



Yūgen Summit'22

UNHRC Background Guide

Letter From the Executive board

Dear delegates,

It gives us immense pleasure to welcome you all to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) at the YUGEN MUN 2.0. We are enthusiastic to be serving as your executive board for this conference. Although this particular committee has been simulated several times in the Hyderabad circuit, we feel that it is of paramount importance and great relevance. We hope that you enjoy the three days you will be spending at the conference, and leave enriched. We would like to say that this background guide should not be the beginning and end of your research, and is a general background of the agenda. Moreover, we expect to see a heated debate with a deeper understanding of the agenda at hand than provided in this background guide. Considering that this may be a new experience for many of you, feel free to contact us if you have any doubts.

That being said, we are looking forward to seeing some Engaging debate at YUGEN MUN 2.0.

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HOW TO RESEARCH FOR A BEGINNER:

Researching vast topics is a very tedious task with various open ends. So as to ensure you are on the right research path, here are some research steps and tips for beginners:

1. Make your foundation by being very thorough with your background guide. It can give you an excellent base to start with your initial research and gain some insights into what your committee is expecting.

2. Get to know your portfolio/country by being aware of some basics about your country such as but not limited to the following aspects of your country:

1. Physical Geography

2. Politics and Government

3. Population

4. Culture

5. Economy

6. Foreign policy

3. Understand the mandate & the powers of your committee.

4. Have good insight into your agenda matters with special emphasis on understanding the hindrances in achieving the agenda, keep some statistics & related documents handy.

5. Be aware of your country's stance, ideas, and views on the matter at hand, similarly, know the positions of some specific countries on the matter and define your foreign policy (history, past actions, etc.)

6. Predict the kind of discussions and on what sub-topics can take place, thereby analyzing the sub-topic research you have done and preparing yourself accordingly

7. Feel free to reach out to your executive board for any kind of queries!

Finally channelize all the information you have gained, into some form of solution.

Any time you feel that there is a deviation from your main research agenda question yourself with "Will this help me with my presentations or understanding of the committee?". It is also important to have all of your research properly compiled & stored. Organize your research notes and documents in a labeled manner.



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NATURE OF EVIDENCE

The following sources will be accepted as credible by the committee:

1) News Sources

a. REUTERS – Any Reuters' article which clearly makes mention of the fact stated or is in contradiction of the fact being stated by another delegate in the council can be used to substantiate arguments in the committee. (<http://www.reuters.com/>)

b. State – operated News Agencies – These reports can be used in the support of or against the State that owns the News Agency. These reports, if credible or substantial enough, can be used in support of or against any country as such but in that situation, they can be denied by any other country in the council. Some examples are

RIA Novosti (Russia) <http://en.rian.ru/>

IRNA (Iran) <http://www.irna.ir/ENIndex.htm>

ALJAZEERA (maybe accepted)

BBC (maybe accepted)

2) Government Reports

These reports can be used in a similar way as the State Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country. However, a nuance is that the Executive Board as credible information can still accept a report that is being denied by a certain country. Some examples are Government Websites like the State Department of the United States of America <http://www.state.gov/index.htm> or the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation <http://www.eng.mil.ru/en/index.htm> Ministry of Foreign

Affairs of various nations like India (<http://www.mea.gov.in/>) or the People's Republic of China (<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/>). Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Reports <http://www.un.org/en/members/> (Click on any country to get the website of the Office of its Permanent Representative.) Multilateral Organizations like the NATO (<http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/index.htm>), ASEAN (<http://www.aseansec.org/>), OPEC (http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/), etc.

3) UN Reports

All UN Reports are considered credible information or evidence for the Executive Board of this joint session. UN Bodies like the UNSC (<http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/>) or UNGA (<http://www.un.org/en/ga/>). UN Affiliated bodies like the International Atomic Energy Agency (<http://www.iaea.org/>), World Bank (<http://www.worldbank.org/>), International Monetary Fund (<http://www.imf.org/external/index.htm>), International Committee of the Red Cross (<http://www.icrc.org/eng/index.jsp>), etc.



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INTRODUCTION

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 (General Assembly resolution 217 A) as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected.

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), which is composed of 47 states elected by the UN General Assembly, is an inter-governmental body within the UN system, and responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe. The council was established by the UN General Assembly on 15 March 2006, with the main purpose of addressing situations of human rights violations and making recommendations on them. The resolution establishing the UNHRC states that “members elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights.

