



President's Letter

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations Human Rights Council of the Model United Nations Conference!

My name is Swati Pant and I will be one of your chairs this year. I am a sophomore at Earlham College and am from Nepal. I hope to major in Biochemistry and minor in Psychology. I joined the MUN club at Earlham as a freshman but I've had 3 years of experience in MUN prior to Earlham. I enjoy being a part of MUN very much as it gives you a platform to discuss regional and international issues. I have attended conferences in the past, chaired a committee and also worked as a part of the Logistics team for a MUN. I am excited to meet you all and hope that you will come well-researched and prepared for discussions.

My name is Unaizah Abbas and I will be one your chairs this year. I am an International student here at Earlham and I plan to major in Politics. This is my second time chairing a committee and previously I chaired UNSC at IMUN in Pakistan. Furthermore, I have participated in 3 Model UN's at each of which, I received either Outstanding Diplomat or Best Delegate. My interests lie in international relations and public policy which in the long run, will help me deal with different political situations. Model United Nations provides me with ideal scenarios that require out of the box thinking and will certainly help me in my future endeavors. I am excited to see how you will approach this topic and whether you will be able to successfully portray the stance of your country.

In UNHRC, we will be discussing issues that are very critical and central to human rights violations that are happening now. Our topics, Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones and Violation of rights in post conflict zones were chosen so that we could discuss how a conflict can change the state and the life of its civilians. We will also be looking at different consequences we have to face during and after a conflict and discuss on ways to counter those consequences so that the rights of the civilians are protected. In our topic, Access to Basic resources, we hope to discuss how lack of clean water, sanitation and food in developing countries. We also hope to discuss strategic plans that could efficiently help people in developing countries.

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 looking forward to working with you.

Good luck!

Best Regards,

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Committee Background

The Human Rights Council was established on 15th March 2006 by the United General Assembly through resolution 60/251. Its main purpose is to protect and advocate for the rights of individuals and societies. It is an intergovernmental body which addresses human rights violations and provides solutions that can satisfy the involved parties. HRC meets at the UN office in Geneva and it replaced the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Furthermore, there are 47 UN member states that are elected by the UN General Assembly and from every region, a specific number of countries are selected to address the issue. Its first session took place from 19 to 30 June 2006 and a year later, the "Institution-building package" was opted for in order to create a proper framework which includes its procedures. The Council works on a variety of issues that include discrimination, economic, social and cultural rights, environment etc. The Human Rights Council also works with the UN Special Procedures and is made up of special representatives that monitor, report and suggest solutions regarding human rights situations in specific countries. Moreover, in 2006 the United Nations General Assembly decided that the Council's work should be reviewed after five years at the level of the General Assembly.

Topic I: Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones

Overview:

Sexual violence includes actions such as rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men or children with a direct or indirect link to a conflict. In war and times of conflict, sexual violence is often used as a weapon to cause harm and humiliate groups on the opposing side. During time of conflict, security is low and laws are not enforced as much as they should be, giving sexual predators an easy way. Women and children are mostly affected by this. Crimes like this have a devastating effect on the victim's life (physical and emotional trauma) and on the community from which they come from. Victims are sometimes taken hostages during wars and become "soldier wives"; they are married to militants and raped. Rape of women from certain communities is used as a weapon to develop fear amongst a community and to forcibly relocate members of a community and/or ethnic group. Sometimes, it is also done to infect women with sexually transmitted disease such as HIV. Even when the conflict has ended, sexual violence still affects the region and the victims because of unwanted pregnancies, emotional trauma, sexually transmitted diseases. It may also increase sexual violence in the region after the conflict. Most post conflict countries cannot meet the victim's needs and help them because of lack of resources.

Historical Background:

Sexual violence has been seen as a weapon for a very long time. During World War II, all sides of the conflict were accused and found responsible for mass rapes. However, none of the countries were prosecuted by the courts that were created by the allies to prosecute suspected war crimes. This tells us that sexual violence was not recognized as a war crime. It was only in 1992, with mass rapes of women in former Yugoslavia in mind, that this issue got attention from the UN Security Council. The council declared "massive, organized and systematic detention and rape of women, particularly Muslim women" (20,000 cases of rape), an international crime and stressed that the situation needed to be addressed. In 1993, The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia included rape as a crime against humanity. In 2001, it also became the first court to find someone guilty of rape as crime against humanity. It also expanded the definition of slavery to include sexual slavery. Since July 2002, the International Court of Justice includes "rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity as a crime against humanity when it is committed in a widespread or systematic way".

Sexual violence has been associated with several conflicts and their aftermath. Some of the countries are; Bosnia (1992-1995), Colombia (1964-present), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (1996-present), East Timor (1976-1999), Liberia (1989-1996, 1999-

2003) and Rwanda (1994). In Rwanda, 100,000 to 250,000 women were raped during the 3-month genocide. During the civil war in Sierra Leone (1991-2002), more than 60,000 women were raped during the civil. More than 40,000 women were raped in Liberia (1989-2003). UNICEF documented around 450 cases of sexual violence, a number that is probably just a fraction, in Central African Republic. In 2012, UN partners in Somalia registered 1,700 rape cases. One in three cases were children. Democratic Republic of Congo has been declared the “rape capital of the world”. Approximately 1,100 raps are reported each month and an average of 36 girls are raped everyday. Over 200,000 women have suffered from sexual violence since the conflict began.

