligations, responding to human rights emergencies, undertaking a universal periodic review, and making recommendations to States and the General Assembly (GA).

The Human Rights Council in numbers from 2006 to 2022:

- 51 regular sessions held
- 35 special sessions held
- 8 urgent debates held
- 1,372 resolutions adopted
- 59 Special Procedures mandates established
- 37 commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions set up
- 123 of the 193 UN Member States have served on the Council

What exactly does the UNHRC do?

- Serves as an international forum for dialogue on human rights issues with UN officials and mandated experts, states, civil society, and participants;
- Adopts resolutions or decisions during regular sessions that express the will of the international community on given human rights issues or situations. Adopting a resolution sends a strong political signal which can prompt governments to take action to remedy those situations;
- Holds crisis meetings known as special sessions to respond to urgent human rights situations, 36 of which have been held to date;
- Reviews the human rights records of all United Nations Member States via the Universal Periodic Review;
- Appoints the Special Procedures, independent human rights experts who serve as the eyes and ears of the Council by monitoring situations in specific countries or by looking at specific themes; and
- Authorizes commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions, which produce hard-hitting evidence on war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Rejection of Western Human Rights Criticism³

In February 2023, Tunisian President Kais Saied responded to US and German criticism of his country's human rights situation by rejecting claims of Western "value imperialism." He argued that such critiques are rooted in neo-colonial ambitions and racism and that human rights norms are being used to morally undermine Global South governments. This narrative, suggesting that human rights serve as a modern form of colonial intervention, is gaining traction in nationalist and populist regimes like those in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia.

At the societal level, anti-colonial sentiments are also prevalent. Islamist and nationalist groups often frame their political programs as unique paths to modernity, emphasizing national security and social cohesion over individual rights. Meanwhile, civil society groups, who have been active in anti-authoritarian movements, also criticize Western values-based foreign policies as interventionist and culturally insensitive.

1. Presidential Response to Criticism: Tunisian President Kais Saied has firmly rejected Western criticism of Tunisia's deteriorating human rights situation, framing it as a form of "value imperialism" that echoes past colonial attitudes.

³ Mandatory reading: [Human Rights Dialogue with Arab States](#)
Read for basics: [International standards | OHCHR](#)

2. Critique of Human Rights Norms: Saied argues that Western human rights norms are used to undermine and morally devalue governments in the Global South. He suggests that these critiques mask neo-colonial ambitions and are often motivated by Islamophobic and racist sentiments.

3. Resurgence of Anti-Colonial Rhetoric: This narrative is not limited to Tunisia but is becoming more prominent in other nationalist and populist regimes, such as in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. These regimes use anti-colonial rhetoric to justify their authoritarian practices and mobilize domestic support.

4. Societal-Level Anti-Colonial Sentiments: Anti-colonial views are also common among various societal groups. Islamist and nationalist factions promote a vision of modernity based on local traditions and priorities, often criticizing Western foreign policies as intrusive and culturally insensitive.

Causes:

1. Historical causes

In January 2021, several governments of Middle Eastern countries were called out for misusing the protection guideline for public health to suppress free speech and activism in the region. The countries included Egypt, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, UAE, and Tunisia.

- These governments often view dissent⁴ as a threat to their authority and stability, leading to stringent controls over the media and public expression.
- The rulers believe that by providing freedoms like these, the citizens might go against the government policies regarding religion and culture.
- Countries like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Jordan, and Oman, which have been monarchies and still are, do not give their people freedom of speech and opinion.

MORE TO KNOW

Authoritarian rule: An example of authoritarian rulers' increase of power is the development of ruler's narratives while ignoring the needs of the people. In Iran and Saudi Arabia, the leaders are the political and **Shi'ite (Iran)** and **Sunni (Saudi Arabia)** religious leaders of their countries. In **Turkey**, the President is establishing himself as a **religious leader**. All have **no mandate to serve their people** and are responsible for representing Allah, continuing economic

⁴ Dissent: The holding or expression of opinions at variance with those commonly or officially held. (definition taken from Google)

stability and exporting their natural resources. As titular heads of their Islamic sects, they can command the obedience and loyalty of their citizens regardless of their actions. The current Iranian Ayatollah, Sayyid Ali Hosseini Khamenei, has also maintained his power through the Revolutionary Guard whose Commanders he appoints and dismisses as the military leader who directed the Iraq-Iran war. Furthermore, according to a 6-month study by Reuters, he has amassed a 95 billion dollar fortune which gives him financial means to operate independently from the parliament and national budget without the construction of a heroic personal narrative. As the religious head of the Shi'ites, he expects the loyalty and obedience of the people. He operates his fortune through the company of the Headquarters for Executive Order of Imam, called "Setad".

