



Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)

MUNUC 33



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CHAIR LETTER

Delegates,

Welcome to MUNUC 33!

My name is Burke and I am so excited to be your chair for SOCHUM. I am a second-year in the college studying molecular engineering. My experience in Model UN includes being a part of UChicago's competitive travel team and being an assistant chair in the MUNUC 32 committee World Health Organization: Pandemic (yikes that aged badly). Outside of school and MUN, I love to bike, hike, hammock, and remind everyone around me that I'm from Alaska. Whenever possible, I also try to get involved in Alaskan politics and community activism. I am really looking forward to presenting you with two great topics that deal with justice, human rights, and other critical themes. The two topics will focus on two groups that often don't get the recognition they deserve: indigenous peoples and journalists. Though incredibly different in their history and identity, they will share the stage in SOCHUM this year.

While we are often used to conversations about journalists, I did want to make it a point to address some of the ways we talk about indigeneity. As you'll find in research, there is a lot of charged language in conversations about indigenous peoples, especially when it comes to names. For example, using the term "eskimo" for Arctic indigenous peoples is becoming increasingly unacceptable and insensitive. Whenever possible, I would strongly encourage delegates to research indigenous groups they plan to speak about and make sure they are addressing the group properly and with respect. Whenever research isn't readily available, it is usually appropriate to use the term "indigenous groups." The word indigenous is quite broad, so if you are hoping to describe multiple groups, or give generic language to specific groups, you can use the phrases like "indigenous peoples of West Africa" or "The Navajo tribe, peoples indigenous to the American Southwest."

If we are all respectful to people inside and outside of committee, engaged in our discussions, and passionate in our stances, this will be a great weekend.

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions, comments, concerns. You can email me through the MUNUC website.

In solidarity,

Burke

HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE

The Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) is the Third Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations. As one of the five organs of the General Assembly, it has the power to suggest solutions and propose guidelines but cannot enforce anything without the support of national governments. That said, SOCHUM is among the most major bodies within the UN, as demonstrated in the vast number of issues it is designed to address. Its purview includes human rights issues and a broad range of social and humanitarian affairs. This means the committee has the authority to address issues related to refugees, children, and women as well as concepts including self-determination and racism. All 193 member states participate and have equal voting rights in the third committee of the General Assembly.

TOPIC A: SUBSISTENCE AND PROPERTY RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS GROUPS

Statement of the Problem

Introduction to the Problem

The topic of indigenous peoples is often a difficult one to fully discuss. Part of the complexity is due to the very definition of indigenous, or a lack thereof. Indigeneity, like other broad descriptions of people around the world, is nearly impossible to identify concretely in a simple definition—and it is even harder to have the nations of the world agree on one. Indeed, the UN itself has not adopted a single definition of indigenous, preferring instead an understanding based off of a few principles:

- “Self-identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member
- Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies
- Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources
- Distinct social, economic or political systems
- Distinct language, culture and beliefs
- Form non-dominant groups of society
- Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.”¹

¹ “UNPFII Session 5 Factsheet” UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, accessed July 4, 2020. https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf.

Among the first things to notice about these elements is that there is no geographic restriction to indigeneity. Indeed, indigenous groups are not exclusively on one continent or in one hemisphere; indigenous cultures can be found in every corner of the world. Especially considering the distinctiveness of indigenous cultures, indigenous groups give life to an unbelievably vast diversity of cultures and ways of life, from the Scandinavian Arctic of Europe and the Sahara Desert of Africa to the tropical islands of the Pacific, and the Andes mountains of South America. That diversity will continue to be an important focus in this background guide.

With such a broad range of people, though, one would be excused for asking, “why put all these cultures under a single title?” At some point, a title that includes such a wide variety of people is at risk of meaning nothing. The answer lies within the second-to-last element of indigeneity from the UN: non-dominance within modern society. As a result of being the non-dominant group in their region, many indigenous groups face intense discrimination: discrimination that is often incredibly similar to other indigenous groups. Amnesty International even considers discrimination and marginalization from the state as part of the definition of indigeneity.² The individual struggle experienced by different non-dominant groups is similar enough to create a unified, global narrative of indigeneity; the details change, but, all too often, the broad elements are incredibly similar.

The numbers show what kind of effect that discrimination has. World Bank study shows that indigenous peoples make up 15% of the world’s extreme poor, despite only making up 5% of the world’s population. And that same study shows that indigenous people face more frequent and more severe poverty than the national average in every single country studied.³

Therefore, we will look at some common aspects of the discrimination indigenous groups face. To demonstrate these in action as well, most of these aspects will be accompanied by a case study of that sort of discrimination or a broader description.

² “Indigenous Peoples” Amnesty International. Accessed July 4, 2020. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/indigenous-peoples/>.

³ “Poverty and Exclusion among Indigenous Peoples: The Global Evidence” World Bank Blogs. Accessed July 4, 2020. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/poverty-and-exclusion-among-indigenous-peoples-global-evidence>.

Cultural, Subsistence Necessities, and the Tuareg People

Indigenous groups have unique cultures and long-standing methods of survival. One way dominant groups target indigenous groups is by taking aim at this uniqueness. Discrimination can take the form of explicitly singling out indigenous group, but nations can also choose to ban or restrict practices across a whole region that are critical to traditional indigenous subsistence (methods of survival, usually in the context of food) and ways of life. Some forms of this kind of discrimination would be a ban on hunting or a strict limit on fishing, but others look like a full elimination of a way of life. The latter is true for the Tuareg people of Western Africa.⁴

The Tuareg people are a Berber nomadic pastoralist group located largely in modern-day Mali, Niger, and Algeria. The Tuareg people were once the dominant people of the Sahara, who survived on trans-Saharan trade, livestock, and raiding nearby sedentary groups. Their distinct culture and subsistence techniques made them one of the few people that not only survived but thrived on the Sahara. They are often called the Lords of the Sahara (or, later, the Lost Lords of the Sahara) for the way they were able to thoroughly dominate such a vast and desolate region.⁵

When large portions of West Africa were colonized by France in the early 20th century, the Tuareg people suffered greatly at the hand of the new government. The Tuareg were able to hold off the French for an additional 22 years after they had already conquered the areas to the South, but the French eventually conquered the Tuareg to temper their previously unrestricted strength and to take control of trans-Saharan trade.⁶ To maximize profits from agriculture and trade, the colonial government cracked down on nomadic behavior—pushing nomads onto farms and agricultural production—and enacted a heavy tax on trans-Saharan trade. By taxing their primary source of income and nearly banning their nomadic way of life, the French robbed the Tuareg of their entire culture and subsistence.⁷

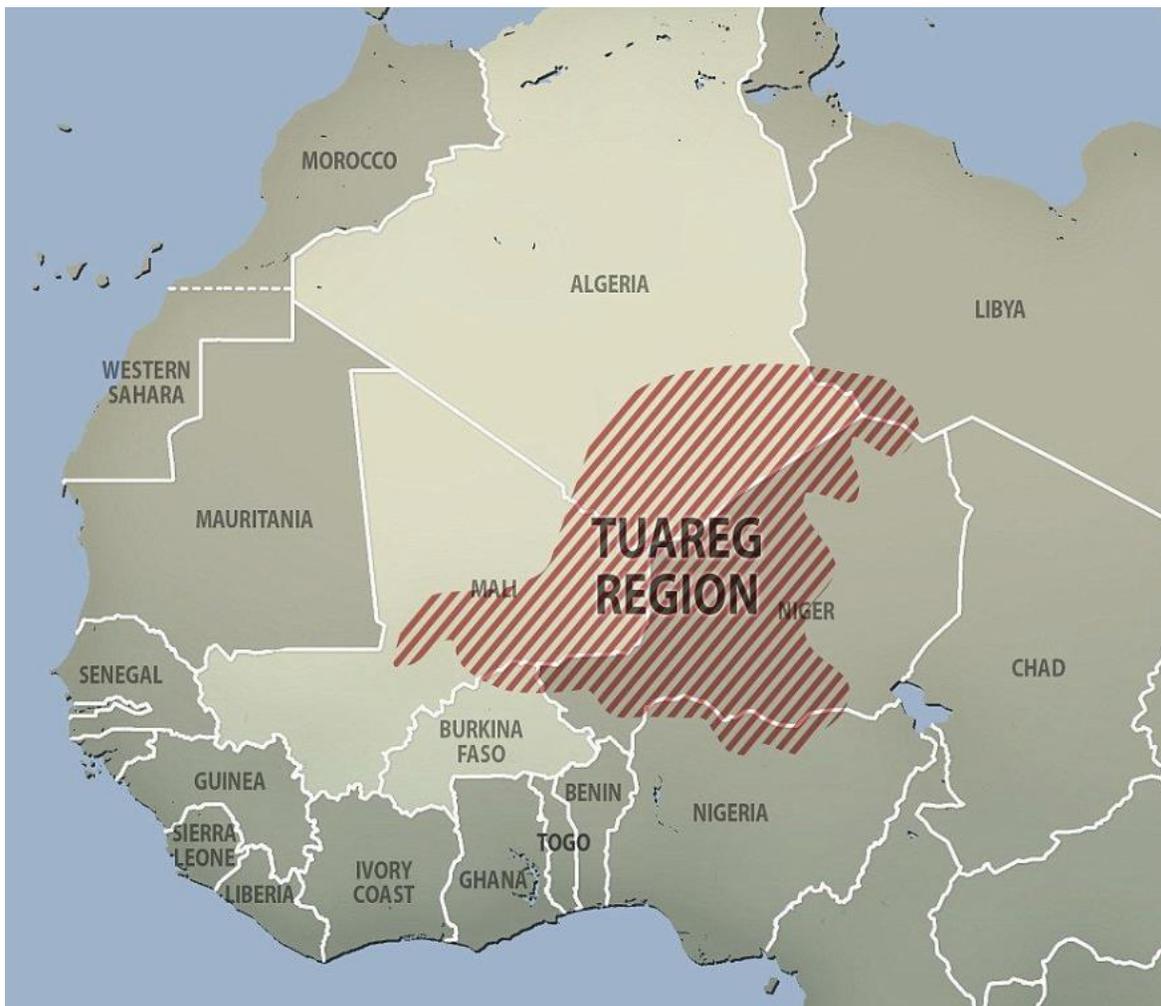
⁴ “Lost Lords of the Sahara” National Geographic. Accessed May 25, 2020. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2011/09/sahara-tuareg/>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Kwame Anthony Appiah, Henry Louis Gates. *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, Volume 3.