IMPORTANT CONVENTIONS, TREATIES, AND DOCUMENTS

All the delegates are suggested to go through the following international bill of rights and other human rights treaties prior to the conference. This will enable you to have substantial knowledge about the existing international frameworks adopted by the United Nations with regard to human rights.

1. United Nations Charter
2. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
3. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
4. International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

In addition to those mentioned above, there are many other universal instruments relating to human rights that the executive board expects the delegates to get themselves familiarised with.



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AREAS OF CONFLICT

A region within a country, a country, or a group of different countries which has a generalized dispute among different communities or groups of people that is affecting the people residing in the region can be called an area of conflict.

In such areas of conflict, in general, there exists a humanitarian crisis that results in deprivation of basic human resources, violations of universal norms such as self-determination, human rights, or democratic governance, and in certain critical cases also poses a threat to the lives of people. High levels of violence, underdevelopment, injustice and massive governance problems are prevalent. The conflicts can take various forms such as armed conflicts between communities, groups, or countries, coups within the country, ethnic and religious persecution, etc. In some cases, existing social issues like poverty, natural calamities and/or lack of natural resources in a region further deprive the state of human rights.

When the conflict seems to grow out of proportion and tends to give rise to a bigger problem that the country or region is unable to control, international organizations such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the ICRC step in and provide assistance in various aspects, such as improving communication between opposing forces, acting as a medium for humanitarian cooperation, promoting civilian-military dialogue, providing services to the affected civilian populations, and encouraging the involved actors to uphold and implement the principles of the International humanitarian law. Also known as the Law of Armed Conflict, the International Humanitarian law is a set of rules contained in the Geneva Conventions which are aimed at regulating the conduct and effects of armed conflict, restricting the means and methods of warfare, and providing protection to civilians who are no longer participating in the hostilities.

With their global perspectives, international organizations often identify issues and trends that may lead to escalating tensions or conflict, and serve as an early warning mechanism, along with offering conflict resolution and diplomacy services to the areas involved.



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HISTORY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The idea of certain inalienable rights pertaining to every human being has existed for centuries. Despite the inherent inequalities and the sometimes-exclusive notion of who is human and who is not, many ancient societies had developed traditions, philosophies and documents which deliberated the idea that everyone (or originally a certain group) is entitled to a number of rights, by virtue of their humanity. Thus, there exist several precursors of contemporary human rights documents. This is true for many distinct cultures and religions.

Western human rights proponents frequently point to the English Magna Carta of 1215, which codifies individual rights and liberties, mostly for noblemen. Nevertheless, subsequent documents including some aspects of human rights often referred to the Magna Carta, since theoretically it limited the power of the crown considerably and hence established a basis for a liberal theory of human rights. Further historical antecedents of contemporary human rights law asserting individual rights include the English Bill of Rights (1689), the Virginia Bill of Rights (1776), the French Declaration on the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789), the US Constitution (1789) and Bill of Rights (1791).

With the advent of the 20th century and two World Wars, and especially the invention of the totalitarian state as well as the dark chapter of the state-organized genocide by the National Socialists and its collaborators in Europe, the unequivocal need for a codification of human rights, first and foremost understood as individual rights, was once again put on the top of the agenda. Following the establishment of the United Nations one major goal was drafting some form of international legal document which should be of aid to prevent the future atrocities. The UN intended to provide a more comprehensive framework to stop state brutality.

On December 1948 the General Assembly unanimously passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with eight abstentions coming from Belarus, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Soviet Union, Ukraine, Yugoslavia, Saudi Arabia and South Africa.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights are commonly known as the International Bill of Human Rights.

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REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DECLARATIONS

Please consider that there are different regional declarations of human rights too:

1. European Convention of Human Rights
2. Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam
3. Arab Charter on Human Rights
4. Bangkok Declaration on Human Rights
5. ASEAN Human Rights Declaration

These play important roles as they developed in special ways according to their very own regional background with different national and regional particularities and historical, cultural and religious backgrounds.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Looking back at 2014, the world interpreted its events, which turned into a catastrophe for millions of people in the Middle East and North Africa. This year was marked by an increase in the intensity of armed conflicts and horrendous human rights violations in Syria and Iraq; the main population of the Gaza Strip fell during the bloody military confrontation between Israel and Hamas, and Libya increasingly resembled a state that lost its ability to perform its basic functions and is on the verge of civil war.