Has the authoritarian rule resulted in human rights violations by the governments?

2. Legal and Social Restrictions

- **Censorship⁵:** Many Middle Eastern governments practice extensive censorship. Censorship is a policy used by governments to retain control over their people by preventing the public from viewing information considered by the republic as holding the potential to incite a rebellion. This can include blocking websites, monitoring and controlling media outlets, and suppressing social media content. In some countries, criticism of the government, the ruling family, or religious leaders can lead to arrest and imprisonment. Governments have adopted various means to restrict the flow of information online. ⁶
 - **Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates** impose censorship via proxy servers, devices that are interposed between the end-user and the Internet to filter and block specified content.
 - In many countries, including **Jordan**, taxation and telecommunications policies keep **Internet accounts quite costly** and thus beyond the means of many--whether or not this is the objective of these policies.
 - **Tunisia** has enacted the region's most detailed **Internet-specific legislation**, which is in large part designed to ensure that online speech **does not escape the government's tough controls on critical speech** in other media.
 - In the majority of countries where Internet-specific laws have not been enacted, **legal or de facto constraints on freedom of speech and of the press** have a chilling effect on what is expressed online, especially in public forums like open bulletin boards and "chat rooms".
- **Blasphemy⁷ and Morality Laws:** In several Middle Eastern countries, laws against blasphemy or moral offences can severely limit freedom of expression. These laws are often used to suppress

⁵ Read also: [Freedom of press](#)

⁶ Information taken from - [The Human Rights Watch](#)

⁷ Blasphemy is defined as "the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God."
From: [USCIRF](#)

criticism of religion and can lead to harsh penalties, including imprisonment or even corporal punishment. In the Middle East and North Africa, 90% of countries have blasphemy laws:

1. **Saudi Arabia:** Blasphemy is considered a serious offence, punishable by severe penalties, including imprisonment or even death. The legal framework is heavily influenced by Wahhabi interpretations of Islam.
2. **Iran:** Blasphemy is also a grave offence, with harsh penalties. Iranian law can impose severe punishments, including death, for those convicted of insulting Islam or its leaders.
3. **Pakistan:** Blasphemy laws in Pakistan are controversial and can lead to severe penalties, including the death penalty. These laws are often criticized for being misused to settle personal scores or target minority communities.
4. **Egypt:** Blasphemy laws are in place and can lead to imprisonment. The legal system is influenced by both Islamic and civil law, and cases can involve both religious and secular legal arguments.

Blasphemy and moral laws in the Middle East are strongly influenced by **religion and culture**.

These laws often lead to **severe punishments** and can **affect freedom of speech and personal rights**. **International groups and human rights advocates** often criticize these laws for being **too harsh** and limiting individual freedoms.

