WARMUN 2021

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Agenda I:

Mitigating the Impact of the Humanitarian Emergencies on Minority Rights in Southeast Asia

Agenda II:

Ensuring the Safety of Cross-Border Journalists

Chaired by Jewel Wang Chen, Hema Dabbara and Ahmet Cevik

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIRS

Dear delegates,

Welcome to Warwick Model United Nations (WARMUN) 2022! My name is Jewel Wang Chen, and I will be chairing the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) alongside Hema Dabbara and Ahmet Cevik. On behalf of the Dias, I sincerely welcome you to the OHCHR committee.

The topics to be discussed at this year's conference are ***mitigating the impact of the humanitarian emergencies on minority rights in Southeast Asia*** *and* ***ensuring the safety of cross-border journalists.*** *These topics were crafted in a way that would not only facilitate meaningful discussions, but also encourage delegates to actively participate and interact with others in order to come up with constructive solutions to tackle human rights violations around the world. Thus, we urge all of you to challenge yourselves and step out of your comfort zones: should you deliver a speech or simply open yourself up during an Unmoderated Caucus, these are ways to fulfil the vision and dynamic of Model UN. By the end of the three-day conference, we hope you will walk out of the committee room with a newly acquired perspective of the world and a better understanding of diplomacy.*

Should you have any concerns or questions prior to the conference, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to meeting everyone at WARMUN!

Your chairs,

Jewel Wang Chen, Hema Dabbara and Ahmet Cevik

YOUR CHAIRS

Jewel Wang Chen	*Jewel is a second-year student studying Law at Queen Mary, University of London. She started her MUN journey in her freshman*

	year of high school, and has since then accumulated over 20 conferences of experience. Having had her first delegate experience in the Human Rights Council, she cannot wait to see how delegates come up with solutions to tackle current human rights abuse and violation in Southeast Asia.
Hema Dabbara	*Hema is a third-year student studying Marketing at Hult International Business School. She started her MUN journey in highschool and since then has filled in various roles in over 10 conferences. Since her experience in the Human Rights Council, she has gained a keen passion for Human Rights and is looking forward to the discussions and solutions that delegates bring forward during the weekend of WarMUN.*
Ahmet Cevik	*Ahmet is a post-graduate student studying Engineering Business Management at WMG, University of Warwick. He has been in Humanitarian Aid for four years by working in crisis-affected areas such as Sudan, Chad, Niger, Tanzania, Somalia, Kenya, Syria, Palestine and Israel. He has had the opportunity to personally diagnose humanitarian crises in the field with all their aspects, through their institutional work in coordination with the UN agencies.*

INTRODUCTION TO OHCHR

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is the leading UN entity on human rights. The main mission of the OHCHR is to not only give priority to addressing ongoing human rights violations around the world, but to also protect

and stipulate the full range of human rights as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights was established in December of 1993 through resolution 48/141, as adopted by the General Assembly. In reaffirming its commitment to the principles of the UN Charter, the Assembly created the post of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, appointing the Secretary-General of the UN to assign administrative and policy-making power to the OHCHR. The main objectives of the OHCHR are to promote international cooperation for human rights; support human rights organs; and respond to serious human rights violations.

One of the mechanisms and powers of the OHCHR is to mandate fact-finding missions to investigate violations of international humanitarian law. The Human Rights Council, in particular, is a committee of independent human rights experts who provide legal research and report on the situation or humanitarian emergency in a country.

Unlike the UN Security Council, the OHCHR passes resolutions to **recommend** member states to take actions in order to tackle human rights issues. In order to pass a resolution, the commission will require **simple majority**.

