



President's Letter

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the General Assembly of Earlham College Model United Nations!

My name is Dieu-Anh Nguyen, and I will be chairing your Committee this year. I am currently a freshman at Earlham College and I intend to major in Politics. Ever since the tenth grade, I have been involved with Model United Nations. I helped organize some of the biggest annual MUN events in Vietnam. However, this will be my first time chairing a committee. The concept of a common forum for countries to discuss and negotiate global peace has always been fascinating to me, thus, I am grateful for the chance to practice and study it in action. I am honored to be your chair and hope that we will engage in fruitful debate.

My name is Ali and I will be co-chairing your Committee. I'm also a freshman at Earlham College and intend to major in Math and Economics. I have been involved with MUN for four years now as a delegate, organizer and chair in different conferences in various places. I've lived in a number of different countries and have experienced that coming together to talk about international issues is the most effective way to gain awareness of issues and to start solving them. I'm grateful for the opportunity to chair this committee and wish you the best of luck, a fruitful debate and an amazing experience.

We all are very excited to meet you all in January and lead you through this amazing experience! The topics we will be discussing in the committee are all highly significant and relevant in our globalized world, and we hope you will all come prepared, with carefully done research, an open-minded spirit, and the willingness to learn. Please familiarize yourself with parliamentary procedures and do not hesitate to get in touch with any of us if you have questions. We are all looking forward to working with you. Best of luck!

Kind regards,

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Committee Background

The General Assembly, or GA for short, is one of the six principle organs of the UN and the only organ where all UN member states are represented and have an equal vote. It was established in 1945 under the Charter of the United Nations. Chapter IV of the Charter determines the scope and influence of the GA. Anything covered by the Charter can be discussed here; it's essentially the core of the UN. Although in recent years the GA has tried to shift to a more consensus based organization, most issues are decided using a simple majority, and substantial matters require a two-third majority. Most of what the GA decides are just suggestions, meaning they are not legally binding, however, some issues such as budgetary decisions are binding to all UN members.

Topic I: Brexit and the fate of EU

Overview:

The term Brexit is the merging of two words, Britain and Exit, refers to the departure of the UK from the European Union. Recently, on June 23rd, 2016, A referendum - a vote which everyone (or nearly everyone) of voting age can take part in - was held to decide whether the United Kingdom should remain as part of the EU or not. England voted strongly for Brexit, by 53.4% to 46.6%. Wales voted with 52.5% in favor of leaving and 47.5% in favor of staying. Scotland and Northern Ireland both supported staying in the EU. Scotland backed Remain by 62% to 38%. 55.8% of Northern Ireland voted to Remain and 44.2% voted to Leave. However, the UK's departure from the European Union does not only affect the UK itself: Brexit shock has left a powerful impact globally.

Historical Background

The European Union was established in 1951 by six nations as the European Coal and Steel Community. The goal was to heal the post-World War II damaged economy through duty-free trade. Britain tried to join in 1963 and in 1967, but its application was vetoed by France. Britain finally joined in 1973. A referendum like this has happened before. In 1975, two years after Britain joined the European Economic Community, there was a referendum on whether it should stay. More than 67 percent of Britons voted to stay.

For many years, the UK Independence Party, which received 13% of the votes cast in May's general election, has advocated Britain's exit from the EU. They accused the EU of holding back British development by imposing too many rules on business and charging too much for little in return. They wanted Britain to take absolute control of its borders and reduce the number of people coming here to live and/or work. During the referendum campaign, they were joined by half the Conservative Party's MPs and a handful of Labour MPs and Northern Ireland party, the DUP. Exiting the EU, Britain is undoing 43 years of treaties and agreements covering thousands of different subjects.

Current situation:

After David Cameron resigned on the day after losing the referendum, Theresa May, former home secretary, had stepped up to take the position of UK Prime Minister. Mrs. May was, like Mr. Cameron, against Britain exiting the EU. However, she insists that she will respect the will of the people and that "Brexit means Brexit".

The UK economy appears not to have been heavily hit by the shock of Brexit, but the pound value plunged into a 30-year nadir. Opinion is sharply divided over the long-term effects of leaving the EU.

ECMUN 2017
General Assembly

Most big business inclined to be in favor of Britain remaining since it makes it easier to transport money, people and products around. Some major firms have reported that the slump in sterling has increased their costs. On the other hand, BBC reports that "Some UK exporters say they've had increased orders or enquiries because of the fall in the value of the pound. Pest control firm Rentokil Initial says it could make £15m extra this year thanks to a weaker currency".

A second independent referendum is a very likely possibility in Scotland, where the majority has voted to remain in the EU. Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has commented on the result that it was "democratically unacceptable" that Scotland faces being taken out of the EU when it voted to Remain. Northern Ireland seems to be on the same track. Its Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness remarked that Brexit would profoundly affect Northern Ireland.

Questions to consider:

1. What will happen to EU citizens living in the UK?
2. What will happen to UK citizens working in the EU?
3. What will happen to treaties other countries signed with EU as a whole?
4. Will leaving the EU mean the UK don't have to abide by the European Court of Human Rights?
5. Will the UK be able to rejoin the EU in the future?
6. Will the UK be barred from the Eurovision Song Contest?

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ECMUN 2017
General Assembly

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Topic II: Internet Censorship

Overview

Lately, Internet censorship has become a growing issue, especially with some countries like China, Turkey, Ethiopia, Iran, etc. Internet censorship is similar to other types of media censorship: certain information which can be easily accessed in some countries might be banned in others. Censorship online works to prevent access to data even though it does not have physical or legal control over the websites itself. This leads to unique internet censorship methods like content filtering or site-blocking or the deprivation of the Internet itself.

Some argue that censorship is needed and is crucial for the greater, collective good. But where does sacrificing for the good of the many end and public manipulation and oppression begin?

Historical Background

The first case of Internet censorship goes back to 1958 when the U.S. Department of Defense pioneered the Internet to safeguard against the possibility of communications being intercepted, should there be intention of a nuclear attack. Since then, the world has come a long way to implement censorship.

Take China for example: For as long as the internet has existed, China has put a lot of effort into monitoring and controlling how the Internet is used. Using the technology known as "the Great Firewall", the government blocks websites on a myriad number of delicate topics (democracy, for instance), while thousands of authorities monitor and citizen volunteer to ensure nothing challenges the country's "harmonious society" by frequently sweeping through blogs, chat forums, and e-mail. Large enterprises such as Yahoo, Google and Microsoft have faced criticism from human rights groups for abiding to the country's censorship laws and giving the government information on their clients.

Unfortunately, China is not alone in doing this. To this day, several issues about censorship have been raised and questioned in various countries: many are still suppressing people's rights to speak out and to be heard for political reasons.

Current Issues

Considering the complicated nature of the subject, it would be impossible to summarize the status of Internet censorship in every country. However, the focus of the discussion should be on the following ten states, which top the list of countries with the most Internet restriction: North Korea, Burma, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Iran, China, Syria, Tunisia, Vietnam, and Turkmenistan.

In **North Korea**, only 4% of the population has access to the Internet. Even then, all websites are under the authority's, which apparently mean Kim Jong Un's, control.

In **Burma**, individual privacy is being violated by the government filters in place that filter out personal emails and block access to human rights group's websites or sites that expose wrongdoings and disagree with the Burmese government.

In **Cuba**, Internet is only available at "access points". All activities on the internet are monitored through keyword filtering, IP blocking and the checking of browsing history. Users who are not supportive of the government cannot upload content online.

In **Saudi Arabia**, up to 500,000 sites have been blocked so far. Unsurprisingly, the list includes websites that discuss social, political and religious topics that stray from the Islamic beliefs of its Monarchy.

In **Iran**, to be able to post articles online, bloggers must be registered at the Ministry of Art and Culture. Any opposition to the mullahs running of the country results in online and offline harassment and prison time.

In **China**, the government holds a stronghold on Internet censorship by having the world's most rigid censorship program. This includes blocking sites, filtering searches, erasing "inconvenient" content, rerouting search terms on various subjects (such as on the Tiananmen Square massacre, Tibetan or Taiwanese Independence) and on posts unfavorable to the leading communist party.

In **Syria**, any blogger who is deemed to have "jeopardize[d] national unity" gets detained. Identifications must be presented in order to use the internet at cyber cafes and the time of use must be recorded and reported to the government.

In **Tunisia**, all of the internet traffic through a central network, all content is filtered and all emails are monitored. The authority also requires all internet service providers to report IP address and personal information of all blogger.

ECMUN 2017
General Assembly

In **Vietnam**, any website advocating democracy, human rights or religious freedom is blocked, as does pages that are critical of the Communist Party. The authority demands that websites like Yahoo, Google, and Microsoft to divulge data on all bloggers using their platforms.

In **Turkmenistan**, the government is the only Internet service provider. Many websites are blocked and all Gmail, Yahoo, and Hotmail emails are monitored.

Questions to consider:

1. Should online information be censored or blocked? Are we violating human rights when we censor and limit information on the internet?
2. If it should be, what type of info should be blocked? To what extend?
3. Can the international world body do anything to dismantle censorship?
4. Should the international world body do anything to dismantle censorship?