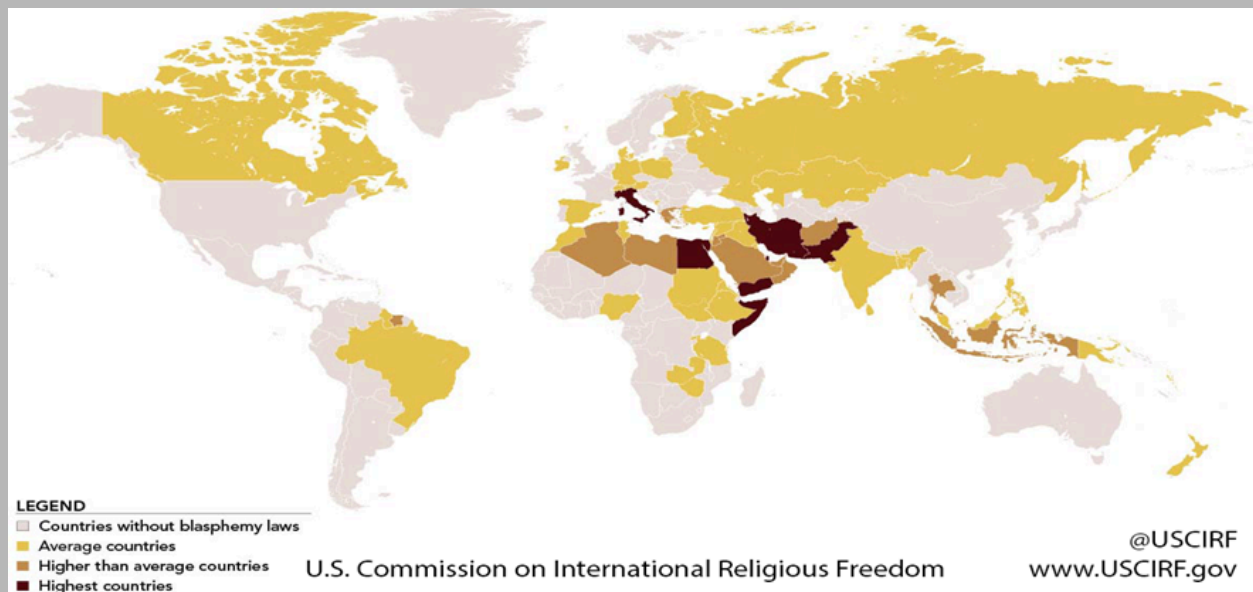
In some countries – such as **Afghanistan, Brunei, Iran, Mauritania, Nigeria, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia** – violations of blasphemy laws can carry the **possibility of the death penalty**.⁸

Analysis:⁹

- Blasphemy laws are astonishingly widespread. **71 countries**, spread out across many regions, maintain such statutes.
- Every one of these blasphemy statutes deviates from at least one internationally recognized human rights principle. Most of these laws fail to respect fully the **human right of freedom of expression**.
- All **five nations** with blasphemy laws that deviate the most from international human rights principles maintain an official state religion.
- Most blasphemy laws studied were vaguely worded, as many failed to specify intent as part of the violation. The vast majority carried unduly harsh penalties for violators.
- Most blasphemy laws were embedded in the criminal codes and **86% of states** with blasphemy laws prescribed **imprisonment** for convicted offenders. Some blasphemy statutes even imposed the **death penalty**.

⁸ From: [Pew Research Center](#)

⁹ From USCRIF



3. Conflicts and Instability

Ongoing conflicts, both internal and regional, contribute to human rights abuses. In war zones and areas of political instability, there is often a breakdown of law and order, leading to violations such as displacement, violence, and lack of basic services.

For example, the Israel-Palestine conflict's deep roots lie in Israel's forced displacement and dispossession of Palestinians in 1948, the military occupation of Gaza and the West Bank in 1967, Israel's ongoing system of apartheid¹⁰ against Palestinians, and its 16-year illegal blockade of the occupied Gaza Strip.

Let's understand more of this through a few case studies¹¹:-

1. Syria

Breakdown of Law and Order

- **Conflict:** The Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011, led to a severe breakdown of law and order. Various factions, including the Assad regime, rebel groups, and extremist organizations like ISIS, have been involved in widespread violence.
- **Human Rights Abuses:** Reports from organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch document numerous violations, including chemical weapon attacks by government

¹⁰ Apartheid can also be a form of human rights violation.

¹¹ From Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Tip from EB: Find out more about each of these conflicts.

forces, arbitrary detentions, and torture. For example, the 2013 Ghouta chemical attack, where hundreds of civilians were killed, highlighted the devastating consequences of the conflict. Humanitarian aid wasn't even provided and the citizens were left to die.

Displacement and Refugee Crises

- **Displacement:** The war has created one of the largest refugee crises in modern history. Over 6.6 million Syrians have been displaced internally, and more than 5.5 million have sought refuge in neighbouring countries and beyond.
- **Human Rights Abuses:** Refugees often face dire conditions in camps. For instance, in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, Syrian refugees live in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, making them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

2. Yemen

Violence and Humanitarian Crises

- **Conflict:** The Yemeni Civil War, which escalated in 2014, involves a conflict between the Houthi rebels and the internationally recognized government, with significant involvement from a Saudi-led coalition.
- **Human Rights Abuses:** The war has led to severe humanitarian crises. Airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition have hit civilian targets, including hospitals and schools. For example, the bombing of a funeral hall in Sana'a in 2016 killed over 140 people. The conflict has also exacerbated a severe famine, with millions of Yemenis suffering from food insecurity and malnutrition.