The society in Yemen also remained deeply divided; The central authorities faced the activity of Shiite militants in the north, an active movement for secession in the south, and continuing resistance in the south-west. The situation in Egypt gave little cause for optimism. In this country, the army general, who initiated the overthrow of the country's first president in 2013 after the mass unrest, took over the presidential post and raised a wave of repression directed not only against the Muslim Brotherhood movement and its allies, but also against political activists many other associations, as well as against media workers and human rights activists. During the repression, thousands of people were thrown into prison, hundreds were sentenced to death. In addition, in 2014, the world witnessed fierce brutality from armed groups involved in the conflicts in Syria and Iraq; In this regard, it is necessary to emphasize the armed group, which calls itself "Islamic State" (IG, formerly ISIS). In Syria, soldiers of the IG and other armed groups controlled vast areas of the country, including a large part of the area in which the largest Syrian city of Aleppo is located, and imposed "punishments", including public killings, cutting off limbs and corporal punishment for the actions they considered a departure from Islamic law.



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Political tensions and other acute problems that persisted in the Middle East and North Africa in 2014 assumed an extreme character in countries where armed conflicts took place; On the whole, institutional and other flaws were noted in all parts of the region, which, on the one hand, contributed to exacerbating tensions, and on the other hand, did not allow its detente. These factors include the lack of tolerance among governments and a number of non-state armed groups to criticism and dissent, weak or completely absent legislative bodies that could deter and serve as a counterweight to the arbitrariness of the executive branch, the lack of independent judicial bodies and the subordination of the criminal justice system to the executive branch, and also the inability to ensure accountability, including with regard to compliance with the obligations of states under international law. Suppression of dissent Governments in the region continued to suppress dissent, restricting the right to free speech and other types of freedom of expression, including in social networks.

In Bahrain, laws criminalizing the expression of opinions that were considered offensive to the head of state, the government, members of the judiciary, or even to foreign leaders were applied to imprisoning critics. For example, a court sentenced a well-known activist to three years in prison for tearing a picture of the king.

Similar cases occurred in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Oman and Saudi Arabia. In Iran, critics were brought to trial on charges involving “mohherebeh” (“enmity against God”) – a crime punishable by death. In the UAE, the authorities continued to sentence reform advocates to lengthy prison sentences following unfair trials and introduced new anti-terrorism laws, the scope of which turned out to be so broad that they equated peaceful protests to acts of terrorism, as punishment for which application of the death penalty. The UAE and some other Gulf states, including Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman, used their power to punish those who criticized, by depriving them of their citizenship and all the rights it provided, turning them into stateless. Bahrain, Kuwait and the UAE used their power in a similar way throughout the year.



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HISTORY OF THE REFUGEE CRISES

The history of refugee crises, especially as they pertain to armed conflict, is very complex due to its wide span across time and civilizations. The term “refugee” stems from the French *refugié*, “shelter” or “protection,” and the Old French *refuge*, “hiding place”.³⁰ “Refugee” was initially used to refer to French Protestant Huguenots who fled France after the 1685 revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which had granted them religious liberty and civil rights.³¹ It was soon generalized to refer to anyone fleeing danger or persecution on the basis of religion or ethnicity.

HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE LAW

Refugee crises are generally thought to have entered international conversation in the aftermath of World War I. The beginnings of modern international cooperation and protection of refugees would begin around the same time. As is the case for other components of current international law, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was an important catalyst in the formation of refugee law.

World War I (1914–1918), the Balkan Wars (1912–1913), the wars in the Caucasus (1918–1921), and the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922) created massive upheaval in involved states in the Near East and especially in the Russian Empire. Large numbers of refugees—estimates vary between 1 and 2 million—left Russian (later Soviet) territories for various countries across Eurasia between 1918 and 1922 and thereafter.

Charitable organizations were the main source of emergency relief. However, these groups could not extend their support beyond what material assistance they could manage. Coordination was poor, and resources were quickly exhausted. Considering the situation, international bodies of Red Cross Societies called a conference to kickstart coordination efforts.

This led to the appointment of a High Commissioner in the League of Nations for refugees. The purpose of the High Commissioner was “to define the status of refugees, to secure their repatriation or their employment outside Russia, and to coordinate measures for their assistance”.



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Under the League's jurisdiction, several important steps were taken to attempt to solve the refugee crises in the Near East at the time. The first agreements were made in the 1920s to provide a definition of Russian and Armenian refugees. These also attempted to set up processes for giving "identity certificates" to refugees.