AGENDA I: Mitigating the impact of humanitarian emergencies on minority rights in Southeast Asia

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

Our first Agenda on the table to be addressed considers the impact of humanitarian emergencies on minority rights. In particular, we will be tackling the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Southeast Asia, specifically in **Myanmar** and **Bangladesh**. These two countries are suffering from an unprecedentedly large scale military and political violence, putting vulnerable groups of individuals, such as children, women, the elders and the disabled, in grave danger. By cooperating with other Member States, delegates should respond to each crisis accordingly, and provide a comprehensive humanitarian response regarding minority rights in these two Southeast Asian countries. International humanitarian actors must be quick and efficient in order to respond to these crises.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

A humanitarian emergency refers to a series of events that threaten the health, safety, security and well-being of a group of people, thereby violating and deteriorating the basic human rights of individuals residing in these areas. While these individuals attempt to recover from life-threatening hazards and damaged communities, humanitarian needs must be provided and challenges be tackled. There are many types of humanitarian emergencies; these crises can arise from natural disasters, man-made emergencies, or a combination of both. In a crisis, the most critical matters that need to be addressed are: **food security, armed conflicts,** and **displaced populations.** Failure to address these humanitarian issues will aggravate their most basic and essential humanitarian needs, thereby worsening the crisis itself.

In light of how multifaceted and complex the humanitarian emergency in Myanmar and Bangladesh is, we have narrowed down the issue to addressing the discrimination on minority rights. Southeast Asia's ethnic and religious diversity is made up of more than 1,200 languages and dialects spoken, as well as a wide array of religions and traditions. While some ethnic groups across Southeast Asia have been reinforced and celebrated, many others are being marginalised, receiving unfair treatment, discrimination, and even denied basic civil rights. This means the minority ethnic groups are not being represented and heard, being economically deprived of. That being said, delegates should direct their attention to the impact of humanitarian crises on deprivation of minority rights in Southeast Asia.

HISTORICAL SITUATION

Located in Southeast Asia, Myanmar is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse countries in the world, with 135 separate ethnic groups and 100 spoken dialects and languages. The ethnic groups are categorised into 8 major national ethnic races, which are Bamar, Chin, Kachin, Kayin, Kayah, Shan, Rakhine and Mon. However, with the Bamar as the dominant ethnic group (consisting of 68% of the whole population), the ethnic minority groups are often concerned with cultural homogenisation, where cultural diversity is reduced through the popularisation of the dominating Bamar culture. They fear a "monoculture", where their own heritage and lands will be culturally unified.

In 1982, this fear was turned into reality for the Rohingya population, who, under the 1982 Citizenship Law, were being denied citizenship, and rendered stateless. This began a cycle of displacement, being forced to relocate from their homes. Ever since, civilians have been suffering from military and political oppression, all in an attempt to fight for their independence. In the northern Rakhine state, the then-ruling state, State Law and Order Restoration Council, enlarged their military presence and the Rohingya were subject to compulsory labour, rape, executions and torture. The abuse of human rights in Myanmar and lack of protection of the religious and ethnic minorities have raised political concerns in the international community- without accountability and under-reported crimes, the minority population, mainly of women and children, are at high risk of conflicts.

The Rohingya people have faced decades of systematic discrimination, statelessness and targeted violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar. Such persecution has forced Rohingya women, girls, boys and men into Bangladesh for many years, with significant spikes following violent attacks in 1978, 1991-1992, and again in 2016. Yet it was August 2017 that triggered by far the largest and fastest refugee influx into Bangladesh. Since then, more than 773,000 Rohingya—including more than 400,000 children—have fled into Cox's Bazar.

Timeline

2017- State security forces launched a campaign of terror targeting the Rohingya community, exerting horrific violence and abuse. More than 700,000 Rohingya people fled from, moving across the border to Bangladesh, seeking safety there as refugees. 6,700 deaths were reported.

2021- The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the conditions in which the Rohingya people lived as strict lockdown measures were imposed and freedom of movement was restricted.

2021 February - A military junta overthrew and detained Myanmar's elected leaders in an army coup, further worsening the refugee crisis. The junta imposed movement restrictions and aid blockages on Rohingya camps, causing water scarcity and food shortages. The nationwide broadcast of mass killings, torture and war crimes caused international media backlash, raising humanitarian concerns around the world.

2021 March - A massive fire broke out in Cox's Bazar, the largest refugee camp in Bangladesh, which resided around 900,000 Rohingya people. 15 people lost their lives, 560 people were injured, and about 45,000 people were displaced. The conditions of the shelters, having been built with temporary and flimsy materials, meant that people were suffering from inadequate living conditions and increased violence.