Breakdown of Basic Services

- **Healthcare and Education:** The war has devastated Yemen's healthcare system and educational infrastructure. Many health facilities have been destroyed or are non-functional, and educational disruptions affect millions of children.

3. Iraq

Human Rights Violations by Multiple Actors

- **Conflict:** The Iraq War (2003-2011) and the rise of ISIS (2014-2017) led to significant human rights abuses.
- **Violations:** The invasion and subsequent occupation by U.S.-led forces saw incidents such as the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, where detainees were subjected to torture and mistreatment. Under ISIS, numerous atrocities occurred, including the mass execution of Yazidis in Sinjar in 2014.

Displacement and Refugee Crises

- **Displacement:** The conflicts in Iraq led to massive displacement, with millions of Iraqis forced from their homes. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees faced dire conditions and lacked access to basic services and protection.

4. Egypt

Authoritarian Governance

- **Conflict:** The Arab Spring of 2011 led to the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak and the rise of Mohamed Morsi. His ouster in 2013 led to the consolidation of power by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.
- **Human Rights Abuses:** Under Sisi's regime, there have been widespread human rights abuses, including crackdowns on dissent, arbitrary detentions, and the suppression of free speech. For example, the 2013 Rabaa massacre saw security forces kill hundreds of Morsi supporters during a sit-in protest.

Restrictions on Civil Society

- **Civil Society:** The Egyptian government has heavily restricted civil society organizations, limiting their ability to operate freely and advocate for human rights. This has stifled dissent and reduced accountability for human rights violations.

5. Bahrain

Authoritarian Governance and Repression

- **Conflict:** In 2011, the Bahraini government cracked down on pro-democracy protests as part of the Arab Spring.
- **Human Rights Abuses:** The government's response involved the use of excessive force, including the deployment of Saudi troops to suppress demonstrations. Human Rights Watch reported on the torture of detainees and the use of live ammunition against peaceful protesters.

4. Human rights violations by Non-State Actors

- ➔ Non-state actors are entities that participate or act in international relations, with sufficient power to influence and cause change without any affiliation to established institutions of a state.

- These individuals or organizations have significant political, economic, or social influence without being allied to any particular country or state.
- Few UN experts report that a non-state actor can be any actor on the international stage other than a sovereign state.
- While NSAs like IGOs play a crucial role in maintaining International Peace, the infamous NSAs like the Violent Non-State Actors (VNSAs) pose a serious threat to International Peace and Security. In international relations, violent non-state actors (VNSA) are individuals and groups that are wholly or partly independent of state governments and that threaten to or use violence to achieve their goals.

In the Middle East, human rights violations by various actors are evident in multiple conflicts:¹²

1. Government Forces

Syria

- **Government Actions:** The Syrian government, under President Bashar al-Assad, has been accused of severe human rights violations during the Syrian Civil War. Reports include the use of chemical weapons, such as the 2013 Ghouta attack, and widespread torture and extrajudicial killings.
- **Sources:** Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch document these abuses extensively. Amnesty International - Syria, Human Rights Watch - Syria

2. Rebel and Militant Groups

ISIS (Islamic State)

- **Militant Actions:** ISIS, which controlled parts of Iraq and Syria, committed numerous atrocities, including mass executions, such as the Sinjar massacre where hundreds of Yazidis were killed. The group also engaged in sectarian violence and forced recruitment.
- **Sources:** Reports from Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International highlight these abuses. Human Rights Watch - ISIS, Amnesty International - ISIS

Solutions

1. International diplomacy and pressure:

- Foreign countries can pressurize the governments of the Middle Eastern countries by targeting sanctions against them which might result in the changing of their policies. International peace-creating

¹² Tip from EB: Go ahead and explore more about this situation, especially the Syrian case study (the first one).

bodies can even help by lawfully solving the criminal problems of these countries and supporting the judiciary. They should work to facilitate peace negotiations and mediate conflicts.

