Committee Overview

Our committee will be run Harvard style, which means that there can be no pre-written resolutions. We highly recommend writing at least one position paper as this is necessary to be considered for an award. In addition, delegates should have some knowledge of each of the topics in order to be informed during debate.

We expect that all delegates will come to committee with a good grasp on their country and its policies, especially surrounding our topics of discussion. The goal of the United Nations Human Rights Council is to solve the issues presented peacefully, effectively, and respectfully. We recognize that awards are fun to receive but above all we want to make sure you have fun while participating. Feel free to reach out with any questions!

Committee Description

The Houthi–Hostage Taking in Yemen
Violence Against Asylum Seekers in Croatia
The China Uighur Deportation Crisis
Violations of Fair Trial Rights in Saudi Arabia

Chairs

Aarya Patel | aaryapatel2019@yahoo.com

My name is Aarya Patel and this is my fourth time chairing and my fourth year in Model UN! I am a senior at Brighton High School. I am part of the leadership team for our Model UN club, vice president of DECA, vice president of FBLA, and I am also a part of natural helpers. Feel free to email us with any questions on topics, position papers, etc. I look forward to meeting everyone!

Julia Allen | Julia@jiliarallen.com

My name is Julia Allen and I am a senior at Fairport High School. This is my third year in Model UN, but my first time chairing. I am the vice president of my school’s Model UN club. Outside of MUN, I’m on the cross country and Nordic skiing teams, Editor-in-Chief of my school’s literary magazine, and on the math team. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions, and I can’t wait for UNAR!
The Houthi rebel group in Yemen has been regularly and unlawfully taking hostages. Houthi leaders either force the hostages' relatives to pay for their release, or sell the prisoners to “opposing forces” for money or information. This is a direct violation of wartime policies and denies these hostages almost every fundamental human right.

While prisoners are being held hostage, Houthi rebels have taken many acts of violence against them. Leaders have been found to beat their hostages with iron sticks, rifles, whip them, chain them to walls, and threaten to rape or murder them in order to obtain profits or confessions. Even if prisoners give up money or information, the rebels have been found to still keep the hostages captive. In total, over 6,660 civilians have been directly killed, 10,000 injured, and another few thousand killed from causes such as malnutrition or disease from the unsanitary living conditions. These abuses have been going on since 2014 when the Houthi forces took control of Yemen, and forced the leader to flee. A coalition rose up to restore the government, and the fighting that broke out from this rebellion has left over 22 million people in need of “humanitarian aid” and has created a food emergency.

Seizing an enemy civilian, detaining them, and threatening to kill them is not only a violation of war crimes, but also a violation of wartime human rights. The UNHRC is being called upon to reinforce the mandate of the “Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen” in order to find those responsible for the abuses. The Human Rights Watch has written to the ministry of Yemen in regards to the actions they have taken to hold abusers accountable, and HRW is requesting information on what action to take next. However, they have received no response. Nonetheless, Houthi leaders need to release prisoners immediately, end the torture and starvation of hostages, and be punished for violating the human rights of thousands of individuals during wartime.

How can UNHRC provide humanitarian aid to those already abused? How can UNHRC prosecute the Houthi rebels who are torturing these civilians? How can UNHRC make sure a similar situation doesn’t re-surface anywhere in the world?

Sources:


Croatia has been pushing away asylum seekers, most of whom have legitimate claims for asylum, back across the border without giving them the possibility for refuge. Refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan attempt to cross over to Croatia from Bosnia-Herzegovina with the goal of reaching Slovenia. While Croatia has a bilateral agreement with Bosnia-Herzegovina, allowing them to deport any illegal immigrants, this agreement, which denies refugees protection rights, is in direct contrast with EU asylum law, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the 1951 Refugee Convention, and article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In addition, the expulsions conducted by Croatia do not follow due process and are not conducted at official border crossings, so they cannot be justified under the bilateral agreement.

Croatia has a duty to protect migrants, yet are instead pushing them back to Bosnia or Herzegovina. In addition, the Croatian police has been found to beat, kick, punch and steal from asylum seekers in order to force them away. In August, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that Croatia pushed back over 2,500 migrants in the previous eight months. Pushbacks are already unlawful under EU law because they send people back to a country where they may be facing human rights violations, but the Croatian police are further contributing to these violations through their treatment of asylum seekers.

The UNHRC is being called upon to conduct thorough investigations on the Croatian police and the abuses occurring at the border, and hold the police and any affiliate members responsible for the human rights abuses. The Croatian ministry is not owning up to any misconduct by the police by saying that officers are simply “detering migrants from illegally entering.” However, Croatian officers deport seekers back to Serbia, Bosnia or Herzegovina with no intention of taking into consideration legitimate asylum claims. Officers have been found to charge fees for those entering or even force them to sign papers in foreign languages, which is against the EU directive of asylum procedures.