Map of the Tuareg traditional region in West Africa⁸



The hardship caused by these policies and a series of severe droughts inspired a Tuareg rebellion, beginning a decades-long war and leading to a cycle of violence and destruction between the Tuareg people and their respective governments—both French colonial and independent African nations—that still continues today. Many of the same discriminatory motivations and sentiments against the Tuareg existed in the dominant groups in Mali and Niger just as much as they were in the French. Mali and Niger continued to restrict nomadic lifestyles, and, since uranium was discovered in Tuareg

⁸ “Sex and the Sahara...” Daily Mail. Accessed July 4, 2020. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3131511/Sex-Sahara-Striking-photographs-mysterious-Islamic-tribe-women-embrace-sexual-freedoms-dictate-gets-divorce-don-t-wear-veil-men-want-beautiful-faces.html?ito=social-facebook>.

lands, there have been decades of conflicts over government relocation of the Tuareg among Tuareg independence movements.⁹

Both colonial and independent African governments enacted policy expressly to eradicate or hinder Tuareg traditional means of life by controlling trans-Saharan trade and forcing a sedentary lifestyle. By targeting essential elements of indigenous culture or survival, governments can subjugate these communities to a non-indigenous life. Indigenous communities, without these necessities often have no way to carry on and though the government might not have explicitly banned indigeneity, it can result in the same thing in practice.

Land Rights

Land is a critical element of any society, but especially so for indigenous communities. As the UN defines, an important element of indigeneity is a “strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources”¹⁰ so land is a cultural necessity as well as an existential one. Without land to live on, a community cannot exist. But indigenous communities cannot exist without their specific homeland; their culture relies on it and their subsistence is tied to it. The robbery of land from indigenous peoples is then just a special case of the kind of discrimination described above: it is a way to target the needs of indigenous communities. The violation of land rights is a special category, though, because of its frequency and unique characteristics. To be clear, developing indigenous lands is discriminatory if it was taken without consent or repayment; if indigenous groups sell or trade land freely and willingly, there is no discriminatory concern there.

For centuries, the advance into indigenous land has been primarily for one purpose: natural resources. Whether those resources are oil and gas, spices, or whales, the desire to profit off of natural resources is a common motivator to take lands from their traditional owners. As Victoria Tauli-Corpus, the chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, describes, “We are seeing a human rights emergency... much of the world’s natural capital—oil, gas, timber, minerals—lies on or

⁹ “Lost Lords of the Sahara” National Geographic. Accessed May 25, 2020.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2011/09/sahara-tuareg/>.

¹⁰ “UNPFII Session 5 Factsheet” UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, accessed July 4, 2020.

https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf.

beneath land occupied by indigenous peoples.”¹¹ Fights over the development of indigenous lands have mounted around the world—where often governments permit mining, drilling, building, or other development projects against the will of the indigenous inhabitants. A recent example of this discrimination is the development of pipelines in Canada.

In February 2020, a nation-wide indigenous and environmental movement caught fire after a police crackdown on indigenous activists in British Columbia. The movement and initial protests are centered around the Coastal GasLink pipeline, an oil pipeline under construction that stretches across Northern British Columbia and through Wet’suwet’en indigenous land in North British Columbia.¹²

Indigenous activist as police deconstruct barrier in Canada¹³



¹¹ “Indigenous people and the crisis over land and resources” The Guardian. Accessed July 8, 2020.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/sep/23/indigenous-people-crisis-land-resources>.

¹² “‘Revolution is Alive’: Canada protests spawn climate and indigenous rights movement” The Guardian. Accessed July 8, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/28/canada-pipeline-protests-climate-indigenous-rights>.

¹³ “Exclusive: Canada police prepared to shoot indigenous activists, documents show” The Guardian. Accessed July

Reports even indicate that in a protest in January, 2019, the police were prepared to use lethal force against indigenous protesters attempting to block the construction of the pipeline.¹⁴ This was also only one instance in a long history of poor treatment of indigenous people for Canada, which is part of the reason the movement caught fire so quickly; there was plenty of kindling beforehand.

Canada and the Coastal GasLink pipeline is just one example of a common situation: indigenous lands and resources being developed against their will, perpetrated by corporations and governments.

Self-Determination

Another way governments have come to discriminate against indigenous people is through representation in government and self-determination, or lack thereof. Not only do indigenous people have a right to their own self-determination as a distinct group, but they also have a right to a nationality—included in that, the right to be a part of decisions that will affect them. Indigenous peoples have been denied either or both. Self-determination, in the context of indigenous nations does not mean being separate from its nation-state (country surrounding it); it means that each indigenous group has a right to also have its own political system under—but separate to—the nation-state. Often the inability to self-determine is more obviously noticed, as a refusal to recognize indigenous governments usually comes with a refusal to recognize indigenous people. But the involvement in the nation-state can be more subtle. An example of that lack of representation and a lesson in the subtlety as well can be found in the voting system of the United States.

In the United States, all voters need a voting address to register. However, in many American Indian reservations, addresses are not really needed otherwise; small tribes do not need numbers and names to locate each other's homes. Though this problem is not necessarily created by the US government, the government certainly was not proactive in solving it; today it continues to be a problem and a significant barrier to many indigenous peoples from voting. Large portions of

8, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/20/canada-indigenous-land-defenders-police-documents>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

indigenous communities are left without any way to have access to a ballot. This suppresses indigenous votes and disenfranchises indigenous people from the decision-making process.¹⁵

In some cases, the government is just complacent, but other times, it is an intentional effort. In 2018, the State of North Dakota seemed to try their best to lower the number of indigenous votes. The state provided addresses to some indigenous peoples who needed one to vote but also failed to provide them to many. Even for those who received addresses, many were deemed invalid in applications for absentee ballots and other forms of voter registration. Indigenous activism was able to correct many of these mistakes before the 2018 US election, but the continued bias against indigenous participation showed clearly.¹⁶

Climate Change

The effects of discrimination are incredibly dangerous for indigenous people; it robs groups of their practices, resources, and land. But it is far from the only threat these peoples face. In fact, climate change can often have strikingly similar results to direct discrimination. As a changing climate molds nature around us and the land below us, activities that have been possible for millennia may now be impossible and land that may have previously been habitable may no longer be. In many modern societies, technology has made humans more resilient to change, but indigenous groups still living off the land as they have for centuries will be far more vulnerable. Among the hardest hit by climate change are indigenous peoples of the Arctic.

Arctic regions are warming faster than any other region and at almost twice the global average, which puts indigenous groups of the far North on the front lines of climate change. For the Yupik and Inuit of the North American Arctic, rising temperatures threaten the bedrock of their existence and culture; Arctic life takes place on a combination of permafrost (areas deep in the ground that stay frozen all year) and ice caps, both of which have started to melt, destabilizing vast areas of land, making it nearly impossible to hunt, fish, and live on. Furthermore, sea ice protects coastlines from

¹⁵ "For Some Native Americans, No Home Address Might Mean No Voting" Pew Stateline. Accessed July 8, 2020. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2019/10/04/for-some-native-americans-no-home-address-might-mean-no-voting>.

¹⁶ "The State of Native American Voting Rights" Brennan Center for Justice. Accessed July 8, 2020. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/state-native-american-voting-rights>.

aggressive storms, so without it, storms have eroded away land, leaving coastal villages no choice but to relocate completely.¹⁷ Indigenous groups rely on hunting and fishing to support subsistence, local economies, and cultural traditions. Wildlife changing patterns in warmer temperatures and changing ecosystems puts all three into jeopardy.¹⁸

The boats are packed up and used to move the village of Newtok¹⁹



This threat has already been fully realized by some. The Yup'ik people of Newtok, Alaska, have started a full relocation of the village, 9 ½ miles to higher and safer ground as their homeland erodes and sinks away. The only way this move was even possible was through decades of planning and an

¹⁷ "The Village That Will be Swept Away" The Atlantic. Accessed July 8, 2020.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/08/alaska-village-climate-change/402604/>.

¹⁸ "Report: Alaska Native Communities Will Face Brunt of Climate Change. Alaska Public Media. Accessed July 8, 2020.

<https://www.alaskapublic.org/2018/11/30/report-alaska-native-communities-will-face-the-brunt-of-climate-change/>.

¹⁹ "A Western Alaska Village, Long Threatened by Erosion and Flooding, Begins to Relocate" Anchorage Daily News. Accessed July 8, 2020. <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/rural-alaska/2019/10/19/a-western-alaska-village-long-threatened-by-erosion-and-flooding-begins-to-relocate/>.

accumulation of funding from government agencies and native corporations. And as more regions are faced with the same ultimatum to move, villages with more people than Newtok's 370 will face larger financial and logistic challenges.²⁰

But climate change is not just putting cold climates at risk. Indeed, on the other side of the Pacific Ocean, a very different kind of people are dealing with a strikingly similar problem. The I-Kiribati people and the many other Pacific Islander cultures across the ocean face an existential threat from climate change. Rising temperatures have led to higher sea levels, which threaten to completely engulf the low-lying islands of the world. In the Pacific Ocean, nations such as Kiribati are exclusively made of those islands, meaning the country could be completely wiped off the face of the Earth—a situation that seems increasingly likely. Pacific cultures are often built off of a connection to the land and the ancestral history of a region. These islands, when faced with a complete removal of their land, must find a way for their people and culture to persist. For years, the Kiribati government has been devoted to asking the international community for help. It is unlikely that the developing nation will be able to support its own relocation as sea levels rise.²¹

Salt water begins to flood Kiribati's main island²²



²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "Waiting for the tide to turn: Kiribati's fight for survival" The Guardian. Accessed July 8, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/23/waiting-for-the-tide-to-turn-kiribatis-fight-for-survival>.