Current Situation:

In March 2007, the United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict body was launched in order to address the situation in 13 entities and reduce sexual violence in conflict. Even with the committee, sexual violence is still a major problem in conflict zones. Forced marriages are increasing in number and minority groups are still being targeted. In Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey extremists are using sexual violence as a way to increase terror in civilians. In Syria, it has been reported most in the context of house searches, hostage-taking, in detention and at checkpoints. It has been difficult to obtain data because of the stigma around sexual violence, insecurity and lack of confidential resources. In August 2014, after an attack on Sinjar, Northern Iraq, ISIL abducted hundreds of Yezidi women and girls. Some abductees were taken into the Syria and “sold” in markets to be used as sex slaves. Reports show that forced marriage to foreign fighters has increased in territories controlled by ISIL. Families have resorted to child marriages and withdrawal from schools to protect their children.

In 2014, steps were taken by the Democratic Republic of Congo for prosecution of sexual offenders during the conflict, including high ranking army officials. The same in the year, however, there was an increase in violence of armed groups and an increase in rape and forced displacement. 11,769 cases of sexual and gender based violence was reported in 2014. 31% of cases were related to army and government officials. It was also found that rape had been used as punishment for members of the Hunde population. Mai-Mai Simba/Morgan was found responsible for 117 rapes. In 2014, reports of rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy because of ethnicity emerged and the main goal was to humiliate members of opposing groups. Liberia, recovering slowly after the civil war, also has horrifying situations when it comes to sexual violence. In 2014 there were 1,392 incidents of sexual and gender-based violence nationwide. 605 of the victims of rape (out of the 626) were under 18. Sexual violence is also a major problem in Darfur, Sudan. In 2014, there were 1177 incidents compromising of 206 victims. Victims ranged from 4 to 70 years old and 2 of them were male. There also have been cases where the victim is married to perpetrator as settlement. The Sudanese armed forces were accused of mass rape of 200 women and girls in Tabit over a 36-hour period.

Questions to consider:

1. What can be done to decrease sexual violence in conflict zones?
2. What role can UN play to help countries decrease sexual violence?

3. How does HRC, as a committee, do to addresses these problems in conflict zones?
4. What can your country do to address these problems?

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Topic II: Violations of Human Rights In Post-Conflict Zones

Overview:

When you talk about post conflict zones, Yemen, Columbia, Lebanon and several others come to mind. However, post conflict does not only apply to countries. There are several regions that are a part of reconstruction programs after civil wars like parts of Africa. At the end of every conflict however, the affected regions go through massive reconstruction. They suffer from economic, political and social instability, coupled with violation of the local's human rights. Locals are stripped of their property, status and finance by occupying forces or even the government in some cases. They suffer from abuse, torture and sometimes they cannot escape to other countries.

Historical background:

According to the United Nations, there were over 220 armed conflicts in the world between 1946 and 2001, half of them were after the end of the Cold War in 1991. The first official international post-war reconstruction effort was carried out in Austria after the end of the First World War 1. Since then, efforts have been made by the host countries and foreign allies, to come together and assist in post conflict reconstruction. This includes the protection of the rights of local civilians. However, far too often, those rights are violated. In every post conflict area, the causes of war are different but there is always some kind of violation of human rights. Such violations can include executions, arbitrary, torture, human trafficking and deprivation of economic and social rights.

Current Situation:

According to reports by the US government, the most significant human rights problems were arbitrary killings, disappearances, kidnappings, and other violence committed by various groups, as well as a corrupt judicial system that did not provide for the rule of law, further weakened after the Houthi-Saleh takeover. Women in particular have very limited rights and they face severe discrimination in law and practice. They are not permitted to marry without the blessings of their male guardian, nor do they have equal rights regarding divorce, child custody and inheritance. They suffer from sexual and domestic violence due to little legal protection. No laws have been passed that criminalize child marriage and female genital mutilation. There is also no guarantee regarding equality and prohibition of discrimination based on gender.

Furthermore, Remnants of war (landmines/explosives) killed several people while injuring others. There are also large numbers of civilian casualties as a result of coalition airstrikes and some forces even used cluster munitions in 2015. Other human rights abuses include the use of excessive force and torture by security forces, poor prison conditions, arbitrary arrest, restriction on freedom of expression for the locals and media, restrictions on worker rights; and trafficking in persons to include forced labor.

Similarly, the situation in Rwanda is very dire as the government has imposed severe restrictions on freedom of speech and most journalists are unwilling to report on sensitive issues due to intimidation, threats, prosecution and blackmail. Locals also go 'missing' in large numbers and were held unlawfully for several weeks by either the police or were in military custody at unofficial detention centers. Some locals are tortured to confess to alleged crimes or to help incriminate others. According to a testimony by the, there were numerous irregularities in Rwanda's 2013 parliamentary election such as, the presence of security officials in polling rooms, multiple voting, and local election officials filling out ballots in the absence of voters. There have also been reports of targeted killings and harassment of civil society groups and opposition parties.

