



**2012 – 2013**

**Model Arab League**

**BACKGROUND GUIDE**

**Council of Social Affairs Ministers**

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National  
Council  
on US-  
Arab  
Relations



Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2012-2013 Model Arab League! My name is Lara Cole, and it is my privilege to serve as your Chair for the Council of Social Affairs Ministers at the 2013 National University Model Arab League.

This is my fourth year in the Model Arab League program. I am currently a junior at Northeastern University in Boston, Mass., majoring in Journalism with minors in International Affairs, Political Science, Middle Eastern Studies and Arabic Language. I serve on the Executive Board of the International Relations Council at Northeastern University, which hosts Model UN, Model NATO, and Model Arab League programming. In addition, I have the honor of serving as the Secretary General for the Northeast Regional Model Arab League in Boston, Mass., in November. If you plan to attend, please feel free to introduce yourself.

The Council of Social Affairs Ministers is of vital importance to the Arab League. The topics that you will address will require insight and deliberation. It is my hope that this guide will serve as a starting point for your exploration, research and discovery.

I look forward to meeting you all, and look forward to a successful, productive and exciting committee.

Sincerely,  
Lara Cole

## **TOPIC 1: Formulating a comprehensive Arab League policy to address the reduction and removal of indiscriminate weapons ordnance as well as developing strategies to assist affected member states and individual victims.**

### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

#### *A. General Background*

The Geneva Conventions, Article 51, Protocol I, prohibits indiscriminate attacks, including “those which employ a method or means of combat which cannot be directed at a specific military objective and those which employ a method or means of combat the effects of which cannot be limited as required by this Protocol.”<sup>1</sup>

However, the international community has fallen quite short of this goal. Indiscriminate and unexploded weapons are a lasting and lethal legacy of both modern and historical conflict. Initially employed to kill large numbers of combatants or destroy and incapacitate combat equipment during conflict, weapons ordnance often remain unexploded and undetected long after a conflict has ended, with the potential to contaminate the environment and pose an indiscriminate threat to innocent civilians.

The principle of discrimination (distinguishing combatants from non-combatants) is also of critical importance to this topic. For example, non-combatants include civilians that are harmed by unexploded ordnance due to cluster bombs and other indiscriminate weapons.

#### *B. History of the Topic in the Arab World*

The United Nations estimates that every year, landmines, scattered in some 78 countries, kill 15,000 to 20,000 people - most of them children, women and the elderly - and severely maim countless more. In addition, some cluster munitions fail to explode upon hitting the ground, and like landmines, can remain a deadly hazard to children, farmers and civilians long after a conflict ends.

One of the last confirmed cases of the use of cluster bombs was in 2006, when Israel fired large numbers into Lebanon during a month-long conflict with Hezbollah. According to human rights groups, “accidental detonations have killed or maimed hundreds of civilians since then.”<sup>2</sup> A NATO policy banning the use of cluster munitions in Afghanistan has been in place since 2007.

This issue has been explored extensively by the international community, but much work is still to be done. The following is an overview of weapons that are regulated by international law:

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<sup>1</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross. (2005). International Humanitarian Law - Additional Protocol I 1977. Retrieved August 25, 2012, from <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/INTRO/470>

<sup>2</sup> The New York Times. (2012). Cluster Munitions. Retrieved August 25, 2012, from [http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/subjects/c/cluster\\_munitions/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/subjects/c/cluster_munitions/index.html)

<b>Weapon</b>	<b>Treaty</b>
Explosive projectiles weighing less than 400 grams	Declaration of Saint Petersburg (1868)
Bullets that expand or flatten in the human body	Hague Declaration (1899)
Poison and poisoned weapons	Hague Regulations (1907)
Chemical weapons	Geneva Protocol (1925), and Convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons (1993)
Biological weapons	Geneva Protocol (1925), and Convention on the prohibition of biological weapons (1972)
Weapons that injure by fragments which, in the human body, escape detection by X-rays	Protocol I (1980) to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
Incendiary weapons	Protocol III (1980) to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
Blinding laser weapons	Protocol IV (1995) to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
Mines, booby traps and other devices	Protocol II, as amended (1996), to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
Anti-personnel mines	Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines (Ottawa Treaty) (1997)
Explosive Remnants of War	Protocol V (2003) to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
Cluster Munitions	Convention on Cluster Munitions (2008)
Nuclear Weapons	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1970)