These efforts eventually culminated in the Convention of 1933, which eventually served as a model for the 1951 Convention.³⁷ Article 3 of the 1933 Convention included two requirements which are now essential to IRL:

1. Signatories must not expel or turn away refugees who have been authorized to live there. (This statement outlines the main component of non-refoulement.)
 2. Signatories must not turn away refugees who are right on the border of their country of origin.
- In essence, the Convention of 1933 established non-refoulement as a primary component of IRL, and it would go on to become a primary component of human rights law under the UN.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Journalists and human rights defenders faced targeted state repression in 2017, and in some countries of the Middle East and North Africa, freedom of expression on the Internet has been severely restricted. Civil society activists have been able to ward off even greater restrictions on freedom of expression in some cases. Both armed groups and governments violated the right to freedom of religion and belief. The struggle of women's rights movements has in some cases led to changes in laws that codify discrimination and spur violence against women. Nevertheless, women in many parts of the Middle East and North Africa continued to be systematically discriminated by law in everyday life and were not adequately protected from gender-based violence. In some countries, people have been arrested and prosecuted by the authorities for their actual or perceived sexual orientation. Consensual same-sex sexual relationships were often penalized, in several cases even threatened with death penalty. Trade unions have been severely restricted in some countries. Migrant workers remained exposed to exploitation and human rights abuses, although some countries introduced reforms that improved the protection of migrant workers. Armed conflicts had fatal consequences, especially for the besieged civilian population, and were marked by serious violations, such as the use of prohibited weapons, unlawful sieges and direct attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Death sentences were imposed in a number of countries and there were hundreds of executions. There was still a climate of impunity for current and past crimes, despite some efforts to find justice and truth for the victims of human rights violations.



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RIGHTS TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

Throughout the Middle East and North Africa, governments have been suppressing the freedom of expression of civil society both on and off the Internet. Above all, they prevented and punished reports of human rights violations and other criticisms of governments and their allies, often claiming that their actions were aimed at ensuring national security or the fight against corruption. The authorities also used disproportionate force to suppress protest movements that publicly expressed their opinions.

REPRESSION IN EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA

In some countries, the authorities took drastic actions against opponents of the government, joining a global series of authoritarian rulers seeking to assert their claims to power at the international level. Egypt took unprecedented measures of severity against human rights defenders under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. The authorities shut down NGOs and froze their funds. A new law gave state agencies far-reaching powers to dissolve NGOs. Organizations that published research results without government approval had to expect a prison sentence of five years. The courts sentenced at least 15 journalists to prison in connection with their reporting, inter alia for publishing "false" information. The Egyptian authorities blocked more than 400 websites; this also affected independent newspapers and human rights organizations. To punish dissidents, they used detention for long periods of time – often for more than two years and in solitary confinement. After their release, activists often had to spend up to twelve hours a day as a "probationary period" at a local police station, which amounted to arbitrary deprivation of liberty.



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In Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman was appointed crown prince in June 2017 as part of a political reorientation of the country. In the following months, the government took measures against freedom of expression even more drastically and arrested more than 20 10 prominent writers, activists, scholars as well as religious scholars within a single week in September. Human rights defenders had to explain themselves for their peaceful human rights work in front of a special criminal court, which had been created to deal with terrorist offenses. By the end of 2017, most Saudi Arabian human rights defenders were either in jail or implicated in unfair trials, while the royal family attempted to present Saudi Arabia as a more tolerant country to the world.

ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In other countries of the Middle East and North Africa, human rights activism, journalistic reporting and criticism of state institutions have led to prosecution and imprisonment. In some cases, governments and pro-government forces have acted against critics with smear campaigns.

In Iran, the authorities arrested numerous peaceful critics, including women's rights activists, minority and environmental activists, trade unionists, lawyers and people who demanded truth, justice and amends for mass executions in the 1980s.

In Bahrain, the government arbitrarily detained human rights defenders and government critics, restricted activists with travel bans or deprived them of citizenship. The independent newspaper al-Wasat and the political opposition association Wa'ad were banned and dissolved. The capital Manama continued to maintain abanto demonstrate and the authorities used disproportionate and unnecessary force to dissolve protests in other parts of the country.

In Morocco and Western Sahara, a number of journalists, bloggers and activists have been prosecuted and detained for criticizing public servants or for reporting human rights violations, corruption and protest actions. In order to stop the protests in the north of the country, security forces used mass arrests against the mostly peaceful demonstrators, including minors, and in some cases used excessive and unnecessary violence.



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The Kuwaiti authorities detained several government critics and Internet activists on the basis of legal provisions that prohibit any comments that, in the authorities' eyes, offended the head of state or harmed relations with neighbouring states.