²² Ibid.

Around the world, indigenous groups are facing existential threats to their culture and people from climate change. In the same way discrimination results in the loss of land and cultural/subsistence practices, climate change poses a serious danger to indigenous peoples worldwide. Climate change, however, calls for a different kind of response. While discrimination can be stopped by force of will by the discriminators, the same cannot be done so easily for climate change. Some further changes will be inevitable, even if carbon emissions halt immediately. Ways to preserve indigenous ways of life and ensure the safety of climate refugees will be critical to the continued existence of indigenous groups as we know them.

The Futures of Indigenous Peoples

These problems are monumental. Some are new and emerging; some have existed for centuries. But regardless, these challenges to indigenous life need a response. Any resolution in this committee will be expected to make some effort to address each of these issues. These resolutions will not be expected to resolve the core of many of these issues—resource development, climate change itself, etc.—but rather they will be expected to make efforts to chip away at the effects of those broad issues on indigenous communities.

History of the Problem

The scope of this topic is extremely wide. It covers every indigenous group in the world, each with unique culture, unique struggles, and a unique story that is too long for a document such as this one. In the statement of the problem, some of the largest and most common issues facing indigenous groups were highlighted in an attempt to summarize the worldwide issue of indigenous discrimination. However, that focus on single issues often ignores the compounding effect of how multiple challenges can overwhelm indigenous groups and also can often erase the larger context of history and culture. In an attempt to address those shortfalls, we will take some time to dive into a single story—a story that mirrors the experience of many indigenous groups around the world: the history of the San Bushmen.

The San Bushmen are one of the oldest, most stable societies in human history. Located in the Kalahari Desert of modern day Namibia and Botswana, the San people were experienced hunter-gatherers that thrived in the desolate climate. The San people are estimated to be one of the oldest societies in human history; genetic evidence suggests that the descendants of the San diverged from other humans—one of the first splits in the human family tree—as early as 150 thousand years ago (humans, as we know them, have existed for 200 to 250 thousand years).²³ The San people have continued as a relatively distinct population since then.²⁴ To achieve that kind of longevity, the San people were one of the most stable and prosperous societies to exist in human history. Some anthropologists have even dubbed the San people the most successful civilization ever to exist, and the San have given pause to other anthropologists who assumed that hunter-gathering is a “lower” type of society.²⁵

²³ Rincon, Paul. “Human Line ‘Nearly Split in Two’” Accessed June 16, 2020. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/7358868.stm>.

²⁴ Zimmer, Carl. “A Single Migration From Africa Populated the World, Study Shows” Accessed June 16, 2020.

²⁵ Lee, Richard B. “The Hunters: Scarce Resources in the Kalahari” Accessed June 16, 2020. http://sociology.morrisville.edu/readings/ANTH101/Scarce_Resources-Lee.pdf.

The San are well known for their skills in hunting with small bows and arrows²⁶



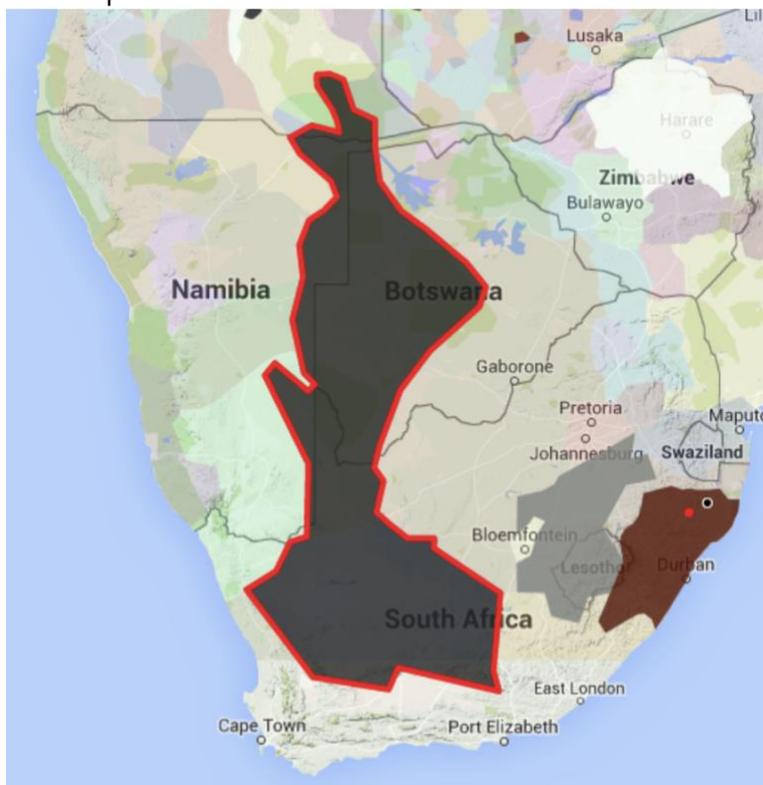
There is no united name for the San people from the people themselves, as there truly is no one united San people. Rather, there is a wide range of separate tribes that identify more with their tribe than with the larger cultural similarities of the other hunter-gatherer tribes nearby that today we broadly group into the San people. The name San was created by the nearby cattle-herding Khoikhoi people as a derogatory term for people who pick things up from the ground, used to refer broadly to the hunter-gatherers of the region. When the Dutch began to settle and colonize Southern Africa, they also created a name for the hunter-gatherers: Bushmen. This too was a derogatory term against the San people. Both San and Bushmen are used frequently today, often simply combined into the San Bushmen. Especially in academic circles, the word San is gaining popularity so that will be used predominantly in this background guide.²⁷

²⁶ Daley, Jason. "San People of South Africa Issue Code of Ethics for Researchers" Smithsonian Magazine. Accessed July 8, 2020. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/san-people-south-africa-issue-code-ethics-researchers-180962615/>.

²⁷ Lee, Richard B. "The Hunters: Scarce Resources in the Kalahari" Accessed June 16, 2020. http://sociology.morrisville.edu/readings/ANTH101/Scarce_Resources-Lee.pdf.

The San built their greatness from sharply honed hunting and gathering techniques. Though a vast majority of food came from gathering, their hunting techniques show the San's mastery of subsistence in the desert. The San used poison arrows (notably impressive, as this poison must be able to kill animals such as giraffes without spoiling the meat) to hunt their prey and used their keen ability to follow tracks to trace down an already hit animal over long distances.²⁸ Even in severe droughts, the San people were well fed, often more so than the average person in non-hunter-gatherer societies.²⁹

Map of San-inhabited land before Western contact³⁰



The San people faced several threats and challenges over the course of their existence—including some from the nearby indigenous Bantu people—but the predominant challenge to the San people was the European colonization of Southern Africa. In the 19th century, attempts by British and Dutch colonists into the Kalahari were ultimately unsuccessful, due to the harsh terrain and the San's

²⁸ Suzman, James. *Affluence Without Abundance*, Chapter 12.

²⁹ Lee, Richard B. "The Hunters: Scarce Resources in the Kalahari".

³⁰ "San" Art and Life in Africa, University of Iowa. Accessed July 4. <https://africa.uima.uiowa.edu/peoples/show/San>.

abilities in their native land. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, however, German colonists fully conquered the Kalahari and quickly committed one of the first genocides of the 20th century. San people were hunted down by colonial officials, who often had authority to shoot on sight; these policies that encouraged mass murder were described as “a warrant for genocide” by Robert J. Gordon, anthropologist specializing in the San Bushmen. By the end of World War 1, when Germany lost its African colonies, the vast majority of the San people were enslaved, either in mines or farms.³¹

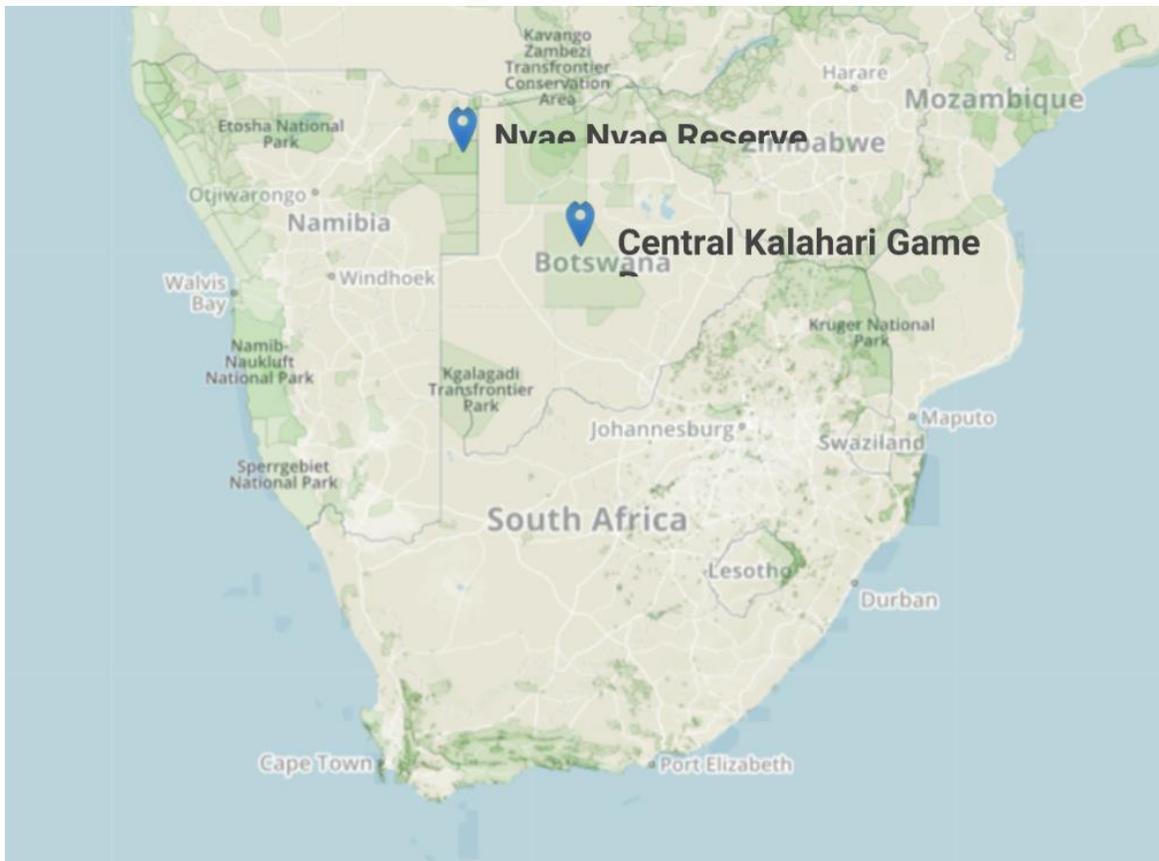
But even as the Germans left, it was more of the same for the San. From the use of San units in the cold war-era proxy war, the South African Border War, to continued restriction to indigenous lands, the San people faced continued adversity. After the war ended, the San people had only two reserves where they could live in relative peace: The Nyae Nyae Reserve in Namibia and the Central Kalahari Game Reserve in Botswana. Though both Namibia and Botswana were independent African states, the discrimination did not stop. During the 1990’s and 2000’s, all San people were evicted from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve by the Botswana government. Despite international backlash and a case in Botswana’s High Court that ruled the evictions as illegal, they have continued until today, in a variety of forms.³² In addition to the use of military force to keep the San people from their land, Botswana instituted a nationwide ban on hunting in the name of conservation, while exempting private game ranches and allowing diamond mining and fracking in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. The reserve is one of the most resource rich regions in the world, notably containing the world’s largest supply of diamonds. This ban made it impossible for San people to hunt for survival and drove many to starvation. This was in addition to park guards and paramilitary police using excessive violence and even torturing any San people who attempted to return to the reserve throughout the 2010’s. The San people are still fighting for their land in Botswana today.³³