Source: International Committee of the Red Cross<sup>3</sup>

### *C. Finding a Solution to the Problem*

Numerous measures of international law have endeavored to limit the pain and suffering caused by armed conflict; however, the widespread availability of arms and weapons contributes to violations of several measures, and ultimately hampers the delivery of assistance to victims throughout the Middle East. Because of these reasons, it has never been more critical for the Council of Social Affairs Ministers to formulate a comprehensive Arab League policy to address the reduction and removal of indiscriminate weapons ordnance. While there are many angles from which individual member states may choose to approach this problem, it will be critical for the League to develop a policy that can be applied and implemented equally across all member states.

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<sup>3</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross. (2010). Weapons Overview. Retrieved August 25, 2012, from <http://www.icrc.org/eng/war-and-law/weapons/overview-weapons.htm>

## II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How has your country been affected by indiscriminate weapons ordnance?
- How does your country define indiscriminate weapons?
- What legislation or initiatives does your country have in place to address the reduction and removal of indiscriminate weapons ordnance?
- Has your country signed and/or ratified the numerous international treaties and resolutions regarding indiscriminate weapons?
- Does your country consider indiscriminate weapons a critical problem?

## III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What League-wide policies can be implemented to address the reduction and removal of indiscriminate weapons ordnance?
- What League-wide measures can be implemented to assist affected member states and individual victims?
- How can the League promote the acceptance and compliance of these measures?
- How do all the above relate to existing laws or protocol at either the domestic or international level?
- How can the League assist in accurate collection of data on people with disabilities resulting from unexploded weapons?

## IV. Resources to Review

- All relevant international treaties, declarations and resolutions relating to the topic. For reference, see above chart.
- Friends of Lebanon: The Campaign Against Cluster Munitions  
<http://friendsoflebanon.org/cluster-munitions>
- Cluster Munition Monitor 2012 [http://www.the-monitor.org/cmm/2012/pdf/Cluster\\_Munition\\_Monitor\\_2012.pdf](http://www.the-monitor.org/cmm/2012/pdf/Cluster_Munition_Monitor_2012.pdf)
- Book: Weapons and The Law of Armed Conflict (William Boothby, 2009)
- Book: Human Security and the New Diplomacy: Protecting People, Promoting Peace (Robert McRae, 2001)
- Article: Temporal Indiscriminateness: The Case of Cluster Bombs (Science and Engineering Ethics, 2010, Volume 16)
- United Nations Global Issues: Demining  
<http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/demining/index.shtml>
- United Nations Global Issues: Disarmament  
<http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/disarmament/index.shtml>
- United Nations Global Issues: Peace and Security  
<http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/peacesecurity/>
- International Committee of the Red Cross <http://www.icrc.org/eng/>
- United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs  
<http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Chemical/>

## Citations

- Book: WorldMinds: Geographical Perspectives on 100 Problems (Donald Janelle, 2004)
- Book: Human Security and the New Diplomacy: Protecting People, Promoting Peace (Robert McRae, 2001)
- Article: Temporal Indiscriminateness: The Case of Cluster Bombs (Science and Engineering Ethics, 2010, Volume 16)
- Article: Injuries From Land Mines: Doctors Should Work For A Ban On These Indiscriminate Weapons (British Medical Journal, 1991, Volume 303)
- Web: Crimes of War – Indiscriminate Attack <http://www.crimesofwar.org/a-z-guide/indiscriminate-attacks/>
- Web: Encyclopedia Britannica <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/638279/weapon>
- Web: United Nations Global Issues: Demining <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/demining/index.shtml>
- Web: United Nations Global Issues: Disarmament <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/disarmament/index.shtml>
- Web: United Nations Global Issues: Peace and Security <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/peacesecurity/>
- Web: International Committee of the Red Cross <http://www.icrc.org/eng/>
- Web: United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs <http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Chemical/>

## **TOPIC 2: Discussing media policy in member states regarding press freedom, shifts in digital, print, and new media, as well as the role of state-sponsored outlets**

### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

#### *A. General Background*

Free access to and sharing of ideas is the hallmark of the digital age. Today, individuals can share information to form opinions that can impact society and, on a broader scale, the course of history. Public access to information is driving fundamental change in the world, and the tools that provide this access are now integral players in the global economy.

The series of uprisings constituting the Arab Spring which began in 2011 launched an era of sweeping and fundamental change throughout the member states of the Arab League. The fall of longtime authoritarian dictators and political institutions and the public's rising demands for a stronger, freer voice in their own governance has ushered in new opportunities for reform and transition in regard to press and media freedom. In addition, the media landscape throughout the League is more diverse than ever before. Consider Rotana Group, the Arab World's largest entertainment company. The pan-Arab media conglomerate includes a film production company, magazine, television station, seven music channels, and a record label.

#### *B. History of the Topic in the Arab World*

Historically, newspapers have existed in the Middle East since the eighteenth century, with the first recorded Arab newspaper, "Al-Waqae al Masreya", printed in 1828 in Egypt. Research recently conducted by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Middle East has shown that "although the constitutions of the majority of Middle Eastern countries provide for freedom of expression, in reality conventional and international (including radio, satellite TV and the Internet) media remain under a restricted political and security environment."<sup>4</sup>

Many members of the League have implemented press laws to regulate online publishing and traditional journalism. For example, journalists in Tunisia have been prosecuted by Tunisia's press code, which bans offending the president, disturbing order, and publishing what the government perceives as false news.<sup>5</sup> In one notorious 2005 case involving unofficial press repression, Christophe Boltanski of the French daily newspaper Libération was pepper sprayed, beaten, and stabbed by four unidentified men in Tunis. The attack came right after Boltanski wrote an article describing persecution of human rights activists in Tunis.

Furthermore, measures to monitor Internet activities, particularly in Internet cafes, have been implemented in many Arab countries. For example, Jordan began increasing restrictions on the country's Internet cafes in 2011. According to the regulations, Internet cafe owners must be

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<sup>4</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2012). Freedom of the Press: in the Middle East, widely curtailed and often violated. Retrieved August 25, 2012, from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/FreedomofthePressintheMiddleEast.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> Press Freedom Online - Committee to Protect Journalists. (2008). Tunisia Report: The Smiling Oppressor. Retrieved August 27, 2012, from <http://cpj.org/reports/2008/09/tunisia-oppression.php>

“Jordanian men of good repute”<sup>6</sup>, who have never been charged with immoral crimes or fraud. Owners are further obliged to register the names and identity of users, and to keep a monthly record of the websites browsed by visitors.<sup>7</sup>

### *C. Finding a Solution to the Problem*

A continued effort on the part of all nations is required for citizens to fully realize media freedoms. One major roadblock to be considered is that national publication and press laws are frequently changed and vary widely throughout the League, leaving room for wide interpretation and challenges for effective enforcement. Therefore, solutions will need to look beyond individual laws and regulations that have been adopted by member states, and instead focus on what can be done on a League-wide basis to address press and media freedom.

## **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- What broadcasting authorities and/or press regulation bodies exist in your country?
- What domestic legislation has your country adopted that relates to press freedom?
- What print, broadcast, and radio outlets does your country have?
- Are the outlets state-sponsored, controlled by political or religious parties, or independent? How does this compare to others in League member states?
- How many citizens in your country have access to the Internet?
- Does your country consider freedom of the press a fundamental social right?
- Does freedom of the press change in your country during times of war or social conflict?