The case is that Croatian police are illegally pushing people across their border, violating multiple EU agreements, and beating, stealing, and malnourishing thousands in the process, violating multiple basic human rights.

How can UNHRC ensure that these asylum seekers are not pushed away without infringing on national sovereignty? How can UNHRC help those in need of aid from malnourishment and beatings? How can the Croatian police be punished for violating the human rights of asylum seekers?
Xinjiang is a region of northwestern China that has a population of approximately 11 million Uighur (Uyghur), a group of ethnic Turkic Muslims. In May 2014, China launched the “Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism”. This campaign has caused the number of arrests in the area to nearly triple, with Uighur people being held in detention centers or political education camps - the largest internment program since Mao’s Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976. The “Strike Hard” campaign has also had repercussions abroad. As the Uighur people have fled conditions in China, the Chinese government has continued to harass and intimidate them to compel them to return to China. The Chinese government has also asked countries harboring Uighur asylum-seekers to deport these migrants back to China, and few of these deportees have ever been heard from again.

Estimates say that there are a million or more people currently in political education camps in China, in which detainees have reported being chained up, deprived of food for as long as a week, forced to sing patriotic hymns, and forced to write essays criticizing themselves and their faiths. Outside of camps, strict laws restrict the Uighur people’s abilities to practice Islam, and they fear being arrested for any sign of practicing their faith. The Uighur people have been escaping China in an attempt to reach Turkey or Europe, but often face deportation. In 2015, Thailand came under fire for deporting 100 Uighur refugees to China, and such deportations have also occurred across Asia and Europe. Although Germany and Sweden have agreed to suspend deportations, such deportations are still widespread in other countries.

On December 3, 2018, the Human Rights Watch wrote a letter asking the European Union to suspend all deportations, citing government obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, as well as the Convention against Torture, which the Chinese government is currently in violation of. In August, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination called on China to release all Uighurs from re-education camps. However, little has improved since then. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees condemned the Thai deportation in 2015, but did not take action. UNHRC must take action to help the prisoners of these political education camps, and to stop illegal deportations of Uighur asylum-seekers.

How can UNHRC free Uighur prisoners from political education camps and provide humanitarian aid to past victims? How can UNHRC facilitate Uighur migration to safer countries? How can UNHRC stop the deportations of Uighur asylum-seekers? How can all this be done without infringing on China’s national sovereignty?

Sources:


In Saudi Arabia, citizens commonly face systematic violations of due process and fair trial rights. Saudi Arabia has no formal penal code, and the country instead uses Sharia law as its national law. This has led to judges and prosecutors interpreting the law in any way they choose, including prosecuting people under broad charges such as "breaking allegiance with the ruler". Authorities often deny detainees rights such as access to a lawyer, a speedy trial, and supporting evidence. The death penalty is common, even for non-violent crimes, and admission of guilt is often extracted under torture.

On November 1, 2017, Saudi Arabia published the Penal Law for Crimes of Terrorism and its Financing. This law defines terrorism as a broad range of acts, including “disturbing public order” and “bringing religion or justice into disrepute,” but despite the name, the law still did not establish a formal penal code. These vague definitions have been used to punish peaceful activists and dissidents. The law gave more power to the public prosecution and allows them to make arrests without judicial oversight. Detainees can be held in pretrial detention for up to a year and in incommunicado detention for up to 90 days, where torture is most common. They are often not told what crimes they are convicted of, and do not see a lawyer until very late in the trial process, if at all. Additionally, children can be tried as adults as long as signs of puberty are visible. The Saudi government formally denies that any torture occurs in its facilities. However, more than three thousand allegations of torture were recorded between 2009 and 2015 although not a single official was prosecuted for committing an act of torture.

On June 6, 2018, the Special Rapporteur for HRC published his report on human rights abuses while countering terrorism in Saudi Arabia. This report included suggestions for the government to correct its behavior. These suggestions included revising the definition of terrorism, investigating all torture allegations, and implementing fair trial laws. However, little has changed in Saudi Arabia since the report. Saudi Arabia is currently in violation of numerous articles of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including Article 5 forbidding torture, Article 9 against arbitrary arrest, and Article 10 outlining fair trial rights. Saudi Arabia must revise their legal code to ensure all citizens have access to their basic fair trial rights.

How should Saudi Arabia’s legal code be revised to ensure fair trial rights for all citizens? What should be done to prosecute and punish those guilty of committing human rights abuses in Saudi Arabia? How can UNHRC convince Saudi Arabia to adopt these suggestions without infringing on national sovereignty?

Sources: