



Human Rights Council Background Guide 2019

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2019 National Model United Nations Conference in Erfurt, Germany (NMUN • Germany)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the Human Rights Council (HRC). This year's staff is: Director Samantha Hall and Assistant Director Christopher Pridat. Samantha Hall obtained her B.A. in International Studies from Wright State University and her M.A. in International Affairs from American University. Samantha works as a consultant in the International Development field to guide developing nations to identify areas where they can finance their own development without the need for foreign assistance. Christopher is currently interning at the European Commission in Berlin while finishing his B.A. in International Relations and Law at the University of Erfurt. He will start a LL.M. program in Public International Law at Utrecht University in September 2019.

The topics under discussion for the Human Rights Council are:

- I. The Human Rights Situation in Palestine
- II. Preventing Political Persecution and Oppression

HRC is a subsidiary body of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. Since its creation in 2006, HRC has played a unique role as the primary inter-governmental body within the UN system, responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights as they are defined within the Charter of the United Nations, and subsequent international treaties and laws. Designated as a forum for dialogue on all human rights issues, HRC possesses a comprehensive mandate which allows it to take proactive measures in order to address and provide recommendations on all human rights violations, and to foster international cooperation and coordination within the UN human rights system.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to conduct additional research, explore your Member State's policies in-depth, and examine the policies of other Member States to improve your ability to negotiate and reach consensus. In preparation for the conference, each delegation will use their research to draft and submit a [position paper](#). Guidelines are available in the [NMUN Position Paper Guide](#).

The [NMUN website](#) has many additional resources, including two that are essential both in preparation for the conference and as a resource during the conference. They are:

1. The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not discuss the topics or agenda with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes the long and short form of the rules as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee, please contact the Deputy Secretary-General Marleen Schreier at dsg.germany@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the conference!

Sincerely,

Samantha Hall, Director
Christopher Pridat, Assistant Director

Table of Contents

Committee Overview	3
Introduction.....	3
Governance, Structure, and Membership.....	4
Mandate, Functions, and Powers	5
Recent Sessions and Current Priorities.....	6
Conclusion.....	8
Annotated Bibliography	8
Bibliography.....	9
I. The Human Rights Situation in Palestine	13
Introduction.....	13
International and Regional Framework.....	13
Role of the International System.....	14
Social, Economic, and Political Developments.....	16
Conclusion.....	17
Further Reading	17
Annotated Bibliography	18
Bibliography.....	19
II. Preventing Political Persecution and Oppression	22
Introduction.....	22
International and Regional Framework.....	22
Role of the International System.....	23
Victims of Political Persecution and Oppression	25
Means of Political Persecution and Oppression	26
Conclusion.....	27
Further Reading	27
Annotated Bibliography	27
Bibliography.....	29

Committee Overview

Introduction

The Human Rights Council (HRC) is the main organ of the United Nations (UN) “responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and making recommendations on them.”¹ Its duty entails responding to urgent human rights situations by addressing issues regarding “accountability and liability for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.”² HRC has a global scope, working to promote and protect all human rights; the Council currently focuses on several regions in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, with special attention placed on the ongoing conflict in Syria and the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.³

The international human rights agenda has been shaped by two important documents: the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) from 1948 and the *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action* from 1993.⁴ After the adoption of the UDHR, the UN Secretariat established a UN department responsible for overseeing its human rights program.⁵ This department, known as the Centre for Human Rights, expanded its reach in the 1980s and moved from New York to Geneva.⁶ In 1993, the World Conference on Human Rights in its *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action* recommended to the General Assembly that the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) be established.⁷ Subsequently, the General Assembly created OHCHR in resolution 48/141 with the responsibility of coordinating the human rights agenda across all intergovernmental agencies and departments within the UN.⁸ OHCHR is responsible for the substantive, logistical, and administrative needs of all UN human rights mechanisms, including core treaty-based bodies, thematic working groups, and HRC.⁹ On 10 August 2018, Secretary-General António Guterres appointed Michelle Bachelet of Chile as High Commissioner for Human Rights upon approval of the General Assembly; Bachelet is succeeding Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein of Jordan.¹⁰

As international human rights law has evolved, specialized agencies within the UN system have also emerged due to the urgent need to respond to human rights violations.¹¹ Among these was the Commission on Human Rights, abbreviated as the Commission, which was an intergovernmental organization of the UN established in 1946 to address human rights challenges and concerns.¹² Responding to criticisms of “excessive politicization” of the Commission, recommendations were later made to replace the Commission with a human rights council.¹³ Subsequently, in its resolution 60/251, the General Assembly “decide[d] to establish the Human Rights Council, based in Geneva, in replacement of the Commission.”¹⁴ HRC had in essence the same responsibilities as the Commission, but possessed an

¹ UN OHCHR, *The 20th Anniversary of OHCHR – 20 human rights achievements*, 2018.

² *Ibid.*

³ UN General Assembly, *Human Rights Council (A/RES/60/251)*, 2006; UN HRC, *Sessions*, 2019.

⁴ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948; UN World Conference on Human Rights, *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*, 1993.

⁵ UN OHCHR, *Who we are: Brief History*, 2018.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ UN World Conference on Human Rights, *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*, 1993.

⁸ UN General Assembly, *High Commissioner for the promotion and protection of all human rights (A/RES/48/141)*, 1994.

⁹ UN OHCHR, *The Human Rights Council and the role of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*.

¹⁰ UN DPI, *Secretary-General Appoints Michelle Bachelet of Chile United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (SG/A/1824)*, 2018.

¹¹ UN OHCHR, *Who we are: Brief History*, 2018.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ UN DPI, *General Assembly Establishes New Human Rights Council by vote of 170 in Favour to 4 Against, with 3 Abstentions (GA/10449)*, 2006; UN General Assembly, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All: Report of the Secretary-General (A/59/2005)*, 2005, p. 45.

¹⁴ UN General Assembly, *Human Rights Council (A/RES/60/251)*, 2006.

enhanced scope of action under its new mandate.¹⁵ As stipulated by the General Assembly, HRC submitted to a five-year review in 2011.¹⁶ All areas of HRC were subject to scrutiny to ensure mechanisms and frameworks were streamlined and efficient.¹⁷ The review identified only minor areas for improvement; due to its “strong and largely well-functioning” nature, HRC was kept as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly without major changes to its structure or operations.¹⁸

Governance, Structure, and Membership

Through a majority vote, the General Assembly elects 47 Member States to HRC; with each seat serving a three year term, elections are staggered so that one-third of the seats are elected each year.¹⁹ The 47 Member State seats are distributed in regional groups: 13 from Africa, 13 from Asia, 6 from Eastern Europe, 8 from Latin America and the Caribbean, and 7 from the Western European and Others Group.²⁰ New members will be elected in October 2018 during the General Assembly’s 73rd session.²¹ Additionally, Iceland was elected by the General Assembly in July 2018 to serve on HRC until 31 December 2019, filling the vacant seat left by the United States of America.²² The General Assembly Third Committee, which is responsible for evaluating questions related to human rights, considers the annual reports of HRC and works closely with HRC’s Special Procedures mandate holders.²³

Each year in March, June, and September, HRC holds regular sessions to discuss issues under its purview.²⁴ Combined, these sessions last a minimum of 10 weeks, and at any time, one-third of HRC’s Member States can request a special session “to address human rights violations and emergencies [related to human rights].”²⁵ There have been 28 special sessions, the last of which was held in May 2018 to address “the deteriorating human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.”²⁶ At the first regular session of each year, Member States elect a President and four Vice Presidents that make up the Bureau, which is responsible for all issues relating to the organization and procedures of HRC.²⁷ The President is responsible for convening and chairing organizational meetings and regular sessions, as well as proposing candidates to serve as Special Procedures mandate holders.²⁸ The current President is Vojislav Šuć, a Permanent Representative to the UN from Slovenia.²⁹

In addition, HRC established the Advisory Committee as its subsidiary body.³⁰ The main functions of the Advisory Committee are to provide policy advice and serve as a “think tank” to HRC.³¹ It meets biannually and is comprised of 18 human rights experts, which are elected by HRC in proportion to the regional

¹⁵ UN General Assembly, *Human Rights Council (A/RES/60/251)*, 2006.