## **III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

- What programs or initiatives can be put in place to address press freedom on a League-wide level?
- How can the League assist in addressing press freedom and identifying instances of censorship or journalist imprisonment?
- Is there a League-wide definition of press freedom? If not, should one be created?
- How should the Arab League approach enforcement and regulation of the media?
- What role should non-state actors play in developing a common solution to the issue?

## **IV. Resources to Review**

- Arab and Middle Eastern Journalists Association <http://www.ameja.org/>
- BBC News Country Profile: Media [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/country\\_profiles/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/country_profiles/default.stm)
- Newseum Press Freedom Map <http://www.newseum.org/exhibits-and-theaters/permanent-exhibits/world-news/press-freedom-map.html>
- Freedom House <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>

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<sup>6</sup> Global Information Society Watch. (2009). Jordan Report - Access to Online Information and Knowledge. Retrieved August 19, 2012, from <http://www.giswatch.org/country-report/20/jordan>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

- Committee to Protect Journalists <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>

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- Book: The Press in the Arab Middle East: A History (Ami Avalon, 1995)
- Book: The Making of Arab News (Noah Mellor, 2005)
- Book: New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere (DF Eickelman, 2003)
- Article: The Analytic Challenges of Studying the Middle East and its Evolving Media Environment [http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/7359/1/MEJCC\\_Sreberny\\_pdf.pdf](http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/7359/1/MEJCC_Sreberny_pdf.pdf)
- Article: Sharing Government-Owned Data with the Public: A Cross-Country Analysis of Open Data Practice in the Middle East  
<http://aisel.aisnet.org/amcis2012/proceedings/EGovernment/16/>
- Web: BBC News Country Profile: Media  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/country\\_profiles/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/country_profiles/default.stm)
- Web: Newseum Press Freedom Map <http://www.newseum.org/exhibits-and-theaters/permanent-exhibits/world-news/press-freedom-map.html>
- Web: Freedom House <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>
- Web: Committee to Protect Journalists <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>
- Web: International Press Institute  
[http://www.freemedia.at/index.php?id=227&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=4137&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=190&cHash=1813c5cb1a](http://www.freemedia.at/index.php?id=227&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4137&tx_ttnews[backPid]=190&cHash=1813c5cb1a)

### **TOPIC 3: Examining common public health issues affecting member states with special regard for population growth and the threat of trans-border infectious diseases**

#### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

##### *A. General Background*

As the trans-border movement of humans, animals, and food increases throughout the world, so does the risk of spreading dangerous pathogens and infectious disease. While new economic markets and technological advances have created unprecedented economic and social opportunities for the League as a whole, the risks – especially health risks – of our increasingly interconnected world continue to proliferate.

For any member state, the health and well-being of its population has broad social, political, and economic implications. Rapid urbanization, population growth, and changing lifestyles in the Middle East have strained the public health systems of many Member states. In addition, political instability, and economic uncertainty have the potential to undermine public health systems.

##### *B. History of the Topic in the Arab World*

According to the World Health Organization, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading global cause of death and strike hardest at the world's low and middle income populations. NCDs include cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers and chronic respiratory diseases, with risk factors including “tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, and the harmful use of alcohol”<sup>8</sup>. These risk factors pose a growing threat to public health and safety for all members of the League.

In addition, communicable diseases pose a large and dangerous threat to the health and stability of the League, as they are spread from one person to another or from an animal to a person. The spread often happens “via airborne viruses or bacteria, but also through blood or other bodily fluid.”<sup>9</sup> Infectious diseases “are estimated to account for about a quarter of deaths worldwide, more than 13 million deaths each year. The top causes of death from infectious disease include lower respiratory tract infections and diarrheal diseases.”<sup>10</sup>

The emergence of new pathogens such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), tuberculosis, and malaria, as well as previously unknown animal diseases, such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (mad-cow disease), are of particular concern to governments around the world as they have the potential to severely disrupt public health systems.