- International bodies like the UN and NATO can put sanctions on the governments. This way, the leaders will try to understand the reason behind the sanctions and maybe understand the need for the removal of laws that restrict the citizens from expressing their ideas.

Diplomatic Efforts

Syria:

- **UN Mediation:** The United Nations has been involved in facilitating peace talks, including the Geneva process and the Astana talks¹³ (led by Russia, Turkey, and Iran). These efforts aim to address the Syrian conflict's root causes and establish a framework for political resolution.
- **Challenges:** Despite these efforts, the conflict remains unresolved, with ongoing violence and complex geopolitical interests complicating the peace process.

Yemen:

- **UN-brokered Peace Talks:** The UN has facilitated several rounds of peace talks between the Yemeni government and Houthi rebels. Initiatives such as the Stockholm Agreement (2018) aimed to de-escalate the conflict and improve humanitarian conditions.
- **Challenges:** The conflict continues, with sporadic violations of ceasefires and ongoing humanitarian crises.

2. Accountability

- **International Criminal Court (ICC):** The ICC has investigated and prosecuted individuals for war crimes and crimes against humanity in various conflicts. For example, the ICC has ongoing investigations into alleged crimes in Libya, Syria, and Sudan¹⁴.
- **Ad Hoc Tribunals:** Other mechanisms, like the Special Tribunal for Lebanon¹⁵, deal with specific cases related to international crimes.

¹³Read also: [Ali Jazeera - astana talks](#)

¹⁴Read also: [Situations under investigation](#)

¹⁵ Mandatory reading: [Justice served: Lebanon special tribunal closes](#)
Mandatory reading: [UAE: Sweeping Legal 'Reforms' Deepen Repression](#)

3. Facilitating Inclusive Peace Processes

- **Inclusive Negotiations:** Ensure that peace processes include all relevant stakeholders, including marginalized groups and civil society organizations. This inclusivity can help address the root causes of conflict and human rights violations.
 - **Conflict Resolution Mechanisms:** Develop and support mechanisms for non-violent conflict resolution and mediation. Effective dialogue and negotiation can help prevent and resolve conflicts that lead to human rights abuses.
-

The question is: how well is any of this working?¹⁶

1. Diplomatic efforts and sanctions have had mixed results. While some progress has been made in negotiations and accountability, conflicts persist, and human rights violations continue in many areas.
2. Geopolitical interests, lack of cooperation from some parties, and complex on-ground realities often hinder the effectiveness of these efforts. Additionally, sanctions can sometimes exacerbate humanitarian conditions for ordinary people rather than solely targeting perpetrators.

Through the debates in the committee, we shall try to find the reasons for its effectiveness or why it isn't the best possible solution. We will even try to find better solutions. Are we only looking at the symptoms and trying to find solutions? Is that resulting in reduced efficiency? Do we have to solve the causes first?

Complex On-Ground Realities

1. Humanitarian Crises:

Compounded Issues: Conflicts often lead to severe humanitarian crises, which can be exacerbated by international sanctions. For example, the blockade of Gaza, imposed by Israel and Egypt, has led to dire conditions for civilians, including shortages of essential goods and services.

2. Fragmented Control:

Territorial Fragmentation: In conflict zones like Syria and Libya, control is fragmented among various factions, making it difficult to implement and monitor peace agreements or humanitarian aid effectively. Different groups may control different regions, each with its own policies and restrictions.

¹⁶ Mandatory reading: [*Freedom Improved in the Middle East, but Authoritarian Repression Persists*](#)

3. Infrastructure Damage:

Destruction: Wars often result in the destruction of infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, and utilities. This damage complicates the delivery of humanitarian aid and recovery efforts, and rebuilding can be slow and hindered by ongoing conflict.

