MADMUN XV International Court of Justice (ICJ) Chairs: Kate Mezrich, Cerise Sirek Kreye



Hi Delegates!

We are thrilled to welcome you to the MADMUN 2024 committee of the International Court of Justice! We acknowledge that many of you may be new to MUN and therefore hope to highlight our availability to answer any questions that arise while delving into these topics. Our advice for you is to familiarize yourself with your position and your relationships to other committee members to formulate strategies for alliances. Comprehensive research really helps to spark ideas for potential solutions and provide convincing rationale for enacting the resolutions you develop. For newcomers we want to emphasize that parliamentary procedure is rather complicated and we are here to guide you through the process and ensure the committee runs smoothly. Be courageous in introducing ideas and solutions, even if you worry about missteps in procedure. Engaging in an actual committee is the best way to learn how to MUN! We also understand that these topics can be incredibly sensitive and we expect delegates to conduct themselves considerately and with decorum. We want to reiterate that we are here to answer questions and offer support.

Good luck and see you soon!

Cerise and Kate

Committee Overview:

The purpose of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is to formally mediate and develop settlements for international disputes. Though not the first example of international arbitration, the modern ICJ was one of the first permanent courts for global adjudication.

The main principles of the ICJ stem from two Hague Peace Conferences (1899 & 1907) which resulted in the formation of the Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ), the ICJ's predecessor. At these conferences, European, Asian, and Central and South American states proposed fundamental PCIJ (now ICJ) constituents, including full-time judicial officers from represented countries and a statute regulating court power over international disputes.

Though commonplace today in the majority of global disputes, the principles presented in the Hague Peace Conference were groundbreaking to the world of international legal proceedings. By the end of World War I, the very first "court" for international procedure was formed: the Permanent Court of Justice.

With its permanent home at the Peace Palace in The Hague, the PCIJ advised on 29 cases between member states from 1922 to 1940. Though the first of its kind, the PCIJ's value was undeniable. Through its many cases, the PCIJ was able to not only develop a proper international judicial process, but also clarify previously gray areas of international law (mainly in regards to the first World War).

Despite the PCIJ's success in the last 40 years, by the outbreak of World War II in September of 1939, the PCIJ's activity had begun to decline heavily. After the court advised on its final case in February of 1940, the international community started reevaluating the effectiveness of the PCIJ and looking for ways to improve it. Determined to expand court equality and maintain court peace and international security, delegates from 50 nations met for the United Nations Conference on International Organization in 1945 in San Francisco, California. At this conference the participating nations decided to create an entirely new international court in the place of the PCIJ. Unlike the PCIJ, the new court (which would become known as the ICJ) would be an integral part of the UN, represent more states and regions, and have a new statute to allow more non-European States' influence in court proceedings.

In April of 1946 the PCIJ was dissolved, and the new court, the International Court of Justice, replaced the PCIJ at the Peace Palace in the Hague. Like the PCIJ, the ICJ advises on cases surrounding international disputes, with its first case submitted by the United Kingdom against Albania in May of 1947 on the damage to the Corfu Channel. The ICJ behaves similarly to a national court, with counsels for both of the involved parties of a case, and juries of states which request to intervene. **

Information to Know: Though the ICJ committee at this year's MADMUN will be conducted in the style of a Model UN General Assembly rather than an actual ICJ committee, we as your chairs would like you to deliberate with other delegates and make decisions keeping in mind what would/wouldn't be acceptable in a international court of law.

Case 1: Advisory Opinion: Obligation of States in Respect of Climate Change

Though the world's wealthiest countries produce the majority of global greenhouse gas emissions, smaller, low-income nations are disproportionately susceptible to climate change's deleterious effects. In 2019, to address climate change's impact on small nations, a group of law students at the University of the South Pacific in Vanuatu realized the potential to utilize international law to regulate environmental protections. Representing vulnerable nations as the Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), Vanuatu catalyzed an effort in 2023 to obtain an International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion dictating countries' responsibilities to address their environmental impacts. A ruling from the ICJ would legitimize the ability to impute misconduct to large emitters under international law. The ruling would allow countries to challenge prominent polluters by defining Paris Agreement pledges under existing international human rights legislation, effectively rendering originally voluntary pledges compulsory.