³¹ Lee, Richard B. “The Hunters: Scarce Resources in the Kalahari”.

³² Dixon, Robyn. “In Botswana Reserve, Bushmen still being deprived of rights.” Accessed June 16, 2020. <https://www.latimes.com/world/africa/la-fg-bushmen-hunting-ban-20150228-story.html>.

³³ “Central Kalahari Game Reserve, Botswana” Survival International. Accessed June 16, 2020. <https://www.survivalinternational.org/about/ckgr>.

Map of the Nyae Nyae Reserve in Namibia and Central Kalahari Game Reserve in Botswana³⁴



The Namibian Nyae Nyae Reserve is the last place on earth the San people are free to live in the traditional San way; but for them, the Nyae Nyae Reserve is far too small to sustain the hunter-gatherer lifestyle. In addition, climate change has made the already-desolate Kalahari Desert nearly inhabitable. The San here face severe droughts and famines stemming from rising temperatures, dune expansion, and faster wind speeds that affect crop growth and traditional livestock practices, further driving them to government-made wells, and other government aid.³⁵ The independent and free San hunter-gatherers that existed for thousands of years are non-existent today.

The San Bushmen have experienced nearly every kind of hardship that was outlined in the statement of the problem at one point in their history. Though this is clearly an extraordinary story in terms of the intense struggles the San have faced, it is also heartbreakingly non-unique. Indigenous groups

³⁴ "Discover the World's Protected Areas" Protected Planet. Accessed July 4, 2020. <https://www.protectedplanet.net/>.

³⁵ "Climate Change" United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Accessed June 16, 2020. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/climate-change.html>.

around the world face combinations of these hardships just as the San have and just as the other indigenous groups from the statement of the problem have. Because this background guide could never contain the stories for all indigenous groups, I would encourage every delegate to really dive into researching the indigenous peoples of their country they are representing or the region therein. Similarly, I would encourage every delegate to research more about the indigenous groups from their home region. I believe both the committee and you as individuals will benefit from it. This background guide only provides an incomplete story; I would encourage every delegate to research more and make it more complete.

Past Actions

Before indigenous voices found their way into the United Nations, indigenous groups were still organizing their own international organizations to consolidate power and create a more unified voice to address indigenous issues. In the early 1970's, multiple groups were founded to that effect. Among them, were the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (an annual congregation of 250 groups representing 600,000 people from around the world, dissolved in 1996) and the Inuit Circumpolar Council (a group across Alaska, Canada, Russia, and Greenland focused on issues facing these culturally-similar Arctic peoples, such as climate change and challenges to Inuit culture).³⁶

By the 1980's, the United Nations began to actively include indigenous voices, starting with establishing the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations (UNWGIP) in 1982. The UNWGIP was a part of the Sub-commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and was made up of experts, advised by indigenous volunteers. The group wrote the first draft of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) but was otherwise unable to effectively include indigenous voices in the UN narrative.³⁷ It failed because the UNWGIP was at the lowest level within the UN human rights bodies, so any action of the UNWGIP had to be considered by the Sub-commission, then the Commission on Human Rights and the Economic and Social Council before it made it to the General Assembly.³⁸

It was not until 2000 when the UN established the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) to address the Working Group's shortfalls. The UNPFII was specifically designed to include indigenous voices: the advisory body to the Economic and Social Council includes sixteen members, eight nominated by governments and eight by indigenous groups, each group representing a broad geographic diversity. The permanent forum meets annually to fulfill their mandate to educate members of the UN on indigenous issues and spread information about indigenous people around

³⁶ "Global Actions" Indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca. Accessed July 18, 2020.
https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/global_actions/.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ "Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations" United Nations Department of Social Affairs. Accessed July 4, 2020.
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/about-us.html>.

the world.³⁹ Much of the UNPFII's work is intangible—representation is a hard thing to quantify—but the Permanent Forum plays a critical part in the continued prioritization of indigenous voices.

In 2007, a momentous piece of legislation was adopted by the General Assembly: The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The UNDRIP is the most robust protection of indigenous rights ever passed, and it was the first piece of international law that definitively and concretely defined the rights of indigenous peoples. Some of the most notable and significant (most of which have already been mentioned) are listed below:

- Self-determination and self-government⁴⁰
- Right to exist as a distinct group of people and perpetuate that culture⁴¹
- Right to have and control their own land rights⁴²
- And the right to develop lands how they want⁴³
- Right to involvement in decision-making⁴⁴
- Right to traditional means of subsistence⁴⁵

Additionally, the Declaration tasked nations to not only to cease discrimination but to take steps to prevent it and counteract violations of indigenous rights. The UNDRIP was remarkable and still serves as the landmark achievement of indigenous rights activists. It is a reasonably short document with a lot of information on the kinds of rights that will be discussed in committee with this topic; I would strongly encourage delegates to read the Declaration. The glossary in this background guide

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ “United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” United Nations. Accessed July 4, 2020. Articles 3 and 4 https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouseoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf.

⁴¹ UNDRIP. Articles 8, 11-15, 24, and 31.

⁴² UNDRIP. Articles 10, 11, 12, and 26.

⁴³ UNDRIP. Articles 23, 26, 29, and 32.

⁴⁴ UNDRIP. Articles 5, 18, and 19.

⁴⁵ UNDRIP. Article 20.

also includes complicated words and phrases in the UNDRIP to make its reading more understandable.

After 2007, the priority of indigenous activists has been enforcing the Declaration. That is why, after the adoption of the Declaration, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) was established. The Expert Mechanism is made up of indigenous experts tasked with aiding the Human Rights Council and helping nations conform to the rights outlined in the UNDRIP.⁴⁶

But by and large, it has been up to the nations of the world to uphold and enforce the Declaration. Notable failures have been outlined in the statement of the problem: many nations have either failed to stop or actively participated in discrimination that violates the Declaration. The list of nations that fit that description go far beyond those described in the earlier sections as well. But there have also been successes in upholding the UNDRIP. Though not as common as the failures, the successes can be a roadmap for future legislation and action.

⁴⁶ "Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" OHCHR. Accessed July 18, 2020. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IPeoples/EMRIP/Pages/EMRIPIndex.aspx>.

Possible Solutions

One of the most significant case studies of a respect for indigenous peoples and the Declaration is New Zealand. Before European contact, New Zealand was inhabited by the Māori, a Polynesian people specific to New Zealand. After heavy European immigration in the 1830's, Britain claimed control of all of New Zealand. Though done more wearily of the indigenous as compared to other colonial conquests, Britain's advances worried Māori leaders, who decided to join together under a single king—an undertaking never before done by the Māori. Though some Māori tribes refused to join the King movement, many joined and consolidated Māori power. The kingdom refused to sell land to the British and, when war broke out, to fight against the European colonizers. After a series of wars that lasted until 1872 and a concentrated effort to buy large parts of the two islands, Britain emerged controlling a majority of the land.⁴⁷

Despite the sometimes-hostile takeover of the island, the Māori are granted significant rights as an indigenous group. Traditional cultural practices are kept alive and Māori is an official language of New Zealand. Furthermore, the New Zealand government acknowledges the land rights of the Māori people to the whole of the country. The Māori have established generational land ownership that ensures enough land for the Māori people into the future. Finally, the New Zealand government has made an extra effort to include Māori voices in government. Of the 120 seats in parliament, there are seven designated Māori seats that Māori people can opt into voting for. New Zealand has made particular efforts to fully address the sorts of discrimination outlined in the statement of the problem and those prohibited in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.⁴⁸

It is domestic action like that taken by New Zealand that has been the main focus for the protection of indigenous rights since 2007. After the Declaration was enacted by the UN, the doctrine has been strong; the focus has been on the implementation.