CURRENT SITUATION

Because of their stripped legal right to citizenship in Myanmar, the Rohingya population are denied the ability to return to their homes in Myanmar, and have no choice but to live in Bangladesh, where they have restricted freedom of movement and no access to livelihoods (i.e ability to work). In addition, authorities located in these refugee camps are reported to have carried out serious human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, unlawful detention, torture and extrajudicial executions. They also suppressed peaceful

protests by opposition political parties and students through excessive force. That being said, humanitarian assistance from other countries is essential for their survival.

Inequality in ethnic diversity

The ethnic diversity in Southeast Asia has, to some extent, been translated into political and socio-economic inequality. The portrayal of a certain ethnicity in a Southeast Asian country by a western or third-country media source has resulted in an under-representation of the wider community and negative stereotyping of minorities. Without an accurate depiction of the diverse ethnicity, the international media may only highlight the particular sufferings of an ethnic population, thereby undermining other minority groups. This includes gender-based violence, where women are being marginalised, suffering from economic exclusion and religious intolerance.

Impact of Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 global pandemic has severely exacerbated the problem of discrimination on the minority population of Rohingya. Healthcare facilities insufficiently provide treatment to those that have been tested Covid-19 positive. The lack of clear and accessible information about healthcare services and facilities available for refugees severely undermine humanitarian agencies' efforts to mitigate the discrimination on minority rights. Reports have also indicated that the frequency of violence against women and domestic violence had increased during the pandemic.

Because of the economic crisis, the efforts made by the international community to combat violence and exercise the human rights of the minority population have been challenged and rendered ineffective. That being said, delegates should collaborate effectively provide economic resources where needed and work together to eliminate corruption, further fostering respect and non-discrimination.

Human rights situation of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

The average population density in the Rohingya refugee camps is about 40,000 people per square kilometre (ACAPS, 2022). According to the UN Population Fund, Bangladesh has the most densely populated refugee camp in the world, and despite this, Bangladesh has not acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, nor has the international community responded to the lack of transparency in the local authorities' decision-making.

According to an Amnesty International Report in 2020, the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are denied the "freedom of expression, assembly and movement, and access to healthcare and education" (Amnesty, 2020). Past reports from human rights organisation located in Bangladesh have reported extrajudicial executions since 2017, alleging unlawful deliberate killing of Rohingya refugees. Amnesty International has pointed out that while Bangladesh authorities have shown positive support for Rohingya refugees, there is a lack of transparency in their decision-making when concerning their human rights. The international community must conduct thorough investigation into the internal policies in Bangladesh and subsequently provide assistance to protect the refugees.

Misinformation in the international media

The humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and Myanmar has exacerbated the political and socio-economic inequality among various ethnic groups, not just in the region, but also in the wider, international scene. The lack of a comprehensive and accurate media representation of journalist sources is subsequently reflected in the financial attitudes of international actors towards Southeast Asian countries. Delegates must consider ways to promote inclusive media representation.

MAJOR STANCES

Bangladesh

Though Bangladesh is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the country has been sheltering and providing humanitarian support for the Rohingyas for over a half-decade now. During the tense period of the military crackdown, the country saw a massive influx of Rohingyas fleeing from Myanmar, Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stated: "We have the ability to feed 160 million people of Bangladesh and we have enough food security to feed the 700,000 refugees." The local residents, groups, and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) of Bangladesh provided emergency food, shelter, and other assistance to the new arrivals.

Even though Bangladesh has shown solidarity by helping out 1.1 million Rohingya refugees, in reality, Bangladesh's own economic difficulties and political uncertainty has restricted Bangladesh's own capability to sufficiently aid them. Bangladesh is criticising the lack of international response towards the safety of the Rohingya minority in Bangladesh. Indeed, the UN's international courts of justice, despite bringing the situation in Myanmar to the table and condemning the genocide case, there has not been any concrete solutions being implemented.

People's Republic of China

After the Myanmar junta launched a coup in February of 2021, China reacted with some degree of caution, calling out the irrational action of the military, but nevertheless endorsing the regime. China, in an attempt to take advantage of Myanmar's natural resources and strategic location, seems to be ramping up its support for the junta and continuing economic investments with Myanmar. In particular, the two countries are boosting cross-border cooperation through infrastructure projects such as the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor and cross-border industrial zones.