Complications:

- **Syria:**
 - **Geneva Peace Talks:** The Geneva talks have faced challenges due to the Assad regime's limited cooperation and the involvement of multiple external actors with conflicting interests. The lack of a unified opposition and the persistence of violence have undermined the peace process.
 - **Astana Talks:** Although the Astana talks have achieved some localized de-escalation and the establishment of "de-escalation zones," they have not led to a comprehensive national peace agreement. The continued influence of external actors like Russia and Iran complicates the implementation of agreements.
- **Yemen:** The Saudi-led coalition's involvement in Yemen and the humanitarian impact of the blockade highlight how geopolitical interests and sanctions can have severe repercussions for civilians. Despite international criticism and calls for an end to the blockade, the humanitarian crisis continues.
 - **Stockholm Agreement:** The Stockholm Agreement, reached in December 2018, was a significant diplomatic milestone aimed at de-escalating the conflict in Yemen. The agreement focused on several key areas:
 - **Ceasefire in Hodeidah:** The agreement established a ceasefire in the crucial port city of Hodeidah, which is a vital entry point for humanitarian aid. This was intended to reduce hostilities and allow for the safe delivery of aid.
 - **Prisoner Exchange:** It facilitated a large-scale prisoner exchange, with thousands of detainees being released, which was seen as a confidence-building measure.
 - **Humanitarian Access:** The agreement called for improved humanitarian access to areas affected by the conflict, particularly those under siege.

The sanctions put by the international unions have resulted in some harmful repercussions.

Economic Impact:

- **Targeted Sanctions:** While sanctions are designed to pressure regimes or groups responsible for abuses, they can also negatively impact ordinary citizens. For example, economic sanctions on Iran and Syria have led to shortages of basic goods and services, affecting the general population.

Unintended Consequences:

- **Humanitarian Impact:** Sanctions can sometimes worsen humanitarian crises. In Gaza, the blockade has contributed to extreme poverty and restricted access to medical supplies, impacting the daily lives of civilians rather than solely affecting those responsible for the conflict.

Adaptive Strategies:

- **Circumvention:** Regimes or groups targeted by sanctions often find ways to find a way around them, such as through illicit trade or by leveraging black markets. This can reduce the intended impact of sanctions and prolong the conflict.

QARMA (Questions A Resolution Must Answer):

- ★ How have leaders in authoritarian regimes, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, maintained their power, and what role does this play in human rights abuses?
- ★ Can the impact created through blasphemy and morality laws on personal freedoms and human rights in the Middle East be completely eradicated?
- ★ In what better ways can the already present legal frameworks be strengthened to reduce human rights violations?
- ★ How can the new solutions be implemented in such a way that the execution and maintenance process doesn't become complicated?
- ★ How can the conservative mindsets of the rulers of the monarch be changed to bring development in the form of freedom without completely oppressing their ideas?
- ★ How do ongoing conflicts, such as those in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq, contribute to human rights abuses and humanitarian crises and how can their situation be improved?
- ★ What can other countries do to allow better human rights alleviation, can workshops held by these countries be taken into consideration or is it the task of the Middle Eastern countries?

Basic MUN Terms

1. **Rules of Procedure (RoP):** The rules that dictate how to run a Model United Nations committee.
2. **Decorum:** A call to order. The chair will call for decorum if delegates get too loud or disrespectful.

3. **Motion:** How you ask for something in MUN in the official request form. You can motion for many different actions to guide the debate forward in a specific way.
4. **Simple Majority:** A vote that requires at least one over 50% of the vote to pass. Most procedural votes require a simple majority.
5. **Blocs:** Groups of delegates who agree on certain principles. These blocs will work together to write draft resolutions, which they later introduce and vote on.

Points & Inquiries

1. **Point of Parliamentary Inquiry:** A question from a delegate to the chair about the Rules of Procedure (RoP) or anything else they don't understand in the committee.
2. **Point of Information:** When a delegate asks a question of another delegate. These will take place after a delegate completes a speech on the Speaker's List when approved by the chair.
3. **Follow-Ups:** A request to ask a second question after having already asked one as a point of information.
4. **Point of Personal Privilege:** Can be called for when a delegate feels hindered by something outside of the debate, that is not covered by the RoP. Examples can be going to the bathroom, room temperature and inability to hear another speaker.
5. **Point of Order:** Called by a delegate on another delegate, when the Rules of Procedure are not being followed.
6. **Right of Reply:** When a delegate feels their country was insulted during another delegate's GSL speech, they can ask for the Right of Reply.