Learning from failures and successes alike, there are questions resolutions should answer:

⁴⁷ "Māori" Encyclopedia Britannica. Accessed July 4, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Māori>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

- What can the UN do to stop discrimination and counteract the targeting of indigenous groups?
- How can the land rights of indigenous groups be protected?
 - What kind of procedures should there be—if any—for proper redress of traditionally indigenous land?
- Is there anything the UN can do to create and preserve indigenous self-determination?
- In what ways can the UN protect indigenous communities from the many threats climate change poses?
 - Is there a way to minimize the harms without migration?
 - If migration is necessary, what kind of procedures are needed?
 - How will funds for migration be allocated?

Bloc Positions

As committee develops over the course of MUNUC, delegates will organize into groups that will collectively write a resolution, which will be considered and voted on by the end of the weekend. These groups are called blocs, and they should include delegates that have similar positions and are willing to work together, as the bloc will create and present their position as a single unit by the end of the weekend. In this section, we will go over some possible bloc positions, as well as possible policy proposals these blocs could present in committee.

Before we get into the positions, however, there is an important topic to address. In your research, many of you will find that your nation continues to have discriminatory policies against indigenous peoples today. This does not mean you must defend these actions. In fact, if you do perpetuate discrimination and stereotypes against indigenous peoples, you will face disciplinary action by the chair or MUNUC staff. While in general, we encourage delegates to stay true to their national policies, MUNUC is strongly against discrimination of every kind, so we will not tolerate anti-indigenous sentiment—even if it is what the true representative of your nation would say or do. While we encourage delegates to be true to the nation they are representing, these kinds of positions are unacceptable.

That notwithstanding, you will still find a fairly diverse range of positions. This is a complicated issue and not as simple as bad vs. good. But the issue can broadly be mapped onto how strictly nations want the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) to be enforced and how many resources should be made available for indigenous peoples. The UNDRIP is non-binding, so the steps the UN cannot exercise power directly, but the UN can still expedite the actualization of the Declaration.

Nations that are progressive on the issue of indigenous rights and have robust domestic policy defending indigenous issues will tend to want more international action on the issue and will likely assemble a bloc with those goals. These nations will be more aggressive in its strategies for redress for land rights—for example, trying to encourage New Zealand-like policies globally.

To achieve this, this bloc could champion incentive programs for nations that will fully comply with the UNDRIP or other similar incentive structures for the involvement and protection of indigenous peoples. These policies would hope to offset the economic costs of leaving land undeveloped, indigenous autonomy, or government spending on indigenous communities. For these incentives, it is important to recognize that the UN has a lot of resources available to use and only one small section of that is money; the more creative, the better. This bloc could also push for legal programs that can make it easier for nations to develop fair processes for indigenous self-determination and legal status. This could make available legal experts to aid willing nations that hope to refine legal approaches to indigeneity. These kinds of solutions are only a starting point, of course. More original and diverse solutions are strongly encouraged.

Many nations will also find themselves on the other side of the spectrum, who are not as enthusiastic about fully actualizing the UNDRIP. Often, this is because granting indigenous peoples rights comes at a cost, especially as it relates to land. For some nations—often developing nations—the cost of not developing land is too great. So more international pressure to cease development could be a difficult pill to swallow for these nations and the blocs they form.

Therefore, this sort of bloc will likely prioritize national sovereignty: the autonomy of the state to act as it pleases. This is a relatively common impediment to serious action in UN bodies. It is important and allows nations to act in their own economic self-interest. But it is also not using the UN's abilities to its greatest extent. That is why this bloc does not exclusively have to rely on the autonomy of nations. This bloc could draft policy on how competing land claims should be adjudicated, including situations of long-standing non-indigenous land use on traditionally indigenous lands. Or programs that provide external support for indigenous peoples could be a main focus. For these kinds of actions, it is important to not encourage discriminatory behavior, but there is still plenty of action to take and many debates to be engaged.

An issue that every bloc can champion is that of climate change. This issue does not have the same polarization as that of other indigenous rights, but it has just as much impact on many indigenous peoples. Action on this issue could look like funding measures for climate migration, aid packages for

communities facing deteriorating conditions, or infrastructure to mitigate the harms of climate change.

The two positions described above should not be seen as the expectation for blocs; they are just the blueprints. It is not expected that committee will immediately split in half and embody those descriptions. That does not do justice to the complexity of the issue, nor is it a good way to go about Model UN. Delegates should be more prepared to develop blocs that embody a greater level of nuance between the two extreme positions described above. The dais will be expecting four or more working papers, and two to three draft resolutions after blocs have merged.

For any questions on blocs, merging, or how committee will look over the course of the weekend, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at usg.ga@munuc.org. Similarly, I am open to any questions about what kind of behavior is allowed, or any other questions you might have.

Glossary

Assimilation: “The process whereby individuals or groups of differing heritage are absorbed into the dominant culture of a society”⁴⁹

Collective right: “Collective rights guarantee the development and preservation of ethnic minorities’ cultural identities and forms of organizations”⁵⁰

Distinct: “Recognizably different in nature from something else of a similar type”⁵¹

Indigeneity: The nature of being indigenous

Indigenous: (full definition in the statement of the problem as well):

“[The UN] has developed a modern understanding this term based on the following:

- Self-identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member.
- Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies
- Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources
- Distinct social, economic or political systems
- Distinct language, culture and beliefs
- Form non-dominant groups of society
- Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.”⁵²

⁴⁹ “Assimilation.” Encyclopedia Britannica. Accessed July 18, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/assimilation-society>.

⁵⁰ “Collective Rights” Friends of the Earth International. Accessed July 18, 2020. <https://www.foei.org/what-we-do/collective-rights>.

⁵¹ “Distinct.” Oxford English Dictionary. Accessed July 18, 2020. <https://www.lexico.com/definition/distinct>.

⁵² “UNPFII Session 5 Factsheet” UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, accessed July 4, 2020.

Inter alia: "Among other things" Often used when beginning a list to mean the list is not exhaustive⁵³

Mitigate: "To make something less harmful, unpleasant, or bad"⁵⁴

Redress: "To put right a wrong or give payment for a wrong that has been done"⁵⁵

Restitution: "An act of restoring or a condition of being restored: such as a restoration of something to its rightful owner"⁵⁶

Repatriation: "The act of sending or bringing someone, or sometimes money or other property, back to the country that he, she, or it came from"⁵⁷

Subsistence: "Source or means of obtaining the necessities of life"⁵⁸

Security of person: "The legal and uninterrupted enjoyment by a man of his life, his body, his health and his reputation"⁵⁹

Self-determination: "The ability or power to make decisions for yourself, especially the power of a nation to decide how it is governed"⁶⁰

https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf.

⁵³ "Inter alia" Collins English Dictionary. Accessed July 18, 2020.

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/inter-alia>.

⁵⁴ "Mitigate" Cambridge English Dictionary. Accessed July 18, 2020.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/mitigate>.

⁵⁵ "Redress" Cambridge English Dictionary. Accessed July 18, 2020.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/redress>.

⁵⁶ "Restitution" Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Accessed July 18, 2020. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/restitution>.

⁵⁷ "Repatriation" Cambridge English Dictionary. Accessed July 18, 2020.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/repatriation>.

⁵⁸ "Subsistence" Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Accessed July 18, 2020. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/subsistence>.

⁵⁹ "Personal Security" Free Legal Dictionary. Accessed July 18, 2020. <https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Security+of+person>.

⁶⁰ "Self-determination" Cambridge English Dictionary. Accessed July 18, 2020.

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TOPIC B: PROTECTING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION FOR JOURNALISTS

Statement of the Problem

Introduction to the Problem

There is a reason freedom of information is enshrined in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, one of the most fundamental texts in human rights and international law: it is essential to any free and just society. The document states that everyone has the right to “seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.”⁶¹ Simply, it is the right to knowledge and the open exchange of it. Today, journalists are the protectors of that right—and that cannot be replaced. Information is fundamental to all decision-making, including voting. Without information, we are lost. Without journalists, we have no free exchange of information. It is for this reason that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said that “when journalists are targeted, societies as a whole pay a price” as “no democracy is complete without press freedom.”⁶²

⁶¹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights. United Nations. Accessed August 10, 2020. <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

⁶² ‘Informing is not a crime’ UN chief calls for better protection of journalists, press freedom. UN News. Accessed August 24, 2020. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/02/1033552>.

Net neutrality protester in the United States, 2017⁶³



Journalists play an important role in society, but it should not be lost on us that individuals absolutely have the right to freedom of expression—under which journalism certainly falls. So while journalists have an exceptional role in the functioning of society, they, as individuals, also simply have an unalienable right to exercise reporting.