United States of America

The United States today (22 September 2022) announced more than $170 million in additional humanitarian assistance for Rohingya inside and outside Burma, as well as for host

communities in Bangladesh. With this new funding, the total assistance of the USA in response to the Rohingya Refugee Crisis has reached nearly $1.9 billion since August 2017, when over 740,000 Rohingya were forced to flee to safety in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

The United States applauds the generosity of the government and people of Bangladesh and other Rohingya-hosting countries in the region. Recognizing that conditions in Burma do not currently allow for the safe, voluntary, dignified, and sustainable return and reintegration of displaced Rohingya, we are working with the Government of Bangladesh, Rohingya, and people within Burma toward finding solutions to the crisis. We also commend our humanitarian partners for the lifesaving work they continue to do every day.

Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), or otherwise known as Doctors Without Borders, is an international humanitarian medical non-governmental organisation (NGO) that aims to provide assistance to distressed populations and victims of armed conflict and other natural disasters. In 1991, the organisation provided humanitarian resources to many Rohingya refugee camps in Southwestern Bangladesh, offering medical services, as well as food and water. Since then, they have been running medical facilities in Kutupalong and other major refugees in Bangladesh. They now have approximately 16,000 individual mental health consultations and 18,000 group mental health sessions in the region. Delegates should bear in mind of international agencies such as the MSF and their statements of urgency for the international community to provide more humanitarian aid.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS / FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. How to resolve the under-reported and under-prosecuted violence and conflicts in Southeast Asia (i.e investigative reports, journalists)

2. How to ensure that political mandates foster an environment of protection of human rights?

3. How to draw other international agencies and organisations into play and ask for more humanitarian assistance (i.e Security Council)?

4. Delegates may also draw their attention to the economic crisis and violation of human rights in Sri Lanka: by making references to the crisis, delegates may consider possible alignments between the two crises and how measures adopted in Sri Lanka can be similarly implemented in Myanmar and Bangladesh.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

1. Relief web int. Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan 2022 Mid-Year Report. 2 Sep 2022 https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-humanitarian-response-plan-2022-mid-year-report-1-january-june-30#:~:text=The%20people%20of%20Myanmar%20continue,and%20driving%20deep%20food%20insecurity.

2. Resolutions and decisions of the Human Rights council during its 51st regular session (12 September - 7 October 2022): https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session51/regular-session

3. A/HRC/RES/51/1: **Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka:** https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/520/77/PDF/G2252077.pdf?OpenElement

4. Amnesty International briefing, "Let Us Speak for Our Rights: Human Rights Situation of Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh": https://reliefweb.int/attachments/a75a4bc5-3af6-37a5-b75b-f27e76b7ba80/ASA1328842020ENGLISH.PDF

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"Stance of Europian Union" *Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. (2022, August 25). Fifth anniversary of the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar: joint ministerial statement. GOV.UK. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fifth-anniversary-of-the-rohingya-crisis-in-myanmar-joint-ministerial-statement*

"United States Announces More Than $170 Million in Humanitarian Assistance for the Rakhine State/Rohingya Refugee Crisis." *United States Department of State,* 22 Sept. 2022,https://www.state.gov/united-states-announces-more-than-170-million-in-humanitarian-assistance-for-the-rakhine-state-rohingya-refugee-crisis/

"What Is a Humanitarian Emergency?" *Humanitarian Coalition*, https://www.humanitariancoalition.ca/what-is-a-humanitarian-emergency.