Bibliography and Recommended Sources:

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An Overview of Internet Censorship in the Middle East

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Topic III: Combating Sexual Violence in Combat Zones

Overview:

Sexual violence occurs in combat zones in a variety of ways and includes rape, sexual slavery, forced nudity, forced pregnancy, forced marriage sexual mutilation, sterilization and other types of sexual torture. It is not always opportunistic: it can be used a systematical tactic of war, oppression and destruction of people. It can either be tolerated or commanded. Although the primary victims are women and girls, it can happen to men and boys as well. Perpetrators can be armed state actors, armed rebels or civilians. It can happen in any type of armed conflict, in any geographical location. There are many different ways sexual violence can take, but all have something in common: they are a crime against humanity and they are preventable. Although measures have been taken both by international bodies, governmental bodies and local Non-Governmental Organizations which have not been enough to stop these horrendous acts from happening.

Historical Background:

Sexual violence is not a new phenomenon; it has been occurring in all types of conflicts throughout all eras of human history. In antiquity ages it was considered an acceptable spoil of war. Although historically there have been different attempts at establishing sexual violence in armed conflicts as crimes, the crimes have largely gone unpunished and ignored. Only in recent years has accountability been increased. In 1998, the International Criminal Court made sexual violence a crime against humanity via the Rome Statute of International Criminal Court. In 2008, the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was the first UN resolution to acknowledge the importance of gender-perspective in preventing sexual violence in conflict zones and Resolution 1820 was the first time the UN considered sexual violence explicitly to be a tactic of war instead of mere opportunistic acts. Due to methodological and definitional differences and under-reporting's there isn't enough data to determine whether sexual violence in war zones has been increasing, decreasing or has kept steady in the recent years with scholars and reports supporting different conclusions.

UN agencies estimate that more than 60,000 women were raped during the civil war in Sierra Leone (1991-2002), in Rwanda, between 100,000 and 250,000 women were raped during the three months of genocide in 1994, more than 40,000 in Liberia (1989-2003), up to 60,000 in the former Yugoslavia (1992-1995), and at least 200,000 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1998. [1] Sexual violence occurring to different extent in different wars shows how diverse the reasons and the methods can be, but also how it does not have to be ubiquitous.

Most recently ISIL has been under international spotlight for committing sexual violence such as but not limited to Sexual Slavery, Rape and Forced marriages in the Syrian Arab Republic and to a lesser extent in the Republic of Iraq.

As a tactic of war

Both armed government bodies and insurgent rebels have used sexual violence as a systematical tool of oppression. It can be used to set an example of what happens to people who refuse to recognize the authority of the armed group. It can also be used as a tool to alienate the victims from society since cultural values such as 'honor' and 'purity' can prevent victims to take back their lives and participate in society, further dividing society; this is also one of the main reasons sexual violence is under-reported. Public sexual violence can be used to oppress the victims by humiliating the victims.

This and the collective trauma it causes to a people means that the damaging psychological and social effect of sexual violence continue after the conflict is over. The collective trauma further impedes possibilities of future peace.

Forced pregnancies can be part of a larger ethnic cleansing, forcing women to have children looking ethnically different and subjecting women to psychological torture of having children resembling their torturer.

As a social norm

Normalizing sexual violence and peer pressure to socially conform can cause perpetrators who did not wish to do so to commit sexual violence, as shown by soldier testimonies who admit regret and say that they felt forced into perpetrating sexual violence, either by their peers or by their superiors. This implies sexual violence can be decreased by just changing social dynamics, most importantly accountability.

Religious Justification

Sexual violence has been justified using extremist religious interpretations, especially by Radical Islamist groups such as ISIS, Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda. The UN cannot fight this alone, so it could be beneficial to co-operate with religious leaders who could decrease the social acceptability of sexual violence in religious radical groups.

Problems with reporting

When sexual violence is not reported due to social stigma, fear of reciprocation by the perpetrator or for any other reason, the victim cannot be helped. Due to the problems with gathering data mentioned earlier, policy makers don't have access to the information necessary to suggest effective policies. Furthermore, often Women who are victims of sexual violence are out casted from society and barred access to any type of support, such as paternal services including abortion in case of forced pregnancy.

Questions to consider

1. How can victims be sheltered from the consequences of social stigma attached to sexual violence? How can victims be protected from the physical, medical and psychological effects of sexual violence?
2. How can the UN work together with governments, local NGO, and religious leaders?
3. What are ways to give policy makers the data necessary to make more informed policies?
4. How can accountability be increased? How can perpetrators be brought to justice? Is it only individuals who commit the crimes who hold responsibility, or can superiors who tolerate the actions of their soldiers also be held responsible?

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