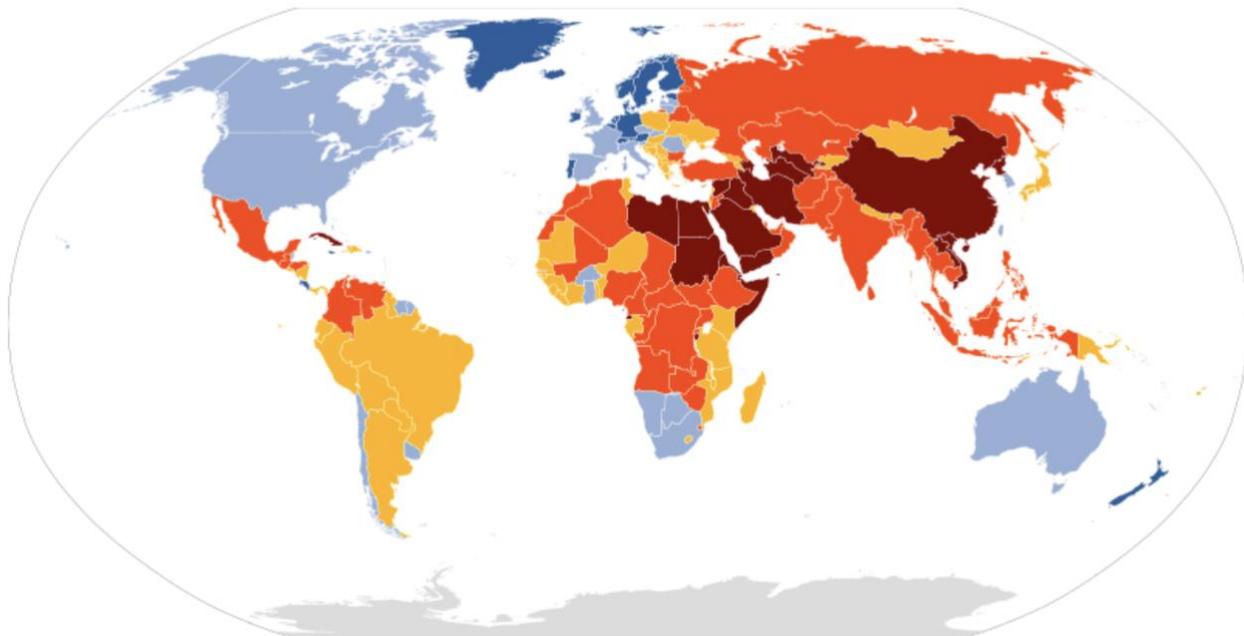
Yet despite their critical role, journalists are facing an increasingly difficult situation. Reporters Without Borders (also known as Reporters Sans Frontières or RSF) is one of the world's foremost watchdogs on freedom of information worldwide. Their World Press Freedom Index measures and quantifies the qualitative national, regional, and global progress on journalistic freedoms, informed by experts and journalists on the ground. Since its creation in 2013, RSF's global indicator has decreased 12%, showing a distinct trend of deterioration of the freedom of information worldwide.⁶⁴ This decline shows an increase in resentment towards journalists and a decrease in journalistic integrity, including pluralism (diversity of opinions and media options) and independence (media outlets not being beholden or controlled). Among their explanations for the decline of these rights

⁶³ Nation's Leading Press Freedom and Civil Liberties Groups Call on FCC to Abandon Its Attack on Net Neutrality. Rightsanddissent.com. Accessed September 18, 2020. <https://rightsanddissent.org/news/nations-leading-press-freedom-civil-liberties-groups-call-fcc-abandon-attack-net-neutrality/>.

⁶⁴ 2020 World Press Freedom Index: "Entering a decisive decade for journalism, exacerbated by coronavirus". Reporters Without Borders. Accessed August 24, 2020. <https://rsf.org/en/2020-world-press-freedom-index-entering-decisive-decade-journalism-exacerbated-coronavirus>.

and concerns for the future, RSF cited rising authoritarian opposition to a free press and a crisis of trust.⁶⁵ Those are the two themes that will be explored in this background guide.

Reporters Without Borders' 2018 Freedom Index Map⁶⁶



Violence and Oppression Towards Journalists

We begin with the organized and powerful opposition to freedom of information that is often seen in authoritarian regimes. Because of the lack of accountability authoritarian leaders possess—and the threat a free press poses to that—journalists in oppressive countries face a dangerous situation.

The most egregious and most notable variety is the murder of journalists. The murder of Jamal Kashoggi in 2018 by the Saudi government made headlines, but it was just one instance of a terrifyingly common trend worldwide. In the last decade, just under 1,000 journalists have been killed for their work by governments and regimes.⁶⁷ That's two murders a week. Around the world and in more ways than just murders, suppression of journalism is widespread. In Turkmenistan—one

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Press Freedom 2018. Wikimedia Commons. Accessed September 18, 2020.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Press_freedom_2018.svg.

⁶⁷ 'Informing is not a crime' UN chief calls for better protection of journalists, press freedom. UN News.

of the world's most oppressive regimes—journalist Ogulsapar Muradova was found dead in her prison cell with cuts and bruises around her body in 2006.⁶⁸ In Eritrea, there have been reports of police arresting journalists by the dozens in their workplaces and there are an estimated 16 journalists imprisoned in Eritrea today.⁶⁹ In Syria alone, more than 10 journalists were killed by the state in 2018.⁷⁰

To make matters worse, in a vast majority of those cases (9 out of 10),⁷¹ no one is held accountable for the extrajudicial killings. In the case of Ogulsapar Muradova, the UN Human Rights Committee did condemn Turkmenistan and found the state at fault, but it did so in 2018, 12 years after the murder.⁷² In Syria, the total number of journalist killings is at least ten, but the final sum is still unknown because some have been imprisoned and their status as of today is unavailable. For an issue with important implications to human rights and human life, it seems our capabilities and choices have been woefully inadequate.

The lives and safety of these journalists must be taken seriously, but it is also important not to miss the larger picture. These journalists choose their profession knowing these risks and that is nothing to skim over. In authoritarian nations that crack down on journalists, the name of the game is accountability. Regimes consolidate power by consolidating narratives—they ensure there is no other story being told other than theirs, and they ensure the story they are telling is good for the rulers. In all of the states mentioned before, those killings and imprisonments are only a portion of a larger crackdown on freedom of information. Turkmenistan is described as a “news black hole” by RSF⁷³, and Turkmen journalist Ruslan Myatiev has described the country's media landscape simply: “It's

⁶⁸ UN Rights Commissioner Finds Turkmenistan Responsible for Torture and Death of a Journalist. Open Society Justice Initiative. Accessed August 10, 2020. <https://www.justiceinitiative.org/newsroom/un-rights-committee-finds-turkmenistan-responsible-torture-and-death-journalist>.

⁶⁹ In Eritrea, Jailed Journalists Continue to Languish. VOA News. Accessed August 10, 2020. <https://www.voanews.com/africa/eritrea-jailed-journalists-continue-languish>.

⁷⁰ Syria. Reporters Without Borders. Accessed August 10, 2020. <https://rsf.org/en/syria>.

⁷¹ Informing is not a crime' UN chief calls for better protection of journalists, press freedom. UN News.

⁷² Turkmenistan. Reporters Without Borders. Accessed August 10, 2020. <https://rsf.org/en/turkmenistan>.

⁷³ The World's Worst Country for Journalists. Foreign Policy. Accessed August 10, 2020. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/05/28/the-worlds-worst-country-for-journalists-turkmenistan/>.

propaganda. It's the worst example of state propaganda. They are making [President Saparmurat Niyazof] virtually a god."⁷⁴

In Eritrea, internet access is heavily restricted—essentially cut off to the whole population except through centralized internet cafés.⁷⁵ Syria, Turkmenistan, and Eritrea are among the worst nations for journalists, but they are not the end-all-be-all of this issue. Nations around the world—developing and developed, small and large, authoritarian and democratic—face variations on the same concepts of silencing journalists and robbing them of their platform.

It should also be noted that, among violent opposition to the freedom of information, it is not exclusively in authoritarian nations. That sort of opposition can best be seen on the battlefield. In wartime, journalists have always had an essential role in being an unbiased source in the development of conflict, but throughout history, journalists have been attacked in conflict settings. The Declaration of Human Rights explicitly states that journalists must be treated as civilians so they cannot be specifically targeted. This should not be used to distract from authoritarian crackdowns on collective rights—as so many more are killed for reporting domestically than internationally and in conflict—but it is still notable.⁷⁶

Crisis of Trust

Threats to journalists and freedom of information do not always look like jailings and murders. In fact, some of the greatest struggles the free press faces today comes from something very different: an attack on journalistic integrity. In a similar vein to the idea that journalists cannot do their job if they do not have a platform, journalists also cannot do their job if they are not trusted, pluralistic, and independent. Increasingly, this is being put in doubt.

This dangerous trend can and does happen in tandem with the horrors discussed previously, as well as on its own in all kinds of countries around the world, regardless of political structure. However,

⁷⁴ Turkmenistan. Reporters Without Borders.

⁷⁵ Life as an Eritrean Journalist. Mail & Guardian. Accessed August 10, 2020. <https://mg.co.za/article/2019-10-02-00-life-as-an-eritrean-journalist/>.

⁷⁶ Journalists in War Zones Tread a Fine Line Between Safety and Freedom of Speech. The Conversation. Accessed August 10, 2020. <https://theconversation.com/journalists-in-war-zones-tread-a-fine-line-between-safety-and-freedom-of-speech-79488>.

because of journalism's especially critical role in democracies, this issue as it relates to democracies will be focused on in this section. This is, however, not just an issue that democratic nations exclusively encounter nor should they be the only ones to address.

When looking at global data on journalism, one thing is clear: people do not trust the media. The 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer measures global trust in government, business, NGO's, and, notably, the media. It found that 57% of people do not believe the media does a good job of differentiating opinion and fact, and the belief that the media as a whole was both incompetent and unethical.⁷⁷ This could be attributed to rising anti-media rhetoric from major politicians, notably right-wing populists. Donald Trump of the United States and Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil have both heavily criticized their country's journalists.⁷⁸ Trump even claimed in April of 2019 that the press is the "enemy of the people,"⁷⁹ taking aim at both individual outlets and American journalism as a whole. Certainly, this kind of narrative creates distrust. However, part of the reason there is decreasing trust in media outlets is because the media is less trustworthy: there are signs of decreasing quality of journalism.

While Trump and Bolsonaro often fight the media, some political leaders have begun to consolidate media outlets to serve the politically established rather than the population. In Hungary and Serbia, right-wing populists have begun to consolidate ownership and control of news outlets. In Hungary, where this process has been implemented for longer, around 80% of the media is owned by government allies. Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel is currently facing corruption charges for offering a quid pro quo with media outlets to create more flattering content.⁸⁰ Media that is beholden to the powerful is not independent journalism and is not worthy of trust.

It is not just politicians; the economically established have also begun to infringe on that independence and trustworthiness as well. Around the world, the media has been concentrated into an increasingly small group of corporations. For example in Europe, the Central European Media

⁷⁷ 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer reveals growing sense of inequality is undermining trust in institutions. Edelman.com. Accessed August 24, 2020. <https://www.edelman.com/news-awards/2020-edelman-trust-barometer>.