Preceding Vanuatu's request for an ICJ opinion, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) compiled evidence highlighting climate change's acceleration. The report emphasized potentially uninhabitable conditions originating through failure to prevent average global temperatures from rising 1.5 degrees celsius since industrialization (the current average temperature is around 1.1 degrees above pre-industrial levels). With the IPCC summary providing strength to its argument, Vanuatu impelled the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to issue a resolution petitioning for the ICJ's opinion.

The Paris Agreement

A 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) formulated the Paris Agreement whereby pledging countries would agree to propose Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), or distinctive plans to minimize greenhouse gas emissions. United Nations members hoped the combined effort of countries upholding their NDCs would further the goal to quell rising global average temperatures, though the Agreement proved difficult to enforce. The Paris Agreement was unable to account for national politics which are often prioritized over international concerns and can conflict with legislation to combat climate change. Furthermore, the most prolific greenhouse gas emitters among pledging countries are largely unresponsive to external criticisms; pressuring powerhouses such as the U.S. and China through economic sanctions or other displays of discontent is ineffective in compelling these influential nations to comply with protective climate action.

Assigning legal claims to violators of the Paris Climate Agreement in the form of an ICJ advisory opinion would allow small countries leverage against major polluters in the face of the climate crisis. The ICJ opinion would clarify states' responsibilities as dictated in the Paris Agreement, which would assuage discord during annual COP discussions, permitting more productive negotiations. Outlining countries' obligations could provide a framework for developing domestic policy in alignment with international goals to establish environmental protections. Having a comprehensive policy structure could influence states to legislate more rigorous NDCs with higher potential for positive climate impacts.

Climate activists face significant challenges in enforcing the Paris Agreement and progress towards cutting emissions has stalled in recent years. Reportedly, governments globally have organized minimal groundbreaking efforts to ease reliance on fossil fuels, with fossil fuel subsidies reaching an unprecedented \$7 trillion in 2022. Additional challenges to upholding the Paris Agreement include large countries' reluctance to provide financial help to assist developing countries' climate goals. This factor in the Paris Agreement will be especially contentious in deliberations on the ICJ ruling, as influential nations are hesitant to be held financially liable.

Recently, several multinational courts have issued notable rulings defining inhabiting a healthy environment as an inalienable human right. Current proceedings, including those from the Interamerican Court on Human Rights in 2023 and from the European Court of Human Rights in 2024 seeking to safeguard individuals' environmental rights, represent a growing global mentality favoring climate action which could inform the upcoming ICJ opinion. As a nation state contributing to an ICJ advisory opinion, your role is to determine whether and how international law should shape countries' approaches to climate change.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. Should international law require states to consider environmental wellbeing a human right?
- 2. How much influence does your country have as an international player? How might this position affect your reception of a stricter Paris agreement or your approach to formulating NDCs?
- 3. What is your country's plan for mitigating the effects of the climate crisis? How does your infrastructure (especially in regards to energy resources) impact your resistance or enthusiasm to address climate change?

Case 2: Contentious: Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Gambia v. Myanmar)

***IMPORTANT NOTE: All instances in which the term "Burma" is used refers to the Myanmar State as the official English name for the country of Myanmar up until 1989 was the "the Union of Burma". Though interchangeable in this background please refer to Myanmar as "Myanmar" in position papers and committee actions.

One of the earliest recorded uses of the term "Rohingya" was in a 1799 article written by the British physician and geographer, Dr. Francis Buchanan-Hamilton to refer to the indigenous muslim minority in the Rakhine State of Myanmar (at the time referred to as Arakan). Though separate in language, religion, culture and self-identification, the Rohingya people have been long denied distinct ethnic classification by the Myanmarian government (With much of the majority Buddhist population refusing the term "Rohingya" and rather choosing their own undesirable term "Bengali").

While looking at the modern conflict in Myanmar alone may make it difficult to determine a source for the violence, much of it stemmed from the Burmese occupation of Arakan in 1785 and the long-standing oppression that resulted from it. From the time of the Burmese's first invasion into the 19th century, thousands of Rakhine people were executed and thousands more deported to Burma.