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<sup>8</sup> The United Nations, . (2012, ). Population Facts: Population Ageing and the Non-communicable Diseases . Retrieved August 29, 2012, from [http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/popfacts/popfacts\\_\\_2012-1.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/popfacts/popfacts__2012-1.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> United States Department of Health and Human Services, . (2012, ). Communicable Diseases. Retrieved August 21, 2012, from <http://www.globalhealth.gov/global-health-topics/communicable-diseases/index.html>

<sup>10</sup> Office of Science and Innovation, London, . (2006, ). Foresight: Infectious Diseases: preparing for the future threats. Retrieved August 19, 2012, from <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/foresight/docs/infectious-diseases/t1.pdf>

Furthermore, the Council of Social Affairs Ministers might consider public health during times of crisis. For example, hospitals, ambulances and clinics throughout Syria are currently are prominent targets for regime air strikes. According to a first-hand account, “remains of ambulance vehicles, bombed or destroyed by gunfire, mar the streets of Aleppo and surrounding villages. Every medical facility in town bares some damage from explosions. The doctors here [unidentified hospital in Aleppo] say they have all been arrested at least once for their role in treating the wounded. Most were tortured.”<sup>11</sup>

### *C. Finding a Solution to the Problem*

In response to the increase in international travel and trade, and emergence and re-emergence of international disease threats and other health risks, 194 countries across the globe have implemented the World Health Organization International Health Regulations since 2005.

The stated purpose and scope of the IHR are “to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade.”<sup>12</sup> The IHR also require member states to “strengthen core surveillance and response capacities at the primary, intermediate and national level, as well as at designated international ports, airports and ground crossings.”<sup>13</sup>

Some solutions to this issue will improve the identification, surveillance, the availability of drugs and vaccines, reporting, containment, education, research and treatment of disease in member states. As new global treats emerge, each of these factors will change from country to country. The Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers must develop a way to promote League-wide cooperation in regard to disease outbreaks and control efforts. In addition, the Council must consider the role of doctors and health professionals during times of civil war or crisis.

## **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- What effects have increasingly integrated trade, economic development, human movement, and cultural exchange had on patterns of disease in your country?
- What is your country’s policy in regards to the reporting of infectious disease outbreaks to the international community?
- What public health issues and infectious disease outbreaks has your country faced in the past? The present?
- What kind of public health initiatives and educational measures has your country implemented in the past? The present?
- Which member states have adopted successful education initiatives? Which have not, and why?
- What is your country’s greatest public health concern in the next year? The next 10 – 15 years?

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<sup>11</sup> PBS: Public Broadcasting Service. (2012). Inside Syria: One Hospital's Story. Retrieved September 26, 2012, from <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/2012/09/inside-syria-2.html>

<sup>12</sup> World Health Organization. (2005 ). World Health Organization International Health Regulaitons. Retrieved September 26, 2012, from [http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241580410\\_eng.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241580410_eng.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [Ibid.](#)

### III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What League-wide programs or initiatives can be put in place to alleviate NCD risk factors, including tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and the harmful use of alcohol?
- How can the League assist in promoting the reporting and identification of infectious disease outbreaks?
- What role does the League play when an infectious disease outbreak occurs in a member state?
- How can the League build health capacity and emergency preparedness measures through the training and retention of healthcare workers?