⁷⁸ 2020 World Press Freedom Index: "Entering a decisive decade for journalism, exacerbated by coronavirus". Reporters Without Borders. Accessed August 24, 2020. <https://rsf.org/en/2020-world-press-freedom-index-entering-decisive-decade-journalism-exacerbated-coronavirus>

⁷⁹ Trump ramps up rhetoric on media, calls press 'the enemy of the people'. The Hill. Accessed August 24, 2020. <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/437610-trump-calls-press-the-enemy-of-the-people>.

⁸⁰ "Media Freedom: A Downward Spiral" Freedom House. Accessed August 24, 2020. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-and-media/2019/media-freedom-downward-spiral>.

Services (CME) was acquired by Czech Republic's wealthiest billionaire, Petr Kellner, in late 2019. CME, which already wielded a large amount of power, will now be one part of a whole array of media services that Kellner controls in Central Europe.⁸¹ A similar story can be seen in the United States, where Sinclair Broadcast Group, a right-leaning media conglomerate has collected 191 local TV news stations that reaches nearly 40% of the American population. Sinclair Broadcast Group is one of five companies that now control 37% of local TV reporting. More than just consolidation, a Stanford University study showed a change in the media these stations produce. Sinclair stations report on national news more and show a distinct rightward shift in partisanship according to an analysis of loaded political terms. When Sinclair takes control, there are fewer choices of perspective and those perspectives are biased by national interests—hurting the vital journalistic principles of pluralism and independence.⁸² Consolidation by the powerful—politically or economically—leads to worse journalism. Furthermore, it brings in incentives for sensationalism and polarized content that can drive political goals or achieve economic growth but fails to uphold journalistic values.

The culmination of the crisis of trust is the interplay between trust and quality. Quite clearly, a lack of quality will lead to a lack in trust: if news sources report poorly, people would be justified in not believing the media so readily. But a lack of trust can equally cause a lack of quality. Harvard Business Review has an in-depth analysis proving that exact phenomenon and the resulting dangerous cycle. The study observes that people will only consume and trust what they already believe—an exercise of confirmation bias. A general lack of trust will then lead to dogged trust in sites and sources that confirm a consumer's view. Essentially, the more you distrust reputable sources, the more you rely on sources that confirm your bias, regardless of accuracy. And that new media, because its role is to confirm biases, will be of lower quality.⁸³ At this point, a cycle can take shape:

⁸¹ "Broadcaster CME agrees to be acquired by Czech firm PPF in \$2.1 billion deal" Reuters. Accessed August 24, 2020. [https://www.reuters.com/article/us-central-euro-m-a-ppf/broadcaster-cme-agrees-to-be-acquired-by-czech-firm-ppf-in-2-1-billion-deal-idUSKBN1X6oSV#:~:text=PRAGUE%20\(Reuters\)%20%2D%20Investment%20group,the%20companies%20said%20on%20Sunday](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-central-euro-m-a-ppf/broadcaster-cme-agrees-to-be-acquired-by-czech-firm-ppf-in-2-1-billion-deal-idUSKBN1X6oSV#:~:text=PRAGUE%20(Reuters)%20%2D%20Investment%20group,the%20companies%20said%20on%20Sunday).

⁸² "Media Consolidation Means Less Local News, More Right Wing Slant. Stanford Business. Accessed August 24, 2020. <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/media-consolidation-means-less-local-news-more-right-wing-slant>.

⁸³ "The US Media's Problems are Much Bigger than Fake News and Filter Bubbles. Harvard Business Review. Accessed August 24, 2020. <https://hbr.org/2017/01/the-u-s-medias-problems-are-much-bigger-than-fake-news-and-filter-bubbles>.

1. Consume media that confirms biases (less quality)
2. Strengthen those biases & distrust media that disagrees (less trust)
3. Consume media that confirms biases (less quality)
4. Rinse and repeat

This negative feedback loop leads to less trust of the overall media system (though more trust in specific outlets) and lower quality journalism (generally two, polarized perspectives that are beholden to the biased narrative or structure, not to facts). The cycle, when left uninterrupted, can be devastating to the state of freedom of information.

The internet and the emergence of digital journalism has demonstrated this cycle to its full effect. Anyone with a computer and time can become a journalist by starting a webpage and posting regularly—and anyone with a computer can read that webpage. The explosion of access the internet brought also presented the perfect storm for confirmation bias to control consumption of media and degrade trust in our media. The two feed off of each other, posing a dangerous threat to the future of journalism, as without sufficient trust, journalism ceases to function.

History of the Problem

Written communication has existed since written language was developed. However, modern journalism—characterized by dissemination of current events to the people—began in the early 1600's when Johann Carolus began what is recognized as the first newspaper, *Relation aller Fürnemmen und gedenckwürdigen Historien*, in Staussborg (modern-day France).⁸⁴

Newspapers began to spread around Europe. In many cases, newspapers were met with concern and opposition by the ruling class: a more educated population posed a threat to their grip on power. Newspapers such as *The Courante*—the first publication of its kind in English, created around 1620—had to take extra measures to avoid strict laws against journalists, so it was published from Holland, which had more relaxed laws. Taxes were levied and restrictions were imposed on journalists across the continent.⁸⁵

Quickly, then, journalism spread across the Atlantic to European colonies in the Americas—notably to Boston in modern-day United States—where the first newspapers in the Americas were popping up in the late 1600's.⁸⁶ This paper began to cause the same sort of trouble *The Courante* started before it, prompting then dodging censorship. In the following decades leading up to the American Revolution of 1776, newspapers such as *The Boston Gazette* and *The New-England Courante* grew to define a unique American identity and played a significant role in the creation of the first democracy. A democracy that, critically, became the model for freedom of information and expression. As journalism came into its own as a part of the economy and culture, revolution and democracy followed.⁸⁷

Back in Europe, the same trend followed. First it was the French Revolution of 1789, then it spread across the continent. Due in no small part to the rise of newspapers and journalism, much of the 1800's were defined by revolution after revolution—an era of quick change and democratization.

⁸⁴ "Johann Carolus's 'Relation,' the First Printed European Newspaper" HistoryofInformation.com. Accessed September 6, 2020. <https://www.historyofinformation.com/detail.php?id=34>.

⁸⁵ "Journalism: A Brief History" Universal Class. Accessed September 6, 2020. <https://www.universalclass.com/articles/writing/journalism-a-brief-history.htm>.

⁸⁶ "Journalism: A Brief History" Universal Class.

⁸⁷ Newspaper of the Revolution! Bostongazette.org. Accessed September 18, 2020. <http://bostongazette.org/2011/03/newspaper-of-the-revolution/>.

Among the most lasting reforms from this period was freedom of the press, a demand shared by revolutionaries across the continent.⁸⁸

The 1800's was also when journalism began to reach out past the Western World. In the Middle East, the Ottoman Empire first used journalism as a tool of oppression, owned overwhelmingly by authorities in the Turkish government. By the 1860's, regional newspapers that were neither owned by or beholden to the Turks began to emerge, to expected state censorship. The independent press of Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon found solace in Egypt, where the Arab press was free to operate. These journalists still faced obstacles in effectively spreading Arab principles and journalism into the Ottoman Empire. After 1908, the Young Turks brought in liberal reforms that lifted restrictions on freedom of expression. Newspapers were able to emerge and operate, though they did not have complete autonomy.⁸⁹

In China, journalism played an important role in the fall of the Qing Dynasty by progressing social modernization. In the power struggle that emerged after the fall of the Qing in 1912, media and journalism were the mouthpieces of the two opposing parties that fought for the soul of China. After the Chinese Communist Party claimed control and the People's Republic of China was founded in the mid 1900's, journalism became limited to state-controlled media.⁹⁰

Journalism also inspired anti-colonialist sentiment and independence movements around the world. Refusing to make the same mistake twice, British colonial powers cracked down harshly on independent media in India. India's first newspaper, The Bengal Gazette, was founded in 1780 then promptly shut down by the British in 1782 after its criticisms of the colonial government. This continued on, through the Press Act of 1910—which called for local governments to fine news organizations that published 'offensive content'—and tight war-time restrictions during World War 2

⁸⁸ "A History of Journalism" g-wlearning.com. Accessed September 6, 2020. <https://www.g-wlearning.com/journalism/9914/cho1/pdf/history.pdf>.

⁸⁹ "Arab media: historical background" al-bab.com. Accessed September 6, 2020. <https://al-bab.com/arab-media-historical-background>.

⁹⁰ "Journalism History: China" Wiley Online Library. Accessed September 6, 2020. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems013>.

until India gained independence in 1947. Though the government initially instituted censorship laws themselves against 'objectionable content', this was removed in the decades following.⁹¹

Journalism helped to usher in the independence movements across the Middle East in the 1940's. Though journalism has had a mixed history since—experiencing periods of censorship and freedom alike—journalism has survived in the region, despite challenges.⁹²

Meanwhile, journalism continued to progress worldwide, adapting and expanding with new technologies—through telegraph, radio, television, and eventually to the internet. With those new innovations, the world becomes more interconnected, creating new opportunities for the world to see truth in every corner of the globe: more sources and more readers suddenly have access to global conversations. But at the same time, the internet has also brought new impediments to journalism that have never been seen before, as ushering in new journalists also welcomes and perpetuates their biases. Misinformation is easier to post and harder to check in the internet age, leading to an increase in misinformation to accompany the similar increase in information.⁹³

⁹¹ "History of Journalism" Editors Guild of India. Accessed September 6, 2020. <https://editorsguild.in/history-of-journalism/>.

⁹² "Arab media: historical background" al-bab.com.

⁹³ "The Impact of the Internet on Teaching and Practicing Journalism" JEP. Accessed September 6, 2020. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/idx/j/jep/3336451.0007.102/--impact-of-the-internet-on-teaching-and-practicing-journalism?rgn=main;view=fulltext>.