AGENDA II: Ensuring the safety of cross-border journalists

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

As previously stated, one of the mandates of the OHCHR is to implement and execute plans for a group of independent experts to investigate and account for the most severe issues in humanitarian crises, to which intergovernmental organs respond and send reinforcements and help. Thus, it is important to fund cross-border investigations and support the effort of journalists who risk their lives to tell stories. Moreover, cross-border investigations play a crucial role in Article 10: Right to a Fair Trial, to ensure that all the facts are transparent. To achieve this, many journalists around the world in certain cases risk their lives to investigate sensitive matters that often are surrounded with political pressure. In recent years, many journalists have been oppressed in an attempt to silence the truth, and we saw this, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The safety of journalists is of utmost importance in relation with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and any acts that pose a threat to journalists are a violation of the article and are condemned. Member states must create a safe space in their societies for both; internal and cross-border journalists to investigate. Lastly, highlighting the role of cross-border journalist investigations in conflict areas to shed light on war crimes and other violations that occur in conflict areas. It is on us to create a safe mechanism for journalists across the world to ensure the protection of Article 19: Freedom of Opinion and Expression.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

Information and access to information play a prominent role in the functioning of a democratic society. Since the beginning of this year, 46 journalists and 4 media workers have been killed, and 234 journalists and 7 media workers have been imprisoned, totalling 508 journalists and 21 media workers currently in prison. As an act of ultimate censorship, every five days a journalist is killed to oppress information shared with the public. This often takes place while journalists and media workers are in the line of duty and in the process of their investigation. The safety of journalists and media workers is of great importance and concern to the global community and to preserve the constitutional right to freedom of expression for all. Journalists face numerous threats in conflict zones and being located in active conflict zones exposes them to severe danger. However, the gravest threat to cross-border journalists is the attacks directed towards them to oppress facts and limit the information leaving a given area. For instance, James Foley, an American journalist was captured by ISIL and later killed in 2014. In recent years, the scale and vast majority of attacks on journalists and media workers were committed with impunity. Impunity is the exemption of perpetrators from punishment or freedom from the consequences of human rights violations. In many cases, perpetrators of crimes against cross-border journalists enjoy impunity, this occurs due to a variety of factors such as lack of proper government authority in conflict-ridden areas, and due to different laws of member states regarding journalists' rights. International laws protecting journalists, and cross-border journalists do exist and this topic has been addressed in previous UNESCO resolutions. However, there are still gaps and matters that need to be addressed on this topic and primarily vagueness when it comes to implementing these laws.

HISTORICAL SITUATION

1992 to 2012 marked as the period of freedom expansion in media, however since then media freedom has been observed to remain stagnant or worsen. Journalism has become a core character of the modern and complex world we live in today, where cross-border journalists have played a crucial role in shedding light on numerous matters. In recent years, the number for transnational investigations rose drastically and led to regulatory and political changes such as the Panama Papers leak in 2016 and the Russian Laundromat investigation in 2014.

The discussion of this topic is associated with article 19 "Freedom of Opinion and Expression", and any actions that pose a threat to the safety of journalists is a violation to this article. Simultaneously, these investigations work closely with important and sensitive matters that hold great importance on the regional and international sphere. Furthermore, highlighting the matter of impunity, where cross-border journalists conduct investigations to uncover human rights violations to bring forward justice, and often are under immense political pressure. The discussion of safety of cross-border journalists has become a matter of importance in recent years, in line with the decreasing levels of freedom of speech between 2005 to 2010 and 2015 to 2020.

CURRENT SITUATION

During the pandemic we observed that about 68% of governments (98 countries out of 144), used the pandemic to place limits on media freedom. Journalists have faced 'direct censorship, arrests and threats' for carrying out their profession that was essential during a health crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. During the period between February 2020 to May 2021, the International Press Institute (IPI) recorded; 215 arrests or charges, 95 censorship cases, 238 cases of verbal attacks and 473 COVID-related media freedom violations. Channels that often interfere with cross-border journalist invitations often include (1) National Security and Counterterrorism Legislation, (2) Political Interference (3) Social Media/Online Harassment, (4) Protests and (5) Public Television. However, pressure from political forces and terrorism groups increases the threat for cross-border journalists and the violation of Article 3, and 10. Furthermore, five main categories of threats media professionals face include; Death, Physical Assaults, Arrests / Detentions, Blocked Assess and Intimidation.

Over the years, there has been growing support for cross-regional collaboration to increase safety for journalists and media workers and hold account of those who harm them and create obstacles to their work. In December 2020, representatives of 53 states adopted the Hague Commitment to address the importance of safety of journalists and media workers, while highlighting the issue of impunity for crimes against them.