¹⁶ UN General Assembly, *Human Rights Council (A/RES/60/251)*, 2006.

¹⁷ UN DPI, *Five Years after Creation, General Assembly Maintains Human Rights Council as Subsidiary Body, Concluding Review of Work, Functioning (GA/11101)*, 2011.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ UN OHCHR, *Membership of the Human Rights Council*, 2018.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ UN General Assembly, *Provisional agenda of the seventy-third regular session of the General Assembly (A/73/150)*, 2018, p. 11.

²² UN DPI, *General Assembly Elects Iceland to Human Rights Council, Adopts Fourth Committee Text Endorsing 2018 Proposals of Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (GA/12040)*, 2018.

²³ UN General Assembly, *General Assembly of the United Nations: Social, Humanitarian & Cultural - Third Committee*.

²⁴ UN HRC, *Sessions*, 2019.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ UN OHCHR, *28th special session of the Human Rights Council on the deteriorating human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem*, 2018.

²⁷ UN HRC, *Institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council (A/HRC/RES/5/1)*, 2007.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ UN OHCHR, *President of the 12th Cycle*, 2018.

³⁰ UN HRC, *Institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council (A/HRC/RES/5/1)*, 2007.

³¹ UN OHCHR, *Background information on the Advisory Committee*, 2018.

composition of the Council.³² The Advisory Committee regularly produces reports at the request of HRC and discusses research proposals and studies in the field of human rights.³³

Partnerships

HRC strengthens its efforts in upholding human rights by forming partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), and other civil society actors.³⁴ Partnerships facilitate many of HRC's initiatives, including specific programs or frameworks targeting groups deprived of their access to fundamental human rights and freedoms.³⁵ NGOs that have received Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) consultative status and NHRIs can directly address HRC during discussions and debates and inform it of situations occurring in their home states.³⁶ Groups and NGOs that have not achieved ECOSOC consultative status can also provide written documents on a Member State as part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Process.³⁷

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

In its resolution 60/251 of 2006 on the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly mandates HRC to promote universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; to address and provide recommendations on all, and particularly grave and systematic violations of human rights; and to promote an effective system of coordination within the UN system with respect to human rights issues.³⁸ Further, the General Assembly designated HRC as a forum for debate and dialogue on all human rights issues, including addressing violations and responding to emergencies, promoting cooperation and education on human rights, reviewing Member States' history and performance, and preventing human rights abuses.³⁹

The work of HRC is "guided by the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, constructive international dialogue, and cooperation."⁴⁰ Also crucial to informing the mandate and work of HRC is the *International Bill of Human Rights*, a framework which encompasses the UDHR, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966), and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966) with its two Optional Protocols.⁴¹ These documents are the pillars that guide HRC in its recommendations by outlining the fundamental obligations and commitments of Member States in international human rights law.⁴² Additionally, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) guide the work of HRC.⁴³

In 2007, HRC adopted resolution 5/1 on "institution-building," which established mechanisms and structures to guide its program of work, rules of procedure, and other operational functions.⁴⁴ The resolution also established the format for the Special Procedures, the UPR, and the Complaint Procedure, which comprise the main powers of HRC.⁴⁵ Special Procedures are mechanisms that enable independent parties to report, monitor, and advise on country-specific or thematic situations for HRC.⁴⁶ Each investigation has a mandate and a mandate holder, who is typically a Special Rapporteur, an independent expert, or a working group, to carry out the investigation.⁴⁷ Special Procedures can

³² UN HRC, *Institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council (A/HRC/RES/5/1)*, 2007.

³³ UN HRC, *Report of the Advisory Committee on its twentieth session (A/HRC/AC/20/2)*, 2017

³⁴ UN OHCHR, *NGO and NHRI Information*, 2018.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ UN General Assembly, *Human Rights Council (A/RES/60/251)*, 2006.

³⁹ UN OHCHR, *The Human Rights Council and the role of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*.

⁴⁰ UN General Assembly, *Human Rights Council (A/RES/60/251)*, 2006.

⁴¹ UN OHCHR, *Fact Sheet No.2 (Rev.1), The International Bill of Human Rights*, 1996.

⁴² UN OHCHR, *Human Rights: A Basic Handbook for UN Staff*.

⁴³ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

⁴⁴ UN HRC, *Institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council (A/HRC/RES/5/1)*, 2007.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ UN OHCHR, *Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council*, 2018.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

undertake country or field visits, with the support of OHCHR, and bring specific cases and concerns to the attention of Member States.⁴⁸ They can send communications detailing accusations of violations or abuses of human rights, engage in advocacy efforts, and offer technical assistance.⁴⁹

The UPR is one of the most important functions of HRC.⁵⁰ Through HRC, each Member State of the UN submits to a periodic review to assess the fulfillment of its human rights obligations.⁵¹ The full cycle of the UPR process takes around four years and includes several steps.⁵² The UPR is unique in both its approach and its universality.⁵³ At the preparation stage, information is gathered that will form the basis of the review, including national reports from the state under review, stakeholder submissions, and information prepared by OHCHR.⁵⁴ At the review stage, documents are presented at the regular sessions of the Working Group on the UPR, which consists of all 47 Member States of HRC.⁵⁵ At the adoption and considerations stage, each Member State provides comments and the state under review can offer reservations on specific issues.⁵⁶ Finally, during the follow-up stage, each state under review shows how effectively it has acted upon the recommendations received.⁵⁷ The UPR has entered its third cycle (2017-2021) and will proceed with reviewing national reports for 42 Member States this year.⁵⁸

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

Within the last 12 months, HRC held three regular sessions.⁵⁹ At the 39th session from 10-28 September 2018, the Special Rapporteur (SR) on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation presented his report.⁶⁰ In his report, the SR recommended that states should ensure the human rights to water and sanitation of forcibly displaced persons and provide adequate access to water and sanitation for them.⁶¹ Furthermore, the agenda item of the “Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories” was considered at this session with a general debate and an “Interactive dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the 2018 protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.”⁶² In addition, HRC held three panel discussions on “Human rights and indigenous peoples,” “Prevention of genocide,” and “Integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system.”⁶³ A total of 23 resolutions were adopted including on “The safety of journalists” and “Local government and human rights”.⁶⁴

In addition to the regular sessions, HRC also held its 28th special session “on the deteriorating human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem” on 18 May 2018.⁶⁵ Following the escalation of violence during civilian demonstrations in the Gaza Strip in March 2018, HRC

⁴⁸ UN OHCHR, *Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council*, 2018.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ UN OHCHR, *Universal Periodic Review*, 2018.

⁵¹ UN OHCHR, *Working with the United Nations Human Rights Programme: A Handbook for Civil Society*, 2008, p. 80.

⁵² Ibid., p. 81.

⁵³ UN OHCHR, *Universal Periodic Review*, 2018.

⁵⁴ UN OHCHR, *Working with the United Nations Human Rights Programme: A Handbook for Civil Society*, 2008, p. 81.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 81.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 81.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 81.

⁵⁸ UN OHCHR, *Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (Third Cycle)*.

⁵⁹ UN HRC, *Sessions*, 2019.

⁶⁰ UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation (A/HRC/39/55)*, 2018.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 17-20.

⁶² UN HRC, *Report of the Human Rights Council on its thirty-ninth session (A/HRC/39/2)*, 2018.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ UN OHCHR, *28th special session of the Human Rights Council on the deteriorating human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem*, 2018.

adopted resolution S-28/1.⁶⁶ In this resolution, HRC “condemn[ed] the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force by the Israeli occupying forces against Palestinian civilians” and “dispatch[ed] an independent, international commission of inquiry [...] to investigate all alleged violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and international human rights law” in the Occupied Territories.⁶⁷

At the 40th session, from 25 February – 22 March 2019, HRC adopted 29 resolutions, 14 decisions on the outcomes of the UPRs conducted for 14 countries, considered seven reports alone on the human rights situation in Palestine, as well as a number of reports of SRs, among others, on the right to food, adequate housing, cultural rights, freedom of religion, freedom from torture and ill-treatment, the protection of human right while countering terrorism, and the protection of human rights defenders.⁶⁸ The High Commissioner presented a report as requested on the relationship between the realization of the right to work and the enjoyment of all human rights by young people, noting that a focus on youth empowerment has grown in importance as their generation is the largest in history and essential in achieving the 2030 Agenda.⁶⁹ The Commissioner recommended to look at the issue holistically and with a gender lens as policies and legislation must account for the intersection of the right to work with the right to social security, the right to education and the right to participate in public affairs.⁷⁰ The HRC held five panels including on the rights of persons with disabilities and specifically children with disabilities, “Human rights in the light of multilateralism: opportunities, challenges and the way forward”, and on the mitigation and countering of rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies in commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

At the latest 41st session, from 24 June – 12 July 2019, HRC’s panel discussions focused on women’s rights, particularly looking at violence against women at work, economic empowerment of older women, and in regard to climate change.⁷¹ The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said at the panel that “across the planet, the climate crisis was stripping people of their rights and identity, and even in some cases, their homes, countries and their lives. Within this context, there were a number of clear links between climate change and the effective enjoyment of women’s rights. Climate change had specific adverse impacts on women and girls.”⁷² As the session report is yet to be published, topics under consideration were the right to education, rights of migrants, and issues of human rights in relation to climate change, business, corruption, and extreme poverty.⁷³ Furthermore, HRC considered UPRs conducted for 14 countries.⁷⁴ The upcoming 42nd session in September 2019 has planned discussions on “The way forward to a United Nations declaration on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of all human rights, including the right to development”, “Promotion and preservation of indigenous languages”, and “Gender-responsive initiatives to accelerate gender equality.”⁷⁵ Some intersessional activities of 2019 focused on the participation of indigenous peoples, the prevention of human rights violations, the incompatibility between democracy and racism and human rights in the context of the 2030 Agenda.⁷⁶

⁶⁶ UN HRC, *Violations of international law in the context of large-scale civilian protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (A/HRC/RES/S-28/1)*, 2018.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ UN HRC, *Report of the Human Rights Council on its fortieth session (A/HRC/40/2)*, 2019.

⁶⁹ UN HRC, *Realization of the right to work – Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/40/31)*, 2018.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ UN HRC, *41st session of the Human Rights Council (24 June – 12 July 2019)*, 2019.

⁷² UN HRC, *Human Rights Council holds panel discussion on women’s rights and climate change: climate action, good practices and lessons learned*, 2019.

⁷³ UN HRC, *Agenda and annotations (A/HRC/41/1)*, 2019.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ UN HRC, *42nd session of the Human Rights Council (9 – 27 September 2019)*, 2019.

⁷⁶ UN HRC, *Intersessional Activities*, 2019.

The most recent 23rd session of the HRC Advisory Committee took place from 22-26 July 2019.⁷⁷ The Committee, preparing studies and reports for HRC, discussed, among others, the negative effect of terrorism on the enjoyment of human rights; national policies and human rights in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals; and the importance of a legally binding instrument on the right to development.⁷⁸ The expert group will also start work on two new mandates as requested by HRC at its last concluded 41st session: a study on new and emerging technologies and human rights and a report on current levels of representation of women in human rights organs and mechanisms.⁷⁹

Conclusion

HRC addresses human rights on global, regional, and national levels by endeavoring to ensure all Member States safeguard the fundamental freedoms and rights articulated by international law.⁸⁰ As HRC looks ahead to future sessions, the relationship between human rights and the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* continues to play an important role in the work of HRC as well as the role and rights of women.⁸¹ As such, in light of the 2019 and 2020 meetings of the HLPF, HRC will hold intersessional meetings that aim to reflect the themes of the upcoming HLPF meetings.⁸² Similarly, as part of the process of the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*, the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* and the *Global Compact on Refugees* will also remain an important aspect for HRC to consider, in particular with respect to the human rights of migrants and refugees.⁸³

Annotated Bibliography

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<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HRhandbooken.pdf>

This handbook provides delegates with a comprehensive view of the human rights system within the context of the UN. Even though some parts may be slightly outdated, the handbook provides a very detailed account of the UN's human rights instruments. The handbook also describes the international mechanisms that evolved to monitor the implementation of rights and process complaints, as well as the strategies engaged to promote and protect human rights within the UN.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2008). *Working with the United Nations Human Rights Programme: A Handbook for Civil Society*. Retrieved 31 July 2018 from:

http://www.ohchr.org/en/AboutUs/CivilSociety/Documents/Handbook_en.pdf

This handbook, which is designed to explain how civil society can engage with various UN human rights bodies and mechanisms, provides delegates with a comprehensive view of all human rights instruments within the UN system. It addresses how the UN human rights bodies and mechanisms can be used, provides information on funds and grants, lists key contacts at OHCHR, and includes links to other valuable resources. This is an extremely useful tool for delegates to understand the mechanisms as a whole and how civil society engages with human rights at the UN.

United Nations, Human Rights Council, Fifth session. (2007). *Institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council (A/HRC/RES/5/1)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 31 July 2018 from:

<http://www.refworld.org/docid/4ae9acbbd.html>

⁷⁷ UN HRC, *Twenty-third session of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee taking place in Geneva from 22 to 26 July 2019*, 2019.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ UN OHCHR, *Working with the United Nations Human Rights Programme: A Handbook for Civil Society*, 2008, p. 75.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*, 2016.

One of the most important resolutions of HRC, resolution 5/1 details an agreed package that established the procedures, mechanisms, and structures to form the basis for its future work. This includes HRC's agenda, program of work, and rules of procedure. The resolution also modified the system of expert advice and the Complaint Procedure inherited from the Commission. This document is fundamental for delegates to understand how HRC operates.

United Nations, Human Rights Council, Twenty-eighth special session. (2018). *Violations of international law in the context of large-scale civilian protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (A/HRC/RES/S-28/1)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 4 August 2018 from:

<http://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/S-28/1>

At the 28th special session, HRC adopted this resolution as a response to use of excessive force by the Israeli Defense Force against Palestinian protesters in the Gaza Strip in March 2018. This resolution emphasizes the lack of humanitarian access in the Gaza Strip and also established an international commission of inquiry to investigate any alleged violations of international humanitarian law and human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories after 30 March 2018. For delegates, this resolution provides a solid understanding of a timely issue and introduces them to possible approaches of HRC to this topic.

United Nations, Human Rights Council. (2019). *41st session of the Human Rights Council (24 June - 12 July 2019)* [Website]. Retrieved 31 July 2019 from:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session41/Pages/41RegularSession.aspx>

This website functions as the main page of the 41st regular session of the HRC. Through this website, delegates are able to access all documents, reports and resolutions that have been considered at the 41st session. Delegates may use this website as a starting point for their research on the various topics of HRC during the 41st session. Since similarly structured web pages can be found for other regular sessions as well, this website additionally allows delegates to navigate through the various documentation of the other regular sessions.

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<http://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2007-03-12/secretary-generals-video-message-opening-fourth-session-human-rights>

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<http://www.un.org/press/en/2011/ga11101.doc.htm>

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I. The Human Rights Situation in Palestine

Introduction

Since 1967, Israel has been deemed as the “Occupying Power” over the Occupied Territories, which include the Golan Heights, Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, and West Bank, following the Six-Day War in 1967.⁸⁴ The International Court of Justice, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, and the UN Security Council recognize Israel as the Occupying Power in a variety of different resolutions, particularly in UN Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).⁸⁵ Different stakeholders within the international community recognize Israel as the rightful power over the Occupied Territories, while other stakeholders deem the West Bank and Gaza Strip to be rightfully governed by Palestine.⁸⁶ Regardless of which country is deemed the Occupying Power, the right to self-determination is a fundamental right and citizens should have the freedom to influence and participate in the goals and future of the land they live in.⁸⁷ After the acquisition of the Occupied Territories, Israel continues to encroach on Palestinian territories (West Bank and Gaza Strip) by building illegal settlements on Palestinian land and restricting physical movement of Palestinians through barriers, checkpoints, bureaucratic constraints, and designating restricted or closed areas.⁸⁸ Restricting physical movement of Palestinians intensified in 2007 after Israel imposed the Gaza Strip Blockade, effectively imprisoning Palestinians within the Gaza Strip and unable to access the remainder of the Palestinian territory or anywhere else.⁸⁹

The Gaza Strip Blockade and other restrictions, both physical and bureaucratic, have led to a humanitarian crisis within the Palestinian territories.⁹⁰ The blockade and other physical obstacles not only prevent the physical movement of Palestinians, but also restrict the movement of goods and services, educational and economic opportunities, and access to health care.⁹¹ As of 2019, 5 million Palestinians live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and many do not have access to basic services such as consistent potable water, sanitation, food, shelter, and health care.⁹² In 2019, the Humanitarian Response Plan for Palestine requested USD350 million to provide basic food, shelter, health care, water, and sanitation for the up to 1.4 million Palestinians who have been identified with the most need.⁹³ An estimated USD1.2 billion dollars will be needed from 2018 to 2022 to help build and maintain adequate infrastructure in Palestine to supply Palestinians with potable water and sanitation services.⁹⁴ Palestinians are also at risk from air and artillery strikes conducted by the Israeli security forces and use of excessive lethal force from the security forces during demonstrations. Furthermore, Israeli security forces target Palestinians through arbitrary arrests, torture and ill treatment, and administrative detention.⁹⁵ The UN Human Rights Council (HRC) deems the Occupied Territories to be illegally governed by Israel, and actively monitors the human rights situation in the Occupied Territories and deploys fact-finding missions to investigate human rights violations in the area.⁹⁶

International and Regional Framework

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1945) serves as the foundation of human rights for all, with the inclusion of the right to freedom of movement, access to economic opportunities, food, water,

⁸⁴ Global Policy Forum, *Israel, Palestine and the Occupied Territories*, 2019.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Lapidoth & Hirsch, *The Jerusalem Question and Its Resolution: Selected Documents*, 1994, p. 351.

⁸⁷ UN General Assembly, *High Commissioner for the promotion and protection of all human rights (A/RES/48/141)*, 1993.

⁸⁸ UN OCHA, *Occupied Palestinian Territory: Movement and Access*, 2019.

⁸⁹ Ibid.; UN OCHA, *Gaza Blockade*, 2019.

⁹⁰ UN OCHA, *Occupied Palestinian Territory: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene*, 2019.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ UN General Assembly & ECOSOC, *Assistance to the Palestinian People (A/74/89–E/2019/73)*, 2019.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2019: Israel and Palestine: Events of 2018*, 2019.

⁹⁶ UN, *The Question of Palestine: Human Rights Council's Resolutions*, 2019.

and shelter, and the right to political participation.⁹⁷ Alongside the UDHR, there are nine core instruments that international bodies and governments look to when it comes to human rights.⁹⁸ These frameworks include the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), which enshrines the rights of peaceful assembly, movement across borders, and rebuttal against unlawful detention.⁹⁹ The ICCPR is supplemented by the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, *Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*, and *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, which protects an individual's right to enterprise, and freedom of religion.¹⁰⁰ These and other frameworks in part create what is commonly referred to as the "International Bill of Human Rights."¹⁰¹ Many of these frameworks have corresponding treaty bodies that have annual meetings where these bodies are composed of independent, elected experts who are knowledgeable in the field of human rights.¹⁰²

In 2016, the UN Security Council passed resolution 2334, which details an escalation in human rights violations and harm affecting civilian populations.¹⁰³ Furthermore, UN Security Council resolution 2334 condemns Israel for their continuous building of settlements on confiscated land, the displacement of Palestinian civilians, and violations of international humanitarian law.¹⁰⁴ The resolution also reaffirms Israel's illegal occupation of the Occupied Territories, and calls for Israel to stop all construction of settlements and return the territory to Palestinian sovereignty.¹⁰⁵ Noting the presence of violence within the Occupied Territories, the UN Security Council also calls for all parties to the conflict to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, acts of provocation and destruction, and acts of terror.¹⁰⁶ As all UN Security Council resolutions are legally binding under Article 25 of the UN Charter, Israel and Palestine continue to violate international law through acts of violence against security forces and civilians, and the dispute over the Occupied Territories.¹⁰⁷

Role of the International System

The HRC has maintained an active role in monitoring violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations in Palestine.¹⁰⁸ The HRC delegates some of its work through the Division of Palestinian Rights, an assembly to promote constructive action and garner support for the well-being of the Palestinian people.¹⁰⁹ Established in 1975 under the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Division of Palestinian Rights monitors the political, social, and economic developments in Palestine, coordinates with civil society organizations that are involved in promoting Palestinian rights, and conducts training programs and capacity building workshops for staff of the State of Palestine at the UN Headquarters.¹¹⁰ HRC has repeatedly looked into human rights violations committed by Israel through its Universal Periodic Review mechanism.¹¹¹ In addition, HRC appoints the Special Rapporteur on the situation of the human rights in the Palestine territories occupied since 1967 who reports regularly about

⁹⁷ UN HRC, *Who Are We*, 2019.

⁹⁸ UN OCHA, *The Core International Human Rights Instruments and their monitoring bodies*, 2019.

⁹⁹ UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966.

¹⁰⁰ UN General Assembly, *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination All Forms of Racial Discrimination (A/RES/2106 (XX))*, 1965; UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966; UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*, 1979.

¹⁰¹ UN HRC, *Who Are We*, 2019.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ UN Security Council, *The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (S/RES/2334(2016))*, 2016.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Charter of the United Nations*, Art. 25, 1945.

¹⁰⁸ UN, *The Question of Palestine: Human Rights Council's Resolutions*, 2019.

¹⁰⁹ UN HRC, *Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/HRC/RES/37/36)*, 2018.

¹¹⁰ UN, Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, *Palestinian Rights*, 2019.

¹¹¹ UN HRC, *Universal Periodic Review – Israel*, 2019.

the state of human rights violations in the Occupied Territories.¹¹² In the latest report 40/73 in 2019, the Special Rapporteur noted the lack of access to the Occupied Territories through Israeli restrictions and highlighted that the “human rights situation deteriorates day-by-day” pointing to loss of life, injury, a tightened the blockade on Gaza exacerbating the difficulties to realize basic socio-economic rights such as employment, health care, housing, food, water, and sanitation.¹¹³ In its 40th session HRC adopted a number of resolutions on the question of Palestine including resolution 40/22 on the “Right of the Palestinian people to self-determination,” 40/23 on the “Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,” and 40/24 on “Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan.”¹¹⁴ Further in 2019, HRC also put forth a “Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory” which investigated the response of Israeli forces to demonstrations in the Gaza Strip in 2018.¹¹⁵ The report most notably concluded that the use of live ammunition Israeli security forces was in all but two cases unlawful and that the Israeli government should “determine whether war crimes or crimes against humanity have been committed” in killing 189 Palestinians and wounding more than 6,100 at the protests and holding the perpetrators accountable.¹¹⁶

In conjunction with the HRC, many UN bodies address human rights in Palestine. The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) “encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance, including in times of armed conflict.”¹¹⁷ UNRWA serves more than five million displaced Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, regionally, and around the world.¹¹⁸ UNRWA provides free primary education to almost 300,000 children, and partnered with the UN Development Programme to build four new structures to accommodate the growing educational need.¹¹⁹ UNRWA also provides primary care consultation for almost four million people, while the World Health Organization (WHO) works with local universities to certify general practitioners.¹²⁰

In 2012, WHO established the Palestinian National Institute of Public Health in partnership with the Palestinian Ministry of Health and the Norwegian Institute of Public Health to build a more resilient health care system in Palestine through research and creation of registry systems.¹²¹ Organizations such as the UN Children’s Fund and the World Food Programme have been helping to build and sustain healthy drinking water and provide emergency food assistance.¹²² There has been an increase of UN agencies and non-governmental organization providing legal services to Palestinians while the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women has led the charge giving women opportunities in the territory from helping to plan and build infrastructure, helping survivors of gender-based violence, and providing skill-matching employment and higher education opportunities for women.¹²³

The UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) continue to monitor and support solutions to improve the humanitarian situation in Palestine. The UN General Assembly adopted

¹¹² UN, *The Question of Palestine: Human Rights Council’s Resolutions*, 2019.

¹¹³ UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (A/HRC/40/73)*, 2019.

¹¹⁴ UN, *The Question of Palestine: Human Rights Council’s Resolutions*, 2019.

¹¹⁵ UN HRC, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (A/HRC/40/74)*, 2019.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ UN, Division for Palestinian Rights, *Resolutions, Decisions and Voting Records of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council Relating to the Question of Palestine*, 2019.

¹¹⁸ UNRWA, *What We Do*, 2019.