In 1823, the Rohingya were finally able to gain status through British rule which took Burma. However this victory was short-lived, as the Burmese Buddhist population felt threatened by the British and the way they supported the once oppressed indigenous community. By World War II with the invasion of Japan into Burma, a violent split between the Rohingya people and the Buddihist majority had formed. This split was only amplified by the Japanese and British conflict in Burma, with the Rohingya Muslims supporting the British and the Buddhist Rakines supporting Japan.

As the dust from the recent world war settled in the mid 20th century, the turbulence between the two groups continued. After Burma finally gained independence in 1948, the Burmese government refused to acknowledge the citizenship of the Rohingya minority. Almost 40 years later, following attempted migration movements from the Rohingya people and several military operations against them, the Burmese government still refused their citizenship. With the enactment of the 1982 Citizenship Law, 135 ethnic groups were identified for citizenship; the Rohingya was not one of them.

Violence between the Burmese government and minority groups including the Rohingya people has only increased in the present day. Acting under the belief that Burma is a land purely for the Burmese Buddists, the government continues to oppress minority groups and incite violence between them and the majority population (a notable instance of this being the 2012 riot in which authorities distributed knives and food to the encourage fighting, resulting in village burnings that took the lives of 78 people and left over 100,000 without homes).

Current Situation:

Gambia's case against Myanmar:

On November 11 of 2019 the Gambia filed a case to the ICJ on behalf of the greater Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) against the State of Myanmar on terms of violating the Genocide Convention. Adopted on December 9th of 1948, the Genocide convention defines genocide as "a crime committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, in whole or in part", and places a binding duty on individual States to "take measures to prevent and to punish the crime of genocide" (Union Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect).

Since 2012, the Myanmar military has continued campaigns of mass Rohingyan massacres, rapes, and arson, but has yet to be held accountable for these crimes. Interviews of hundreds of Rohingya people describe horrific incidents of strategic killings and torching of hundreds of villages.

While many attempt to flee and take refuge in Bangladesh and other neighboring countries, those who stay are deprived of systematic liberties, confined to camps and isolated from proper healthcare, education, and resources.

All of these abuses and the history of abuses that the Rohingya muslims have faced have amounted to the November 2019 ICJ case submitted by Gambia on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. In the case Gambia claims that Myanmar failed in the terms of the Genocide Convention with their actions towards the Rohingyan community in the Rakine State. While avoiding any governmental statement concerning the Rohingyan community and the allegations made in the case, Myanmar claims that the ICJ has no jurisdiction in the case with four original objections: The Gambia is not a "valid" applicant for submission, there was no current conflict at the time of submission, the Gambia is not permitted to "seize the court" and the Gambia lacks the standing in order to submit the case.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC):

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation represents the collective voice of the Muslim community with 57 member States, making it the second largest international organization only surpassed by the United Nations itself. The goal of the organization is to protect the general interests of the Muslim international community and to promote international peace between all peoples, spanning various communities throughout the world. As the Secretariat of the OIC (Established in 2018), the Gambia takes responsibility for carrying out the values of the OIC and upholding the goals of the member states and the organization as a whole.

Questions to Consider:

1. How is the country you are representing directly involved in the conflict? If not, how do their past experiences and governmental actions sway their opinions on the case?

2. Does the country you're representing have a connection to the case in a way similar to the Gambia which represents Muslim rights through the OIC? or is your country more tied to Myanmar in current or past State/public fundings?

3. If on the side of Gambia, How can your country personally provide support to the Rohingya community or how can it collaborate with other committee members to provide a system of

support for the community?

3a. If deciding on the side of Myanmar, how do you justify your stance and go forward in holding governments like Myanmar accountable for their humanitarian abuses?4. Does your country believe that the case presented is within the jurisdiction of the ICJ or does your country side with the objections brought to by Myanmar?