This year alone, 70 journalists and media workers have been killed worldwide, and 15 of the 70 were killed in Mexico alone. A recent list of the deadliest countries for journalists and media workers includes Ukraine, the Philippines, Pakistan and Haiti. Simultaneously journalists in established democracies also face extreme threats of violence and murders such as in Malta, Slovakia, Greece and the United States. Further expanding the violence is the fact that the majority of these killings go unpunished, where the perpetrators are not held

accountable for their actions. This impunity fuels violence and weakens the rights journalists hold and the power of democracy and abuses every one's right to the facts and truth.

The Issue of Impunity

Impunity is a human rights violation that is committed and remains with any form of legal consequences for the perpetrator. Since 1992, 1249 journalists have been murdered according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), with an impunity rate of over 90% as reported by UNESCO in 2016. Organisations such as CPJ, Council of Europe (CoE), UNESCO and Reporters without Borders (RWB) profiled five main areas to address the issue of Impunity

1. The extent of impunity on an international level including fatality and casualty figures
2. Assessment of the kind of news stories that are considered the most dangerous for journalists to report
3. Monitoring executions via the use of UNESCO's media development indicators and safety trends indicators
4. Freeform indicators which monitor and rank countries via media freedom indices
5. Measurement of national political stability and fragility against Western political, social and economic benchmarks

These statistics hold great value for international organisations such as NGOs and CSOs for the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity regarding intimidation, attacks and killings of journalists. Over the years, crimes committed with impunity against cross-border journalists have grown beyond the concept of "censorship by bullet". Simultaneously, the growing concern about self-censorship, which is defined as the act when a journalist practises exclusion of information from the public due to the fear of threats from public authorities and other external forces. This act of self-censorship is also a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as it hinders the truth and the facts citizens have access to.

The issue of Safety

A key issue to highlight is the disputes between neighbouring states, where journalists are under extreme pressure from geopolitical conflicts. Additionally when cross-border journalists face political pressure and are confronted with ethnic and religious oppression

leading to a lack or limited access to information and sources, disinformation and as highlighted before their safety.

Israel- Palestine conflict

Along with journalists, paramedics were among the casualties in a conflict in 2021 in Gaza, several Palestinian journalists were imprisoned in Israel. These journalists are accused of incitement, due to their 'occupation'. Shira Rubin in a corresponding article with Washington Post shared that the local press is very much at the front of Israel-Palestine conflict coverage, where the political leaders attempt to control the narrative.

India-Pakistan Reporting Wall

Due to the disputed border interest conflict between India and Pakistan, political leaders on both sides of the border have built 'high walls' for journalists, where journalists from both nations cannot visit each other and thereby citizens of both states rely on Western and Chinese sources of information. Furthermore, growing nationalism in both states, particularly in Pakistan, where journalists are pressured to follow the national narrative. This leads to fake news and misinformation about Pakistan in India and vice versa, further worsening the conflict as journalists are not on the ground reporting the facts.

Shireen Abu Akleh

Was killed by a gunshot to the head during a cover of an Israeli military raid in the West Bank on May 11, 2022. She was a Palestinian-American journalist who worked for Al Jazeera and was known for her fearless reporting on the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During the event, she was wearing a jacket which was marked "PRESS", as the Israeli government initially denied the responsibility, however, since then the government has admitted there was a "high possibility" that Abu Akleh was hit by its forces. The review suggests that an Israeli Soldier in the convoy likely shot and killed Abu Akleh, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) has said that is possible one of its soldiers fired the shot, however, claimed that any gunfire was directed towards a Palestinian gunman.

Danish Siddiqui

An Indian photojournalist was killed in Afghanistan in July 2021, who worked for the Reuters news agency in India. Several reports and investigation point towards illegal detention and murder of Siddiqui. Furthermore, the Taliban refused to return his body to the authorities, and several appeals had to be made to leaders, including religions for a respectable burial. During an interview, a Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid, who has been named in the complaint, said that the Taliban was not aware of how Siddiqui was killed. Lastly, the Taliban did not respond or make any comment on ICC complaints of the allegations made by Siddiqui's family until an Al Jazeera article was published.