In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, several journalists and bloggers have been subject to arbitrary arrests, death threats and smear campaigns. The repression experienced intensity in the run-up to the independence referendum scheduled for September 2017 by the region's president.

In Yemen, the Houthi Armed Group arbitrarily arrested and detained critics, journalists and human rights defenders in Sana'a, the capital and other areas controlled by it.

The Israeli government denied entry to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories to any supporters or staff of organizations that the authorities claimed had called for a boycott of Israel, Israeli settlements, or other Israeli institutions. The authorities targeted Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations, harassed them, and launched campaigns to undermine their work. Security forces in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank bombarded demonstrating Palestinians with rubber-coated metal bullets and live ammunition. At least 20 people were killed, and thousands injured.

SUPPRESSION OF ACTIVITIES ON THE INTERNET

Not only the government in Egypt tried to intensify the control over expression of opinions on the Internet. The state of Palestine also passed a law on cybercrime in July 2017. It allows the arbitrary detention of journalists, whistleblowers and others who criticize the authorities on the Internet and imposes up to 25 years 'imprisonment and forced labor on those who, in the authorities' view, are disrupting "public order", "national unity" or "social peace". Several Palestinian journalists and human rights defenders were already charged with this law in 2017.

Jordan maintained the blocking of websites and online media. In Oman, the government blocked the website of the newspaper Mowaten. The effects of the trials against the newspaper Azam and some of its journalists were still present. The newspaper published two articles in 2016 about possible corruption in government and judiciary circles. In Iran, the judiciary tried to block the popular Internet news service Telegram but failed because of government resistance. Access to other popular social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube remained blocked.



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REPRESSION BY GOVERNMENTS

In Saudi Arabia, the Shiite minority experienced discrimination because of their beliefs. Their rights to religious freedom and access to justice were limited, and their right to work and access to public services were also arbitrarily restricted. Shiite activists faced imprisonment, unfair trials, prison sentences, and in some cases even death penalty.

In Iran, the rights to freedom of religion and belief were systematically violated both by law and in everyday life. The Baha'i religious minority was again subject to widespread systematic attacks, including arbitrary detention, long prison sentences, torture and other mistreatments. The authorities ordered the closure of companies owned by Baha'i, confiscated assets from Baha'i, and continued to deny access to universities and employment in the public sector for followers of this denomination. Other religious minorities that were not recognized by the Constitution, such as Ahl-e Haq, have been systematically disadvantaged in education and the labor market and persecuted for exercising their faith. The right to change or renounce a religion continued to be violated in Iran. Several people who converted to Christianity received prison terms ranging from ten to fifteen years.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN REGIONS OF NORTHERN AFRICA

Northern Africa is a futile region with various forms of unrest. From unauthorized intrusion of privacy to travel bans the region has seen it all. Impunity for violence against women, ranging from sexual harassment to so-called "honor" killings, continue to go unchecked by any state commitments. Regions of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have seen mass protests as recent as 2019, where officials have relentlessly clamped down on peaceful critics and human rights defenders.

Governments across the region have heavily restricted freedom of expression and civil society activities. Hundreds of human rights defenders were targeted. Governments across the region introduced further draconian legislation criminalizing free speech. In Libya, parliament passed a cybercrime law that severely limits free expression online, allows for government surveillance and censorship, and punishes with imprisonment the dissemination of content deemed "immoral". In Egypt, the president ratified a law criminalizing the publication of information on pandemics on vaguely worded grounds.

Despite frequent bans on public gatherings as part of government Covid-19 measures, people staged protests throughout the year in many countries in the region, usually to demand socio-economic rights.



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In Tunisia, police arrested more than 1,500 people during the January wave of demonstrations. Protest movements in Algeria, Iraq, and Lebanon continued throughout the year as protesters faced arrest, beatings, and at times prosecutions solely for participating in peaceful demonstrations.

Impunity for members of security forces, militias, and armed groups reasonably suspected of crimes under international law and serious human rights violations, including unlawful killings, torture, enforced disappearance, and rape, prevailed across the region. In Libya, authorities continued to integrate into state institutions, and appoint and promote commanders and members of abusive militias and armed groups, including those under sanction by the UN Security Council. In Tunisia, President Kaïs Saïed's July dissolution of parliament was followed by 10 new military trials of civilians, four for criticizing the president, a marked increase compared to the previous years

Concerns regarding the administration of justice remain a key issue in some States in light of multiple reports of arbitrary arrests, torture, ill-treatment, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and trials that did not meet the standards for a fair trial. The death penalty was applied in several States, including for child offenders. Many of the restrictive measures imposed in the context of the pandemic were used to curtail the rights to freedoms of opinion, expression, religion, association, and peaceful assembly, which limited civic and digital spaces and generated serious concerns.