¹¹⁹ UN General Assembly & ECOSOC, *Assistance to the Palestinian People (A/74/89–E/2019/73)*, 2019.

¹²⁰ WHO, *The Palestinian National Institute of Public Health*, 2019.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² WFP, *State of Palestine*, 2018; von Medeazza, *Searching for clean water in Gaza*, 2019.

¹²³ UN, Division for Palestinian Rights, *Resolutions, Decisions and Voting Records of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council Relating to the Question of Palestine*, 2019.

resolution 73/19, “Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine”, resumed the 10th Emergency Special Session in 2018 adopting the resolution “Protection of the Palestinian civilian population,” and affirmed the increased need of support for civilians in and around the Occupied Territories.¹²⁴ ECOSOC has released “Assistance to Palestinian People” in May 2019, a report from the Secretary-General on the current humanitarian situation in Palestine and the UN’s ongoing efforts in the region.¹²⁵ Within the report, the Secretary-General noted continued violence and tensions between Israel and Palestine, a worsened fiscal performance of the Palestinian Authority, and a sharp decline in total contribution of development assistance.¹²⁶ The work of all these bodies in Palestine is also informed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), most notably SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).¹²⁷ The 2030 Agenda serves as a guiding framework for the UN, Member States, and the international community as they implement policies and policymaking decisions, especially when addressing the situation in Palestine and securing peace in the Near East.¹²⁸

Social, Economic, and Political Developments

The tension between Israel and Palestine increased due to the violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the recognized borders through the construction of Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory, which has led to increasing “settlement-related” violence.¹²⁹ In January 2019, the Israeli government did not extend the Temporary International Presence in the city of Hebron.¹³⁰ The Temporary International Presence provided protections to 7,000 Palestinians living in the city.¹³¹ This has led to fear that this reduction of protection and an increase of evictions will lead to more violence.¹³² Further in 2019, Israeli security forces seized over 500 Palestinian properties, some of which were donated as humanitarian assistance, which lead to the displacement of 600 people, where half of the displaced population is children.¹³³

Over the years, restrictions to the free movement of Palestinians have increased.¹³⁴ Many of these restrictions, including movement to public lands, parks, fishing areas, and farming lands, have been imposed by the Israeli government, citing “security concerns.”¹³⁵ Movement in and out of the West Bank requires special access cards and movement is limited within East Jerusalem.¹³⁶ In the Gaza Strip most movement is still restricted but there has been an increase of the number of allowances for medical patients to move in and out of Gaza for care.¹³⁷ In 2012, 92.5% of permits to exit Gaza were approved, but the approval rate has fallen to 61% since 2018.¹³⁸ Physical restrictions have also impacted the movement of goods to and from Gaza. Over 8,000 truckloads of goods were allowed to enter Gaza per month in 2018, resulting in an 11% decrease of the monthly average from the previous two years.¹³⁹ For movement of goods from Gaza to mostly West Bank markets, 204 trucks were permitted exit per month,

¹²⁴ UN General Assembly, *Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine (A/RES/73/19)*, 2018; UN General Assembly, *Protection of the Palestinian civilian population (A/ES-10/L.23)*, 2018.

¹²⁵ UN General Assembly & ECOSOC, *Assistance to the Palestinian People (A/74/89-E/2019/73)*, 2019.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2015.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ UN, Division for Palestinian Rights, *Resolutions, Decisions and Voting Records of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council Relating to the Question of Palestine*, 2019.

¹³⁰ Baruch & Zur, *The Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH): Israel’s Decision to End the Mandate*, 2019.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ UN General Assembly & ECOSOC, *Assistance to the Palestinian People (A/74/89-E/2019/73)*, 2019.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ UN, Division for Palestinian Rights, *The Division for Palestinian Rights*, 2019.

¹³⁷ UN General Assembly & ECOSOC, *Assistance to the Palestinian People (A/74/89-E/2019/73)*, 2019.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

and the rate has remained stagnant since 2016.¹⁴⁰ These physical and bureaucratic restrictions on the movement of goods, services, and access to areas needed for economic opportunities and food supplies further exacerbates the humanitarian situation in West Bank and Gaza.¹⁴¹

Economic opportunities have been dwindling in Palestine over the past few years due the physical and bureaucratic restrictions imposed upon Palestinians.¹⁴² There has been low to no economic growth and the unemployment rate is growing.¹⁴³ By 2018, the unemployment rate in the West Bank was 16.1%, 50.5% in Gaza, and 29.1% overall in Palestine.¹⁴⁴ In 2019, the Palestinian Authority replaced its annual budget with an emergency budget due to the decline in economic growth and international development assistance.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, the Israeli Government withheld part of the monthly transferred clearance revenue, which caused further degradation of economic security of Palestine.¹⁴⁶ The Secretary-General noted that the austerity measures within the emergency could potentially lead to a negative impact on the Palestinian economy.¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

The current situation in Palestine has shown itself to be multifaceted and continues to be delicate, and there has been ongoing work by the UN, non-governmental organizations and many other bodies to support the Palestinian people and upholding human rights within Palestine.¹⁴⁸ From HRC to UNRWA, the UN system is committed to helping Palestinians through the international framework that enshrines human rights principles to the tangible work UN bodies conduct to monitor and promote freedom of movement and access to basic services including education and health care.¹⁴⁹ The HRC must commit itself to the long process it is going to take to restore much of the infrastructure and civil and social mechanisms to ensure the core principles of the UDHR are being enforced for Palestinians.¹⁵⁰

Further Reading

As delegates look at this topic, they should consider some of the following questions: What mechanisms are currently in place that can be a catalyst for expanding and meeting the current and future needs of Palestinian citizens? What are the most vulnerable populations in Palestine and what can be done to secure aid for those in need? What can be done to address the social and economic needs in Palestine, including education, employment, and investment in the Occupied Territories? What can be done to strengthen the response to human rights violations? How can the international community provide educational and economic opportunities for Palestinians? What role can civil society and Member States play in increasing access to basic services for Palestinians within the Occupied Territories?

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ UN, Division for Palestinian Rights, *Resolutions, Decisions and Voting Records of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council Relating to the Question of Palestine*, 2019.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

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United Nations. (2019). *The Question of Palestine: Human Rights Council's Resolutions* [Website]. Retrieved 22 July 2019 from: <https://www.un.org/unispal/human-rights-council-resolutions/>

On this website delegates will find all recent resolutions adopted by the Human Rights Council in its 40th session. This way, giving a comprehensive overview of the questions that the international community has been addressing in regards to the situation in Palestine, namely the human rights violations committed by the government of Israel and the contested issue of East Jerusalem. Besides the collection of resolutions, delegates should use this source to learn about the work of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of the human rights in the Palestine territories occupied since 1967 as well as the Universal Periodic Review. A mechanism deployed by the Council to voice concerns over human rights violations.

United Nations, Division for Palestinian Rights. (2019). *Resolutions, Decisions and Voting Records of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council Relating to the Question of Palestine (A/AC.183/L.2/Add.40)*. Retrieved 8 June 2019 from: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/compilation-of-resolutions-and-decisions-adopted-in-2018-english-and-french-dpr-publication-a-ac-183-l-2-add-40/>

This report is a compilation of all the resolutions, decisions, and voting records for the General Assembly, Security Council, and ECOSOC that deal specifically with Palestine. This is the most recent publication, so many of the resolutions, reports, and decisions are from the most recent session each of these bodies had. This will be a good guide for delegates looking to consolidate the current language when it comes to the question of Palestine. This also delegates to understand the partnerships between the Human Rights Council and other bodies in the UN when it comes to humanitarian aid, emergency assistance, etc.