Start of Session

1. **Roll Call:** A procedure performed by the chairs at the beginning of each committee session to know how many delegates are present in the room (for a simple majority and 2/3rds majority voting) and to know who is 'present' and who is 'present and voting'.
2. **Present:** What a delegate says when they are present in the committee and want to reserve the right to abstain on the final vote.
3. **Present and Voting:** What a delegate stays during roll call when they forgo their right to abstain. This means they can only vote for or against the draft resolution. This is usually done when they feel strongly about the topic.

Debate

1. **Speaker's List:** The Speaker's List, or General Speaker's List, is the default format of the committee. The Speaker's List is suspended when a motion for something else is passed by the committee.
2. **Yield:** Used in MUN for when a delegate finishes their speech with the extra time that needs to choose what to do with it. The delegate can yield, or give up, their time to:
 - a. The Chair: Meaning they give up the rest of their time.
 - b. Another Delegate: Another delegate gets to use the remaining time in their speech.
 - c. Question: The speaker will take questions and answer them with the remainder of their time.
3. **Informal Debate:** When delegates motion to leave the Speaker's List for a specific purpose. That can be speaking about a specific topic, speaking in a format moderated by delegates or lobbying and writing the draft resolutions. This is done through a Moderated Caucus, Unmoderated Caucus and Consultation.
4. **Moderated Caucus:** A less formal discussion on a subtopic within the general topic, chosen by a delegate and passed by a majority. Delegates raise their placards to offer Moderated Caucuses when the chair opens the floor to motions. Moderated Caucuses need to offer overall time, individual speakers' time and topic of discussion. **Unmoderated Caucus:** Lobbying time. When motioning for an Unmoderated Caucus usually no topic is needed, only the general time requested for the unmoderated caucus. Once passed, delegates get out of their seat and move freely around the room. During this time they can lobby, negotiate with other delegates and blocs and write draft resolutions.
5. **Consultation:** An informal discussion where the delegate who is speaking chooses the next speaker. When motioning for a Consultation, you only ask for a general time. The delegate who motioned for the CotW speaks first for as long as they like.
6. **Table:** To suspend action or discussion until later.

Resolution Writing

1. **Clause:** A MUN clause is written instruction detailing the practical policy you want to implement if the resolution passes.
2. **Draft Resolution:** The final draft of a working paper where the blocs combined policy ideas are properly formatted and approved by the chair for both content and

format. Once approved by the chair they can be discussed and, after the debate is closed, voted upon.

3. **Sponsors:** Delegates who were major contributors to the draft resolution. They are the ones who wrote the majority of the document. The number of sponsors is limited to two for this MUN.
4. **Signatories:** Delegates who support a draft resolution, or at least want to see it discussed. There is no limit on the number of signatories.
5. **Preambulatory Clause:** Clauses that explain why you are implementing the policies described in the Operative Clauses. Preambulatory Clauses are usually italicized and not numbered.
6. **Operative Clause:** Clauses that detail the policies / explain what the draft resolution is going to do. Operative clauses can go into detailed sub-clauses to properly convey the idea. The first words are italicized and each clause is numbered.
7. **Amendment:** A written change made to an operative clause. Amendments can change an existing clause, add a new one or delete a section, or an entire clause.
8. **Friendly Amendment:** A change to a clause approved by all the sponsors.
9. **Unfriendly Amendment:** A change to a clause that at least one sponsor does not agree to. These go to vote and are only added to the draft resolution that is passed with a majority in favor of the amendment.
10. **Merging:** When two or more draft resolutions are combined. This usually results in the blocs merging as well to give themselves more voting power.

Voting

Vote by Roll Call: A Motion to have each country declare verbally if they are “For”, “Against”, “Pass” or “Abstain.”

- For: When a delegate casts their vote in favor of the draft resolution.
- Against: When a delegate casts their vote against the draft resolution.
- Abstain: When a delegate formally declines to vote either for or against the draft resolution.

Adjourn: A motion to completely end the committee session until the next conference.

Endnote

We request you not hesitate to reach out to the EB members before, during and after the MUN sessions. Please do not end your research here. Question every bit of this document. Understand why these sub-topics have been chosen. You are the representative of your country, no matter how big or small. Please do justice to your role.

Thank you!