Torture and other ill-treatment in official and unofficial places of detention continued in at least 18 countries, including during interrogation to extract "confessions" and indefinite solitary confinement in dire conditions.

Years of armed conflict and insecurity continued to afflict the lives of civilians in MENA, almost all parties carried out indiscriminate attacks that killed and injured civilians in the form of airstrikes, in the case of those with air power, and shelling of residential areas with artillery, mortars, and rockets thus violating many of the conventions under the International Humanitarian Law. Restriction of humanitarian access in Libya and Syria remained a tactic of some actors. Politically motivated sporadic attacks on water infrastructure by armed actors in Libya affected access to water for millions of Libyans.



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Discrimination in law and practice continues to be reported against women and groups in vulnerable situations, including people on the move, ethnic and religious minorities, and the LGBTI community. Concerns also persisted concerning incitement to hatred and violence. Restrictions on economic, social, and cultural rights (ESCRs) were documented, including in the context of access to social services, housing, education, and employment, leading to the marginalization of women, youth, and minority communities across the region. Across the region, LGBTI people faced arrest and prosecution, and at times anal testing amounting to torture, based on their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Criminal courts continued to treat consensual same-sex sexual relations as a crime, often issuing sentences against men, and sometimes women, either under public decency laws or dedicated provisions. In Egypt, a court convicted four men of engaging in same-sex sexual relations and sentenced them to prison terms ranging from six to nine years. Authorities also failed to protect LGBTI people from violence by non-state actors. A young man who self-identified as a non-binary gay was murdered in Iran after his military exemption card identified him as having a “perversion”.

Authorities continue to arrest and indefinitely detain refugees and migrants, often without legal grounds or allowing them to challenge the legality of their detention. In October, Libyan security forces and Tripoli-based militias used unlawful lethal force and other violence to arbitrarily round up over 5,000 men, women, and children from sub-Saharan Africa. In Libya, Syria, and Iraq, tens of thousands of internally displaced persons were unable to return to their homes due to insecurity, fear of reprisals, or lack of essential services. They faced additional barriers in securing access to healthcare, including Covid-19 vaccines, education, housing, and employment opportunities.



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In Egypt, Iran, Libya, and Tunisia, Covid-19 vaccine roll-outs were characterized by a lack of transparency and consultation, delays in prioritizing at-risk groups, and failure to ensure equitable and fair access for marginalized groups, including refugees and migrants, internally displaced persons, prisoners, the homeless and other undocumented people.

Tunisia and Morocco introduced mandatory vaccine passes for all those entering public or private workplaces and for travel outside of the country. In Tunisia, the decree on the vaccine pass infringed on other rights, allowing employers to suspend unvaccinated workers without pay.

Most of these violations can be attributed to political instability, racial discrimination, corruption, post-colonialism, economic scarcity, ignorance, illness, religious bigotry, debt and bad financial management, monopoly of power, lack/absence of judicial and press autonomy, and border conflicts. Many of the promises contained in regional, national, continental, and global agreements remained unaccomplished.

Despite the various efforts of Regional Offices of the OHCHR, UN Human Rights Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa (ROMENA), UN Country Teams, Resident Coordinator Offices, civil society organizations, national human rights institutions (NHRIs), and other actors to prevent violations and strengthen the protection of human rights, human rights violations persist. The only way to stop such grim violations is by ensuring the presence of strong governmental institutions which promise to abide by both the International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL)



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THINGS TO PONDER

The increasing human rights violations in regions of conflict and post conflict is of grave concern to the international community and hence needs to be addressed. The committee aims at understanding the factors responsible for the outbreak of such conflicts, their implications with respect to the social and humanitarian rights of the parties involved and seeks to materialise solutions that may help in both: preventing conflicts from arising or escalating, and providing assistance to those already affected by humanitarian abuse in such regions.

The UNHRC as a committee does not hold the power to pass any resolutions but can only give recommendations, which are seldom rejected by the General Assembly or the Security Council. The delegates must dwell upon this and try to come up with recommendations that hold value and cannot be rejected.

FURTHER READINGS:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/report-middle-east-and-north-africa/>

<https://www.hrw.org/middle-east/north-africa>

<https://www2.ohchr.org/english/OHCHRreport2020/documents/Middle-East-and-North-Africa.pdf>

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