United Nations, General Assembly, Twenty-first session. (1966). *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. Adopted on the report of the Third Committee. Retrieved 14 May 2019 from: [http://undocs.org/A/RES/2200\(XXI\)](http://undocs.org/A/RES/2200(XXI))

This Covenant is a response to recognizing the importance of self-determination regardless of race, sex, language or religion. This report specifically outlines the importance of political and economic freedom within not only sovereign nations but non-self-governing and trust territories. This report details the importance that no other Nation State or territory may impede on the right of any person to peruse political freedom, economic independence, freedom to work, and education. The report discusses the importance of the right to freedom of movement and that everyone should be free to leave any country, including their own, nor shall anyone be deprived of the right to enter their own country. This report re-states the importance of persons to peruse and have protections under the law.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventh session. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. Retrieved 5 June 2019 from: https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

This is the full text of the resolution that enacted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This resolution gives full context to the initial creation and hopes for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This resolution also gives each SDG and goes into detail the thought process behind the creation of each goal. There is also information on how the UN plans to implement these goals, the role of Member States and non-state actors, and timelines for seeing these goals come to fruition. This resolution is a great resource for understanding each SDGs in depth and how many of these goals can apply to the many issues Palestine is currently facing and will face in the future.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-fourth session & Economic and Social Council. (2019). *Assistance to the Palestinian people (A/74/89 – E/2019/73)*. Report by the Secretary-General. Retrieved 22 July 2019 from: <https://undocs.org/en/A/74/89>

This is a report by the Secretary-General that gives current and detailed accounts of the current human rights situation in Palestine. It discusses issues from economics, political tensions to healthcare and education. It gives current statistical information on the current state of Palestine including the number of persons killed in recent clashes with the Israeli government and how many people on average are allowed to travel outside of Palestinian territories into Israel and other surrounding countries. This will help to give a more concrete and layered vision of everyday life in Palestine including the various programs and initiative by other UN bodies within Palestine.

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II. Preventing Political Persecution and Oppression

Introduction

Expressing political opinion can take many forms: While some people go to the streets, others go to the ballots; while some voice their opinion anonymously, others publish theirs under their own name.¹⁵¹ Excessively restricting such activities denies the right “to participate in the political life of [one’s] community or society” and amounts to political oppression.¹⁵² This has the potential to further lead to political persecution in the form of “intentional and severe deprivation of fundamental rights contrary to international law.”¹⁵³ Oppression and persecution takes on many forms, ranging from harassment, defamation, surveillance, arbitrary arrest and detention, and limiting the legitimate exercise of the freedom of opinion, expression, and association to kidnapping, torture, and killings.¹⁵⁴ The international community has developed an extensive framework of human rights regimes, further strengthened on the regional level, with the goal to promote and protect fundamental human rights and freedoms.¹⁵⁵ Yet, violations of these rights are reported from all around the world – China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Hungary, the Philippines, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and Venezuela being only a few examples.¹⁵⁶ Through an ever-developing set of tools for political persecution and oppression, participation is curtailed and dissidents are silenced, yet perpetrators are rarely held accountable.¹⁵⁷

International and Regional Framework

There are several international documents in which fundamental freedoms are enshrined.¹⁵⁸ Most noteworthy is the international bill of human rights, consisting of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1949, UDHR), the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966, ICCPR), and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966, ICESCR).¹⁵⁹ The UDHR and the ICCPR are the basis for the wide acceptance of the freedoms of movement, expression, association, and assembly, as well as for the prohibition of torture, cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment, and arbitrary arrest or detention, amongst others.¹⁶⁰ According to their common Article 2, such provisions should be applied indiscriminately, “without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”¹⁶¹ Yet, it is often on these grounds that people experience persecution and oppression, undermining the very fundamental freedoms that the international community has pledged to safeguard.¹⁶²

¹⁵¹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2019 – Events of 2018*, 2019, pp. 5-6.

¹⁵² UN, *United Nations Bibliographical Information System*, 2019.

¹⁵³ UN Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an ICC, *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, 1998, Art. 7.2.g.

¹⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2019 – Events of 2018*, 2019.

¹⁵⁵ OHCHR, *Monitoring the core international human rights treaties*, 2019; OHCHR – Regional Office for South-East Asia, *Regional human rights systems in other parts of the world: Europe, the Americas and Africa*, 2019.

¹⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2019 – Events of 2018*, 2019, pp. 2-3, 9-11.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3, 9-11; OHCHR, *Human Rights Defenders: Protecting the Right to Defend Human Rights*, 2004, pp. 11-13.

¹⁵⁸ OHCHR, *Monitoring the core international human rights treaties*, 2019; OHCHR – Regional Office for South-East Asia, *Regional human rights systems in other parts of the world: Europe, the Americas and Africa*, 2019.

¹⁵⁹ OHCHR, *The International Bill of Human Rights*, 1996, p. 1.

¹⁶⁰ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948; UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966; OHCHR – Regional Office for South-East Asia, *Regional human rights systems in other parts of the world: Europe, the Americas and Africa*, 2019.

¹⁶¹ UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966; UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966.

¹⁶² Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2019 – Events of 2018*, 2019, pp. 53, 184, 190, 256, 620, 667.

Aside from such international endeavors, these freedoms have been codified in regional human rights treaties in Africa, the Americas, and Europe; thus localizing human rights norms and standards.¹⁶³ The *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights* (ACHPR, 1981), the *American Convention on Human Rights* (ACHR, 1969), as well as the *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* (ECHR, 1950) all seek to promote and protect human rights in their respective regions.¹⁶⁴ While they include many similar provisions, the ACHPR and the ACHR for instance, explicitly codify the right to participate in government.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, political rights are a prerequisite in realizing the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which sets out a plan of action to, amongst others, “realize the human rights of all.”¹⁶⁶ Sustainable Development Goal 16 “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions” aims to “ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements” and is of particular importance in the context of political persecution and oppression.¹⁶⁷ By enabling people to exercise their political rights and to partake in public life, they are given a say in the development of their country so that, ultimately, “no one is left behind.”¹⁶⁸

In 2018, the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (HRC) has reiterated the importance of political participation, referring to the “Guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs” as outlined by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.¹⁶⁹ These guidelines underscore the rights to equality and non-discrimination, to freedom of opinion and expression, to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, and elaborate on participation in elections as well as in non-electoral contexts.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, they encourage special protection for actors of the media and civil society, such as human rights defenders (HRDs) and journalists.¹⁷¹

Role of the International System

HRC serves as a forum not only to debate human rights violations, but also to provide recommendations to prevent violations of fundamental rights.¹⁷² Under its auspices, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is the main global review mechanism for the human rights situation in all 193 Member States of the UN.¹⁷³ The UPR has the potential to diminish discrimination and to positively impact political participation, resulting, for instance, in Brazil’s consideration of fundamental freedoms while fighting cybercrime, or in the adoption of a law which protects the freedom of expression in Tajikistan.¹⁷⁴ Special Procedures were put in place to further investigate different forms of restriction put on political participation.¹⁷⁵ To that end, in 2014 and 2018, the Special Rapporteur (SR) on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression highlighted issues, such as the freedom of expression and communication in electoral contexts (A/HRC/26/30) and online content regulation (A/HRC/38/35) respectively in past reports. These reports stressed the role of governments and illustrating positive and negative examples of national policy, as well as formulating recommendations for action.¹⁷⁶ In 2013, the SR on the rights to

¹⁶³ OHCHR – Regional Office for South-East Asia, *Regional human rights systems in other parts of the world: Europe, the Americas and Africa*, 2019.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*, 1981; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, *American Convention on Human Rights*, 1969.

¹⁶⁶ OHCHR, *Transforming Our World: Human Rights in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ OHCHR, *Transforming Our World: Human Rights in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

¹⁶⁹ UN HRC, *Equal participation in political and public affairs (A/HRC/RES/39/11)*, 2018; OHCHR, *Guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs*, 2018.

¹⁷⁰ OHCHR, *Guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs*, 2018, pp. 6, 10-14.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁷² UN General Assembly, *Human Rights Council (A/RES/60/251)*, 2006.

¹⁷³ UN HRC, *Basic facts about the UPR*, 2019.

¹⁷⁴ UPR Info, *The Butterfly Effect*, 2016, p. 4.

¹⁷⁵ UN HRC, *Special Procedures*, 2019.