The safety of cross-border journalism is of great importance, due to the role journalists play in our modern society, where every citizen needs to be informed of the events happening across the world, particularly in conflict-ridden areas. Understanding the issue and layers involved would act as a foundation for delegates to create a framework and bring forward solutions to ensure the safety of cross-border journalists and media workers across the world.

MAJOR STANCES

The United States of America

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) is an organisation based in the U.S. committed to fighting for the rights of journalists around the world, to report independently without the fear of reprisal. The CPJ defends the right of all to "seek, receive, and impart information, through any media, regardless of frontiers", in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Simultaneously, on their website for travel, there are guidelines for journalists travelling out of state, and about the various press freedom conditions in other countries. Key events to highlight would be the events that occurred at the US-Mexico border, where journalists have been under pressure with what was being released from the area. In 2019, the U.S. government reportedly was targeting journalists, along with activists and lawyers working to raise awareness of issues of migrations at the U.S.- Mexico border.

French Republic

The French media are independent of the government and prioritise and act in the interest of the public. Over the years verbal attacks on media from politicians were particularly evident, however, in recent years, this has lessened. The legislative framework places the protection of media and journalistic freedom at the core, however, there are shortcomings in safeguarding the confidentiality of journalists and their sources. In 2021, the Constitutional Council implemented a global security law that prevents journalists from covering police operations. Furthermore, police violence against journalists has been a prominent matter in France, in the recent, this has been reduced after the introduction of a new set of regulations on reporter's rights and freedom. Since 2015, Charlie Hebdo attack several journalists are receiving police protection because of the imminent threat from Islamist extremists.

The People's Republic of China

The Chinese regime has been under the spotlight for repression of journalism and the right to information. State propaganda is prominent in media and independent journalists who report sensitive information are often under surveillance, or harassed, or detained and in certain cases tortured. The constitution guarantees "Freedom of speech and the press", however, the regime has been under scrutiny for routinely violating the right to information and with total impunity. Moreover, to silence journalists they are accused of "espionage", and "subversion", in addition, "pocket crimes" is a term used by Chinese law experts to describe offences. Simultaneously, independent journalists are in some cases legally placed in solitary confinement under "Residential Surveillance at a Designated Location" also known as "black prisons", where they are deprived of legal presentation. Lastly, foreign journalists are to comply with the FCCC (Foreign Correspondents' Club of China) and as foreigners involved in civil or criminal lawsuits in China, they can be banned based on past precedent.

The Russian Federation

Since February 2022, the majority of all independent media have either been banned, blocked or declared "foreign agents", and all others are subject to military censorship. The safety of journalists is under great question due to the vaguely worded draconian laws that increase the threat of charges for journalists. New laws relating to freedom of expression that have been adopted in recent years, including defamation and fake news laws, were amended to incorporate the Penal Code at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. In recent years, journalists have been subjected to heavy sentences and even torture, mainly on a regional level. Following the events in February, a new law was passed that makes the international spread of "fake" or "false" news about the events in Ukraine a criminal offence. Following the introduction of this law which includes jail terms of up to 15 years, global news media outlets have temporarily suspended reporting in Russia to protect their journalists.

The Syrian Arab Republic

Since the beginning of war over the decade, journalists have been denied access to swaths of territory. Bashar al-Assad and the Baath Party controlled most of the Syrian media, however since 2011 after the civil war broke out the media landscape split into two-camps; pro-

government and independent. During the initial phases of anti-government protests, the government banned international media outlets and independent freelanders from entering the country. Many journalists currently in the state are forced to remain under the government's political authority. Syrian journalists face many threats such a risks of arrest, abduction, torture or murder, with many focused to flee the country to escape mistreatment or death. However, several journalists who were found as refugees in Turkey were forced to return in 2019, and are oppressed.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS / FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. How can member states increase the safety for cross-border journalists, to ensure their investigation process is not hindered?
2. What constitutes a “legal” violation (the act, scale and purpose)? What role do governments play in such violations and threats cross-border journalists face?
3. What are the methods of accountability within the current OHCHR mandate that could be implemented by member states?
4. How can we mitigate during serious acts that pose a threat to the safety of cross-border journalists and prevent impunity?
5. How can independent journalists seek safety in events of extreme political pressure and intimidation?

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

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