Past Actions

Freedom of information has been a priority of the United Nations since its inception. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—one of the pivotal documents of the U.N. and global human rights, written in 1948—the freedom of information was enshrined as an unalienable right.⁹⁴ This on its own is a definitive protection of freedom of information and expression, but the U.N. has taken more action since 1948 to more fully protect this right. Notably, it has created the position of Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Opinion and Expression, first established in 1993. The Special Rapporteur is mandated to protect these rights by conducting research, producing reports, and broadly giving the issue special attention.⁹⁵

The right has been upheld again and again in official declarations as well, to demonstrate continued attention and determination to solving these issues. Freedom of information has been included, in a form similar to that in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966⁹⁶; the UNESCO celebration of World Press Freedom Day 2016, including the Brisbane⁹⁷, Maputo⁹⁸, and Dakar Declarations⁹⁹; and the American Convention on Human Rights of 1969 by the Organization of American States¹⁰⁰.

In the pursuit of those declared freedoms, however, the U.N. has often played a limited role. This is not unconventional for the U.N., as the organization often prefers to stay neutral rather than play an interventionist role. This provides, then, a wide range of possibilities for delegates to pursue on the

⁹⁴ Universal Declaration of Human Rights. United Nations. Accessed August 10, 2020.

<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

⁹⁵ "Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression" OHCHR. Accessed September 6, 2020. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomOpinion/Pages/OpinionIndex.aspx>.

⁹⁶ "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. OHCHR. Accessed September 6, 2020.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>.

⁹⁷ "Brisbane Declaration" UNESCO. Accessed September 6, 2020.

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/events/prizes-and-celebrations/celebrations/international-days/world-press-freedom-day/previous-celebrations/2010/brisbane-declaration/>.

⁹⁸ "Maputo Declaration" UNESCO. Accessed September 6, 2020.

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/events/prizes-and-celebrations/celebrations/international-days/world-press-freedom-day/previous-celebrations/worldpressfreedomday2009001/maputo-declaration/>.

⁹⁹ "Dakar Declaration" UNESCO. Accessed September 6, 2020.

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/events/prizes-and-celebrations/celebrations/international-days/world-press-freedom-day/previous-celebrations/worldpressfreedomday200900000/dakar-declaration/>.

¹⁰⁰ "American Convention on Human Rights 'Pact of San Jose, Costa Rica'" Organization of American States.

Accessed September 6, 2020. http://www.oas.org/dil/treaties_B-32_American_Convention_on_Human_Rights.htm.

issue. The lack of precedent can be seen as an opportunity for any delegate who wishes to try the unconventional.

Possible Solutions

Broadly, we can separate possible solutions into the same categories the problem was split into. To begin with, we can examine violent crackdowns on journalists. A common solution can be incentive programs dependent on the elimination of state-sponsored killings of journalists. Programs could offer special assistance for communications or internet infrastructure, which can assist in accessibility of information and economic development. Or there can be similar recommendations on other inter-state relationships, where the U.N. can recommend that nations make trade agreements or other diplomacy be contingent on similar standards.

For the crisis of trust in journalism, there exists a central tradeoff to the issue: protecting free expression or defending trust. Both are critical to the free flow of information, but they are often in conflict with each other; for example, some of the most effective ways of upholding trust requires fact-checking or restricting speech—which limits free expression. In current U.N. policy, the organization has preferred free expression, showing no indication of interfering in it. Though the U.N. has no authority to regulate journalists directly or demand nations to act, they can give suggestions to nations, and those suggestions can include how nations should address misinformation as a way to strike a balance in that tradeoff. These plans would have to include a definition for what is misinformation or not true, how those definitions will be enforced, and how it can be used to reconstruct trust in journalism. Restricting speech should only be done carefully, but if there is enough thought into how it is done, it can be a reasonable set of recommendations.

Another option is a recommendation on anonymous sources. Using anonymous sources is a common practice in journalism where the source of information is kept secret when the story is released. It has been subject to criticism at times as a reason for distrust within journalism, as it limits ways for third parties to fact-check and reduces accountability. The U.N. can recommend that nations restrict or ban the practice. However, delegates should be wary about how to define and approach the policy specifics of what constitutes anonymous sources. Any recommendation which is not carefully tailored runs the risk of limiting practices which are useful for journalists and the public good.

Furthermore, nations could reassure trust by attempting to tighten up digital journalism. At the U.N. national level, a way to reassure trust in journalism could include a program that identifies and certifies journalists that fit a high level of journalistic integrity or avoids misinformation.

Bloc Positions

There are a wide variety of positions we can see on this issue; freedom of speech and information has never been straightforward. The way the issue is set forward in the statement of the problem presents two different topics which nations can develop platforms—not to mention any other topics that emerge during the course of committee. Across these three topics, there are likely to be no fewer than three positions.

The first would be the most aggressive in their protections of individual freedoms, even when they conflict with communal benefits. The countries that fall into that group will take a strong stance against any silencing of journalists or individuals at all. Therefore, their platform will include strong measures to reduce the silencing and killing of journalists by authoritarian nations, as well as limited interest in centralized fact-checking or censorship. Possible solutions this bloc could propose include the suggestion that nations make trade agreements contingent on a free press or programs that promote factual reporting without restricting any speech.

The second position would include nations that balance individuality and community. These nations would denounce violent crackdowns on journalists, but would be willing to curtail their rights to restore trust and better results on a societal scale. Their platform might include incentive programs to stop the silencing of the independent press in authoritarian nations but could also share the aggressive approach the first bloc would likely adopt. Where this bloc differs from the first is in the crisis of trust. This bloc would likely push suggestions for moderate sacrifices in free speech for the reconstruction of public trust, including policy that would punish misinformation or would put more stringent restrictions on who could practice journalism. Broadly, this bloc will hope to solve the problems facing journalists and the mission of the free press, even if it means cutting down on the rights of the journalists themselves. The typical member of this bloc would likely be a member of the EU. European nations often toe the line between communal benefits and individual rights, and the EU has previously made restrictions on freedom of speech for that very reason. This bloc is in no way, however, restricted to only European countries.

The bloc positions above were on display at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, when a long list of nations came together in a joint statement against censorship in the crisis, saying “free,

independent, and pluralistic play an indispensable role in informing the public during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.”¹⁰¹ The nations made a point to say “trust cannot be achieved without transparency and accountability provided and guaranteed by a free media,” and the media is responsible for keeping misinformation in check.¹⁰²

The third bloc will, naturally in opposition to the previous two, place a high priority on the collective. These nations will also often be more authoritarian and restrictive of individuals. These nations will likely advocate for the freedom to censor as nations please, even including jailing. This could include policy proposed by the second bloc in the hopes of restoring trust as well. This bloc would likely include world superpowers such as Russia and China, as well as other nations that often align with them on the international stage.

This third bloc’s position was also seen clearly early in the COVID-19 pandemic. Russia, increased censorship and journalistic crackdowns. In April 2020, the Supreme Court made spreading “fake news” about the pandemic illegal, punishable by up to five years of prison—both for journalists and everyday citizens. More than 260 websites were either blocked or were forced to remove false information by the Russian government.¹⁰³ This kind of action demonstrates the contrast between these nations and the first two blocs: the willingness to sacrifice individual liberties in the fight against concepts like misinformation.

It should be said that the issue of freedom of information includes fewer concerns about inappropriate content than that of indigenous rights; however, there are still boundaries. While this topic will give authoritarian nations a bit more room to act as their country would, that line is certainly found well before the killing of journalists. However, there is interesting discussion and engagement on the topic of freedom of expression and information, and, to be fair to that discussion, the extreme position against those freedoms should be represented, just in a way that is

¹⁰¹ “Joint statement on safety of journalists and access to information during the COVID-19 crisis” Government Offices of Sweden. Accessed September 6, 2020. <https://www.government.se/statements/2020/04/joint-statement-on-safety-of-journalists-and-access-to-information-during-the-covid-19-crisis/>.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ “Russia Bans ‘Discussions’ of Fake Coronavirus News” The Moscow Times. Accessed September 6, 2020. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/04/23/russia-bans-discussions-of-fake-coronavirus-news-a70083>.

mindful and respectful of MUNUC's standards of conduct. As always, if there are any questions on this topic, do not hesitate to reach out over email and ask.

These three positions are to give delegates some ideas of where their country might stand and to give a starting point—on what kind of solutions they might want to pursue and what kind of nations they might be inclined to work with. This is not my expectation for committee—the delegates should run the committee far more than this document should. Do not force partnerships that are not working or avoid collaborations if they are unlikely. Nations can and should differ along the positions described above, along with many other stances—be it journalists in warzones or approaches to digital interactions as it relates to journalism.

Glossary

Freedom of information: A term used to represent the right outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the freedom “to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”¹⁰⁴

Journalism: “Journalism is the activity of gathering, assessing, creating , and presenting news and information. It is also the product of these activities”¹⁰⁵

Pluralism (in journalism): “Media pluralism can either mean a plurality of voices, of analyses, of expressed opinions and issues (internal pluralism), or a plurality of media outlets, of types of media (print, radio, TV or digital) and coexistence of private owned media and public service media (external pluralism).”¹⁰⁶

Independence (in journalism): “the independence of the editorial production from influences and interferences by external interests, whether they are economic interests (of the owner, the shareholder, the advertiser), political interests, or any kind of interest that is external to producing uninterested news.”¹⁰⁷

Confirmation Bias: “The tendency to process information by looking for, or interpreting, information that is consistent with one’s beliefs.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Universal Declaration of Human Rights. United Nations. Accessed August 10, 2020. <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

¹⁰⁵ “What is Journalism?” American Press Institute. Accessed August 31, 2020. <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/journalism-essentials/what-is-journalism/>.

¹⁰⁶ “Contribution to the EU public consultation on media pluralism and democracy” Reporters Without Borders (RSF). Accessed August 31, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/image/document/2016-44/reporterssansfrontiers_18792.pdf.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ “Confirmation Bias” Encyclopedia Britannica. Accessed August 31, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/science/confirmation-bias>.

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<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/events/prizes-and-celebrations/celebrations/international-days/world-press-freedom-day/previous-celebrations/worldpressfreedomday20090000/dakar-declaration/>.

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<https://editorsguild.in/history-of-journalism/>.

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