¹⁷⁶ Commission of Human Rights, *Right to freedom of opinion and expression (E/CN.4/RES/1993/45)*, 1993; UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion*

freedom of peaceful assembly and of association reported on the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association in the context of elections (A/68/299).¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, in 2013 and 2015, reports of the SR on the situation of human rights defenders outlined elements of a safe and enabling environment for the work of HRDs (A/HRC/25/55), and raised awareness for the risks and threats they face (A/70/217).¹⁷⁸ The promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests (A/RES/38/11) was addressed separately in 2018, recognizing the particular role of such activities in democratic and political processes as well as the dangers participants often face.¹⁷⁹ The same year, HRC underlined the positive impact of “transparent, responsible, accountable, open and participatory government, responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people” as pillars of good governance, which presuppose the full realization of political rights.¹⁸⁰

A guarantor of the ICCPR’s provisions is the Human Rights Committee, which originated from Article 28 of the Covenant.¹⁸¹ It consists of 18 politically impartial experts who are nationals of States parties, limited to one national per state.¹⁸² The Committee’s responsibility is the examination of states’ reports of the implementation of the Covenant and the consideration of complaints (“communications”) established under the *First Optional Protocol*, which outline alleged violations of the ICCPR’s substantive rights, either submitted by individuals or other States parties.¹⁸³ The Committee discusses the complaints and - should it find that violations have occurred - recommends a remedy, such as compensation or a revision of legislation.¹⁸⁴ Recently, the Committee directed its attention to government surveillance and the interception of communications as well as hate speech, hate crimes, and discriminatory behavior by the authorities in Hungary.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, issues regarding the freedom of expression, the right to peaceful assembly, as well as participation in public affairs and elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were addressed.¹⁸⁶ In 2001, the Committee established a SR position on Follow-up to Concluding Observations to whom the States parties communicate which measures they have taken.¹⁸⁷ Depending on the results, the next report could get antedated, the SR could request additional information or arrange a meeting with the States’ representatives to discuss shortcomings.¹⁸⁸

Parallel to the existence of the UN human rights system, regional organizations such as the African Union, the Council of Europe, the European Union, and the Organization of American States have developed their own mechanisms and remedies in order to implement and protect fundamental rights and freedoms established in the international and regional human rights treaties such as the ACHPR, ACHR, and the ECHR.¹⁸⁹ Commissions, as well as (human rights) courts, are important actors in promoting and safeguarding human rights in their respective regions through judicial and executive efforts and by holding perpetrators accountable.¹⁹⁰ Alongside all of these regimes, civil society conducts indispensable

and expression (A/HRC/26/30), 2014; UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression (A/HRC/38/35)*, 2018.

¹⁷⁷ UN HRC, *The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association (A/HRC/RES/15/21)*, 2010; UN HRC, *Rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association (A/68/299)*, 2013.

¹⁷⁸ UN General Assembly, *Situation of human rights defenders (A/70/217)*, 2015; UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders (A/HRC/25/55)*, 2013.

¹⁷⁹ UN HRC, *The promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests (A/HRC/RES/38/11)*, 2018.

¹⁸⁰ UN HRC, *The role of good governance in the promotion and protection of human rights (A/RES/HRC/37/6)*, 2018, p. 2.

¹⁸¹ UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966.

¹⁸² OHCHR, *Civil and Political Rights: The Human Rights Committee*, 2005, p. 12.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*; UN General Assembly, *Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966.

¹⁸⁴ OHCHR, *Civil and Political Rights: The Human Rights Committee*, 2005, p. 27.

¹⁸⁵ Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Hungary*, 2018, pp. 3-4.

¹⁸⁶ Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of the DR Congo*, 2017, pp. 7-8.

¹⁸⁷ OHCHR, *Civil and Political Rights: The Human Rights Committee*, 2005, p. 20.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁸⁹ OHCHR – Regional Office for South-East Asia, *Regional human rights systems in other parts of the world: Europe, the Americas and Africa*, 2019.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

work, disclosing where political persecution and oppression are taking place and actively engaging in coordination, reporting, and prevention activities.¹⁹¹ Their work is regularly intertwined with UN initiatives: Article 19 and CIVICUS - The World Alliance for Citizen Participation are collaborating in the *Civil Space Initiative* which engages with HRC by submitting 'shadow reports' to the UPR, giving civil society a voice within this process.¹⁹² Oftentimes, through their participation in the UN system's deliberations, these actors shape the outcome of resolutions and declarations, which aim to protect HRDs and civil society, as the work of Amnesty International demonstrates.¹⁹³ Moreover, the UN profits from mutual collaboration in its field work, as it is the case with Front Line: International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, or the data and statistics provided by Reporters Without Borders.¹⁹⁴ Other non-governmental organizations, like Human Rights Watch, strive for more accountability and compliance of recommendations within the Council.¹⁹⁵

Victims of Political Persecution and Oppression

While victims of political persecution and oppression can be part of the organized political opposition, they are predominantly persons "perceived as a threat to the Government for expressing dissent or discontent," and are often summarized under the term of HRDs.¹⁹⁶ The *Declaration on Human Rights Defenders* defines them as "individuals, groups and associations [...] contributing to the effective elimination of all violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of peoples and individuals."¹⁹⁷ Their multidimensional human rights work includes the collection and dissemination of information on violations, action to secure accountability, and supporting better governance and government policy, which potentially results in criticism of current governments and makes them subject to high scrutiny.¹⁹⁸ Some HRDs face a threat on multiple levels due to political activism based on their identity, for example women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) persons, members of indigenous people, or other vulnerable groups.¹⁹⁹ While the SR on the situation of human rights defenders outlined more general, global trends of risks and threats for HRDs, the most recent annual report of HRC underlines the crucial role of HRDs as well as dangers for specific groups: Women HRDs, for example, face (sexual) harassment and violence, as well as arbitrary arrest and detention in their activities.²⁰⁰ These risks are increased by the lack of accountability and a general impunity of perpetrators.²⁰¹

There are two other groups which are common victims of political persecution and oppression: politicians and journalists. While they might also fit the definition of HRDs, it is their prominent role in politics that make them targets.²⁰² Political opposition is typically regarded as an adversary to authoritarian regimes, due to having the ability to oversee and scrutinize government action.²⁰³ In several countries, among them Azerbaijan, Equatorial Guinea, Russia, and Venezuela, opposition politicians face severe restrictions of their human rights and fundamental freedoms of opinion, expression, and association.²⁰⁴ According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, aside from the suspension and loss of their parliamentary

¹⁹¹ OHCHR, *Civil Society Space and the United Nations Human Rights System*, 2014, pp. 3-5.

¹⁹² International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, *The Civic Space Initiative – Universal Periodic Review*, 2019.

¹⁹³ Amnesty International, *What we do – United Nations*, 2019.

¹⁹⁴ ECOSOC, *Quadrennial reports for the period 2004-2007 submitted by non-governmental organizations in consultative status (E/C.2/2009/2/Add.32)*, 2009, pp. 2-4; Reporters Without Borders, *Reports and Statistics*, 2019.

¹⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Council*, 2019.

¹⁹⁶ OHCHR, *Human rights violations in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*, 2018, p. iii.

¹⁹⁷ UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (A/RES/53/144)*, 1999.

¹⁹⁸ OHCHR, *Human Rights Defenders: Protecting the Right to Defend Human Rights*, 2004, pp. 2-5.

¹⁹⁹ UN General Assembly, *Situation of human rights defenders (A/RES/70/217)*, 2015, p. 12.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*; UN General Assembly, *Report of the Human Rights Council (A/73/53)*, 2018, pp. 111, 118, 149, 166-167, 182-183.

²⁰¹ OHCHR, *Human Rights Defenders: Protecting the Right to Defend Human Rights*, 2004, pp. 4, 11, 13.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

²⁰³ Venice Commission, *Report on the Role of the Opposition in a Democratic Parliament*, 2010, p. 7.

²⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2019 – Events of 2018*, 2019, pp. 53-55, 200-201, 478, 647.

mandates, members of parliament experience violations of their fundamental human rights across the world, such as the lack of a fair trial or ill-treatment.²⁰⁵ Journalists play a vital role in collecting and distributing information, which are a prerequisite for “active and engaged citizenry” and a “diverse and independent media.”²⁰⁶ However, information on human rights violations, corruption, public crises, or demonstrations may also be critical of the government.²⁰⁷ For this reason, journalists face repressions and attacks in several countries, ranging from intimidation, surveillance, and arbitrary arrests to abductions, torture, and killings.²⁰⁸ HRC has regularly highlighted this issue, explicitly urging for measures to guarantee the safety of journalists, as well as their role in the context of fundamental freedoms in its recent resolution.²⁰⁹

Means of Political Persecution and Oppression

In some cases, restrictions of fundamental rights and freedoms are publicly evident, including detention of human rights activists without trials in China, the prohibition of private press in Eritrea, repression of anti-government protests in Nicaragua and Israel, or the arrest of opposition figures prior to elections in the Maldives, to name just few.²¹⁰ In order to avoid the scrutiny of the international community, many actors disguise their misconduct by acting under different pretexts or by attributing their actions to other entities.²¹¹ A legal opening for human rights restrictions is the state of emergency as set out in Article 4 of the ICCPR.²¹² The Human Rights Committee made it clear that derogations from the Covenant’s rights “must be of an exceptional and temporary nature, and that such derogations shall not be arbitrary in nature.”²¹³ Still, States parties have used it to repress activists and journalists.²¹⁴ For example, 300 journalists in Turkey were arrested and detained by state authorities during its state of emergency in 2016.²¹⁵ Moreover, many countries justify restrictions on civil and political rights with legislation regarding national security and counter-terrorism, especially since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.²¹⁶ This trend was noted by the SR on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism who stated that “[a]ny form of expression that articulates a view contrary to the official position of the State” can potentially be suppressed by declaring it a security threat or even a terrorist activity.²¹⁷ Furthermore, claiming to combat hate speech, many policy makers across the world use laws to silence the critical voices of HRDs, journalists, and politicians.²¹⁸ Even well-intended efforts to curb hate speech have the potential to significantly limit political activities and expression due to the lack of clear phrasing.²¹⁹

²⁰⁵ Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians*, 2019.

²⁰⁶ UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression (A/HRC/20/17)*, 2012, p. 10; UN HRC, *Guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs*, 2018, p. 7.

²⁰⁷ UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression (A/HRC/20/17)*, 2012, p. 9.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*; Reporters Without Borders, *2019 World Press Freedom Index – A cycle of fear*, 2019.

²⁰⁹ UN HRC, *The safety of journalists (A/HRC/RES/39/6)*, 2018.

²¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2019 – Events of 2018*, 2019, pp. 136-137, 205, 232, 304, 371-372.

²¹¹ UN HRC, *Impact of measures to address terrorism and violent extremism on civic space and the rights of civil society actors and human rights defenders (A/HRC/40/52)*, 2019, pp. 2, 14.

²¹² UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966.

²¹³ Human Rights Committee, *General Comment No. 29 – States of Emergency (Article 4)*, 2001, pp. 2-3.

²¹⁴ UN HRC, *Impact of measures to address terrorism and violent extremism on civic space and the rights of civil society actors and human rights defenders (A/HRC/40/52)*, 2019, pp. 13.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3; UN HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression*, 2012, p. 10; UN HRC, *A disabling environment for civil society (A/HRC/20/NGO/50)*, 2012, p. 3.

²¹⁷ UN HRC, *Impact of measures to address terrorism and violent extremism on civic space and the rights of civil society actors and human rights defenders (A/HRC/40/52)*, 2019, pp. 4, 12.

²¹⁸ UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression (A/63/357)*, 2012, p. 15.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Conclusion

The dimensions of this issue are manifold, and so are the solutions. While promoting and protecting people from political persecution and oppression, several human rights instruments are at the disposal of governments and relevant human rights institutions on the international, regional, and national level. Reporting mechanisms of HRC, such as the UPR, the Special Rapporteurs, and the Human Rights Committee, as well as the work of civil society, have borne fruit and shed light upon atrocities all around the world. However, there is a need for stronger enforcement mechanisms beyond the identification of human rights violations. Civil and political rights are openly restricted, fundamental rights of HRDs, political figures, and journalists are violated, and political activism is criminalized for the sake of national security. Accordingly, HRC must consider further means of preventing political persecution and oppression - not only in light of the human rights violations these groups are exposed to, but also with regards to the overall mission of the UN, and to “promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all.”²²⁰

Further Reading

When researching the topic, delegates should take into consideration these questions: How can existing decisions and recommendations of human rights regimes by the HRC or the Human Rights Committee be effectively implemented? What are the most important and most vulnerable elements of political participation? To what extent are citizens who do not actively engage in politics affected? How can activists be protected and their work be promoted? In the digital age, what role does the internet play when it comes to political repression and participation? How does surveillance affect political persecution and oppression? What can be done to end impunity and increase accountability of offenders?

Annotated Bibliography

United Nations, General Assembly, Twenty-first session. (1966). *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. Adopted on the report of the Third Committee. Retrieved 8 May 2019 from: [http://undocs.org/A/RES/2200\(XXI\)](http://undocs.org/A/RES/2200(XXI))

This resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 1966 in tandem with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights forms, together with the UDHR of 1948, the international bill of human rights. This resolution specifies the rights which every human being ought to enjoy in order to participate fully in civil and political life. Delegates should familiarize themselves with the rights and obligations enshrined within the covenant as they are severely affected by political persecution and oppression.

United Nations, General Assembly, Fifty-third session. (1999). *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (A/RES/53/144)*. Adopted on the report of the Third Committee (A/53/625/Add.2). Retrieved 12 May 2019 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/53/144>

This declaration characterizes the fields of action of human rights defenders or other individuals who are engaged in public and political affairs and stresses the importance of human rights and fundamental freedoms associated with their activities. Even though many of the rights are included in other documents, the declaration contextualizes them, enabling delegates to find potential areas of action.

United Nations, Human Rights Committee. (2019). *Database of states parties' reports* [Website]. Retrieved 11 May 2019 from:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=8&DocTypeID=45&DocTypeID=29

²²⁰ Charter of the United Nations, 1945, Art. 1.3; OHCHR, *Transforming Our World: Human Rights in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

This database lists States parties' reports submitted to the Human Rights Committee which monitors the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It should be kept in mind, however, that these reports are submitted and complied by the states parties themselves on an optional basis. Nevertheless, delegates can gain some valuable insights on actions taken by their assigned country with regards to political rights, including overcome or remaining deficiencies.

United Nations, Human Rights Council. (2019). *Universal Periodic Review – Documentation by country* [Website]. Retrieved 11 May 2019 from:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/Documentation.aspx>

This database provides periodical reports from several stakeholders regarding the human rights record of UN Member States. Aside from their own assessment, this includes information collected by the United Nations and several other institutions and organizations as well as comments and questions brought forward by member states. These reviews will help delegates familiarize themselves with the human rights situation in their country as well as those of fellow delegates.

United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (1996). *Fact Sheet No.2 (Rev.1), The International Bill of Human Rights*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations. Retrieved 15 May 2019 from: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FactSheet2Rev.1en.pdf>

This fact sheet published by the OHCHR gives an overview of the fundamental human rights and freedoms included in the International Bill of Human Rights, its relevant protocols and their history. It further outlines their influence on regional human rights regimes. Overall, this document helps the delegates classify and differentiate the most important international human rights documents.

United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2004). *Human Rights Defenders: Protecting the Right to Defend Human Rights – Fact Sheet No. 29*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations. Retrieved 19 May 2019 from:

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FactSheet29en.pdf>

This fact sheet published by the OHCHR explains the concept of Human Rights Defenders – who they are, what they do, what crimes are committed against them, who commits these crimes, who supports them and how they can be supported further. This information helps delegates to grasp the full extent of Human Rights Defenders and the vital - yet vulnerable - role they play.

United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2005). *Civil and Political Rights: The Human Rights Committee - Fact Sheet No. 15 (Rev.1)*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations. Retrieved 10 May 2019 from:

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FactSheet15rev.1en.pdf>

While this fact sheet published by the OHCHR does delve into the provisions of the ICCPR, it also elaborates on the Human Rights Committee – its composition, functioning, reporting and complaint procedure. Since it is established on the basis of the most relevant binding treaty with regards to this topic, delegates should be familiar with the work of the Human Rights Committee in order to come up with ideas which might be complimentary.

United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2005). *Special Procedures – Thematic Mandates* [Website]. Retrieved 12 June 2019 from:

https://spinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/SpecialProceduresInternet/ViewAllCountryMandates.aspx?Type=TM

This list includes all thematic mandates of the Special Procedures established by the OHCHR. While not all may be of relevance, delegates are encouraged to explore the different Independent Experts, Special Rapporteurs or Working Groups as to see what has been done already and where action is needed regarding the topic at hand. Their

reports may shed some light on related issues in general or with respect to certain countries.

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