### IV. Resources to Review

- World Health Organization International Health Regulations
- National Institutes of Health (NIH) Middle East and North African Region  
<http://www.fic.nih.gov/WorldRegions/Pages/MiddleEastNorthAfrica.aspx>
- Food and Drug Administration Middle East and North Africa Office  
<http://www.fda.gov/InternationalPrograms/FDABeyondOurBordersForeignOffices/MiddleEast/default.htm>
- World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean  
<http://www.emro.who.int/>
- Global Network of Researchers on HIV/AIDS in the Middle East and North Africa  
<http://www.uic.edu/orgs/gnr-mena/>
- Nature Middle East - A website for information on scientific and medical research in the Middle East, as well as updated on the general research community and its activities  
<http://www.nature.com/nmiddleeast/index.html>
- Characterizing the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the Middle East and North Africa: Time for Strategic Action  
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/0,,contentMDK:22632787~pagePK:146736~piPK:146830~theSitePK:256299,00.html>

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- Article: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Facts April 2002 [http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/popfacts/popfacts\\_2012-1.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/popfacts/popfacts_2012-1.pdf)
- Article: Unhealthy Landscapes: Policy Recommendations on Land Use Change and Infectious Disease Emergence <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1247383/>
- Article: Emerging Trends in International Law Concerning Global Infectious Disease Control <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2958540/>

- Article: International Health Regulations, 2005 –World Health Organization [http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241580410\\_eng.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241580410_eng.pdf)
- Article: Global Status Report on Non-Communicable Diseases 2010 – World Health Organization [http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2011/9789240686458\\_eng.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2011/9789240686458_eng.pdf)
- Article: Infectious Diseases: Future Threats <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/foresight/docs/infectious-diseases/t1.pdf>
- Web: National Institutes of Health (NIH) Middle East and North African Region Information, Grants and Resources <http://www.fic.nih.gov/WorldRegions/Pages/MiddleEastNorthAfrica.aspx>
- Web: Food and Drug Administration Middle East and North Africa Office <http://www.fda.gov/InternationalPrograms/FDABeyondOurBordersForeignOffices/MiddleEast/default.htm>
- Web: World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean <http://www.emro.who.int/>
- Web: Global Network of Researchers on HIV/AIDS in the Middle East and North Africa <http://www.uic.edu/orgs/gnr-mena/>
- Web: Nature Middle East <http://www.nature.com/nmiddleeast/index.html>
- Web: Characterizing the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the Middle East and North Africa: Time for Strategic Action <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/0,,contentMDK:22632787~pagePK:146736~piPK:146830~theSitePK:256299,00.html>
- Web: Global Health Topics <http://www.globalhealth.gov/global-health-topics/communicable-diseases/index.html>
- Web: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/>

## **TOPIC 4: Considering stability measures and the protection of human rights in post-conflict states.**

### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

#### *A. General Background*

The principle of universal human rights is the cornerstone of international human rights law and regulations. First emphasized in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948, the principle has been reiterated and reinforced in numerous international human rights conventions, declarations, and resolutions. At the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, for example, a declaration noted that “it is the duty of States to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems.”<sup>14</sup>

Human rights, however, have little value if they are not protected, implemented and advocated. States recovering from conflict, such as civil war or social unrest, or those currently engaged in conflict, have the potential to become the breeding ground for mass violations of human rights including unlawful killings, torture, starvation, and forced displacement.

#### *B. History of the Topic in the Arab World*

Although the maintenance of peace and the promotion of human rights are fundamental principles of both the United Nations and the Arab League, innocent civilians are often victims of violence. More so than in most other regions of the world, “the states of the League are greatly divided over the need to enforce human rights law and the desirability of achieving a true regional system for the promotion and protection of human rights.”<sup>15</sup>

Beyond addressing traditional human rights violations in member states, the Council of Social Affairs Ministers might consider, analyze, and clarify the role of stability and peacekeeping in the region. As of September 2012, “16 United Nations peacekeeping operations are currently deployed on four continents, three of which are in the Middle East: the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).”<sup>16</sup>

While those directly involved in peace operations around the world have the inherent responsibility to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights throughout their work, operations still face extraordinary challenges. For example, expanding expectations for peacekeeping have strained the resources and mechanisms of the United Nations. Operational overstretch, shifting definitions of what peacekeeping should entail, and diminishing contributions are only the most recent obstacles.