Colombia is not faring any better with regards to protecting human rights. Civilians in Colombia continue to suffer serious abuses by paramilitary successor groups which emerged due to an official paramilitary demobilization process a decade ago. According to Human Rights Watch, reports showed that in 2014 the Santos administration promoted several bills that were able to undercut the accountability for unlawful killings of civilians by the military, coining the term 'false positive killings'. Soldiers and officers were under pressure from superiors to boost body counts and so they killed several civilians and reported them as enemy combat casualties. Furthermore, the National Liberation Army (ELN) has committed serious abuses against civilians, such as killings, abductions, and child recruitment. Women and girls face delays in receiving post violence care and medical assistance due to lack of training and poor implementation of protocols. Moreover, Human rights defenders, trade unionists, journalists, and other community activists face constant death threats and violence which is why after some time, they discontinue their efforts in trying to make the situation more favorable.

These are a few examples of how the rights of individuals are being violated and UNHRC can find solution on how to put an end to such treatment. Some other countries that face similar problems are Iraq, Cambodia and parts of Africa.

Questions to Consider:

1. Which areas are considered post conflict zones?
2. What are the similarities and differences between them?
3. Are all post conflict zones a result of civil war?
4. How should the local governments act in such situations?
5. How do most governments respond to these scenarios?
6. Are all international countries obligated to assist them?
7. What is their role and how should they help?
8. How can UNHRC improve the lives of the victims?

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Topic III: Access to Basic Resources

Overview:

Women in Africa and Asia walk 6 kilometers to collect water. While average water use in Europe is 200-300 litres a person a day in Europe, in countries like Mozambique, it is less than 10 litres a day. People in developing countries consume far less water because of distance it takes to get water and also because of lack of clean and safe water. The cost of clean water in developing countries is sometimes so high that most people can't afford it. Unclean water and sanitation is the cause of death in children. The situation for food isn't any better. Poor nutrition causes 45% of deaths in children under 5 (3.1 million children). 100 million children (one out of six) children in developing countries are underweight. 795 million people (one in nine people) in the world do not have enough food to lead a healthy life. 12.9% of the population in developing countries is malnourished. In Asia, two thirds of the total population do not get enough food. WFP has calculated that 3.2 billion dollars is needed to reach all 66 million hungry school-age children.

Historical Background:

In 1948, the Universal declaration of Human rights affirmed that everyone had the right to adequate food. Access to food however is hard to attain in rural areas as it depends on other natural resources, like water. The World Food Summit (1996) defined food security as "existing when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet dietary needs for a productive and healthy life". It set the target of "eradicating hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015". In March 1977, The Action Plan from the United Nations Water Conference recognized water as a right for the first time - "All peoples, whatever their stage of development and social and economic conditions, have the right to have access to drinking water in quantities and of a quality equal to their basic needs". UN Resolution formally recognized right to water and sanitation in July, 2010. It acknowledges that clean water and sanitation are basic human rights and calls upon countries and other international organizations to provide financial resources to help developing countries to provide clean, safe, accessible and affordable drinking water for their population

Current Situation:

The World Food Programme stated that there are currently 842 million people without steady access to food. With regards to access to clean water, UN is taking action after it recognized it as a basic human right. UN is using its available means and mechanisms to hold governments accountable. But the "one policy for all" is not working. Water challenges are increasing because of population growth and will lead to greater consumption of water

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and water waste. By 2050, one in four people are likely to live in a country affected by chronic or reoccurring shortages of freshwater. Water is also very important for food security as crops and livestock need water to grow. Agriculture not only produces food but also crops such as cotton and oil. Irrigation uses about 70% of all freshwater and this affects amount for human use. By 2030, with the growing population, food demand is predicated to increase by 50% and by 2050, its is to increase by 70%. The challenge is making the food available to everyone and also decreasing waste. About 30% of the food produces is wasted every year.

Price of food is also very important to consider. In 2008, increase in food prices drove 110 million people into poverty. 44 million more people became undernourished. 925 million people go hungry because of the high prices of food. In developing countries, people spend 50-80% of their income on food. A Task Force created by UN in 2008 has plan of actions to meet immediate needs of people who are vulnerable to effects of price hikes. This means helps through food assistance, nutrition interventions and changes in trade and tax policy. Their long term goal is to build a better food and nutrition system through social measures like support for local and small farmers. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) had made available up to \$200 million to increase agricultural production for developing and affected countries and support higher production by smallholder and family farmers. IFAD is providing assistance for an increase in staple food production (basic grains and dairy products). The organization also helps improve land fertility and water management.

Questions to Consider:

1. What are the challenges developing countries face?
2. How can issues related to food and water be tackled?
3. How can the UNHRC help change the current situation?
4. What strategic plans are needed to fulfill goals set?

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