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<sup>14</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (1995 ). World Conference on Human Rights . Retrieved September 25, 2012, from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/ViennaWC.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> Britannica Online Encyclopedia. (2012 ). Human Rights -- Britannica Online Encyclopedia. Retrieved August 26, 2012, from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/275840/human-rights>

<sup>16</sup> The United Nations. (2012,). United Nations Peacekeeping. Retrieved September 28, 2012, from <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/>

### *C. Finding a Solution to the Problem*

International humanitarian and human rights laws offer certain protections to civilians living in areas of conflict. The Permanent Arab Commission on Human Rights was founded by the League in September 1968. Later, building on the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights and the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, the League approved the Arab Charter on Human Rights in May 2004.

Issues surrounding human rights and conflict are nothing new to the international community – but there is no better time than the present to implement drastic, fundamental solutions in the wake of the monumental shifts and transitions in the Arab world since 2011. The development, promotion, and enforcement of a true regional system for the protection of human rights might be considered with a goal of building a future of peace and security for all citizens.

## **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- Has your country signed and/or ratified relevant human rights treaties? What limitations, if any, did they place on their signature?
- What domestic legislation and policies does your country have that relates to this topic?
- Has your country ever experienced human rights violations as a result of armed conflict?
- Is your country currently experiencing a period of domestic unrest?
- Does your country consider human rights a fundamental right for all, regardless of sexual orientation, religious affiliation, nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, language, etc.?
- What is your country's approach to protecting vulnerable segments of the population during times of conflict, including women, children, the elderly, the disabled and internationally displaced persons and/or refugees?

## **III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

- What measures can the League implement in order to take a more proactive role in the protection of human rights in areas where violence appears imminent?
- How can the League address the implementation and monitoring of human rights obligations and responsibilities in situations of conflict?
- How can the League more effectively work with regional and international bodies to streamline the peacekeeping process and maximize peacekeeping effectiveness?
- What special considerations, if any, should be given to armed conflicts where women and children are especially vulnerable?

## **IV. Resources to Review**

- Arab Charter on Human Rights <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b38540.html>
- Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights <http://www.alhewar.com/ISLAMDECL.html>
- Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/cairodeclaration.html>

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights  
<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm>
- Charter of the United Nations <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml>
- Charter of the Arab League  
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,LAS,,,3ae6b3ab18,0.html/>
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees <http://www.unhcr.org>
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/HRCIndex.aspx>
- Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>
- United Nations Peacekeeping <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/>
- Freedom House <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>

## Citations

- Book: Terrorism And Peacekeeping: New Security Challenges (Volker Franke, 2005)
- Book: After Abu Ghraib: Exploring Human Rights in America and the Middle East (Shadi Mokhtari, 2011)
- Article: Avoiding the Scourge of War: The Challenges of United Nations Peacekeeping  
<http://ehistory.osu.edu/osu/origins/article.cfm?articleid=61>
- Article: Conflict goods: The challenges for peacekeeping and conflict prevention (International Peacekeeping, Volume 8, Issue 3, 2001)
- Article: The challenges of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in Liberia (International Peacekeeping, Volume 12, Issue 2, 2005)
- Article: The Challenges of Strategic Coordination: Containing Opposition and Sustaining Implementation of Peace Agreements in Civil Wars  
(<http://www.javvo.com/colerche/POL6655/Readings/StratCoord.pdf>)
- Article: The future of civil society in the Middle East (Middle East Journal, Volume 47, No. 2, Spring, 1993)
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- Web: Charter of the United Nations <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml>
- Web: Charter of the Arab League  
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,LAS,,,3ae6b3ab18,0.html/>
- Web: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
<http://www.unhcr.org>

- Web: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/HRCIndex.aspx>
- Web: Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>
- Web: United Nations Peacekeeping <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/>
- Web: Encyclopedia Britannica: Human Rights  
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/275840/human-rights>