Positions:

1. Canada

*In November of 2023, Canada along with six other member states: Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, UK and Maldives, filed a declaration of invention in the case. * Canada along with the Netherlands identified the actions of the Myanmar military as "genocidal" and "intended to destroy the Rohingya as a group", and urged the States of the UN and Genocide Convention to take action to address the abuses (Government of the Netherlands).

2. Denmark

(Reference Canada's Background) The Danish government has donated almost 52 million USD to the World Food Program. Similar to their monetary support, the Danish government has emphasized its commitment to continuing its support to the Rohingya refugees and the communities that host them.

3. France

(Reference Canada's Background) The French President Emmanuel Macron publicly labeled the killings of Rohingya people in Myanmar as "genocide" following Myanmar military brutality targeting the Rohingya in 2017. France also supports the sheltering and support of the refugees in Bangladesh specifically by donating around 1 million USD to the World Food Program which provides emergency aid to Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh.

4. Germany

(Reference Canada's Background) Since the start of the Rohingya refugee crisis in 2017, Germany has donated about 30 million USD to the World Food Program Bangladesh division. Germany's government is steadfast in its support to the refugees in Bangladesh and is striving to expand and improve upon any current and future humanitarian response.

5. Netherlands

(Reference Canada's Background) The Netherlands has publicily condemned the actions of the Myanmar government towards the Rohingya and identified the oppressive actions of the Myanmar military in regards to the Rohingya community as "genocidal" and "intended to destroy the Rohingya as a group...by use of mass murder, rape...as well as the systematic destruction by fire of their villages..." (Government of the Netherlands). The Netherlands urge the States for the UN and Genocide Convention to support efforts and work towards addressing these abuses.

6. United Kingdom

(Reference Canada's Background) The UK Minister rep for Indo-Pacific, Anne Marie Trevelyan, emphasized the UK's commitment to developing a solution to the Rohingya crisis with the safety and support of the Rohingya community at the forefront of said solution. The UK also provided 4.5 million euros to various protection services for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

7. Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS): Case 1, Vanuatu; Case 2, Maldives

Case 2 -MALDIVES- : *(Reference Canada's Background)* Maldives filed a

declaration of intervention in support of the Rohingya people. The Foreign Minister of the Gambia, Abdulla Shahid stated, "[The Republic of Maldives] intends to extend its support...to seek accountability for the acts of genocide committed against the Rohingya people" (Al Jazeera). Along with this vocal support, the Maldives has been one of the largest contributors to the aid of the Rohingya, primarily through the Maldivian Red Crescent (MRC), amounting to a total of almost half a million USD.

8. United States

The United States has been unwavering in their support of the Rohingya refugees and has provided around 2.4 billion dollars since 2017 for refugee response with around \$2 billion of that money going to response efforts in Bangladesh. The United States has stated that while they are committed to providing support and resources, more countries/donors are needed in order to create real change.

9. China

China has taken a reserved approach in their response to the both case and crisis. The Chinese government has made it clear that they believe it is important to respect Myanmar's sovereignty in any response/action in regards to the conflict. With a similar history of ethnic/religious minority abuse present in their repression in Xinjiang, China has been hesitant to acknowledge any wrongdoings of the Myanmar government with the fear that their own government actions would be put under scrutiny. China believes that the crisis should not be classified as international but rather domestic, arguing that only the countries directly affected should come to a resolution, those being the countries of Bangladesh and Myanmar. 10. Gambia

Having submitted the case against Myanmar on 11 November 2019 on behalf of the OIC,

the Gambia claimed that the Myanmar government continued to break the terms of the Genocide Convention. The Gambia identified two main governmental actions of persecution towards the Rohingya which they claimed as "indicative of genocidal intent": denial of legal rights, and support of hate campaigns against the Rohingya. The Gambia also identified the destruction of over 30 villiages between 2018 and 2019 as examples of ongoing acts of genocide. The Gambia represents the voice of the Rohingya and the interests of the Muslim community on an international scope.

11. Myanmar

The Myanmar government claims that the ICJ has no jurisdiction in the case presented by Gambia. Myanmar objected that, since Gambia submitted the case on behalf of the OIC, the court could not rule on it because the ICJ was established solely to rule over state based disputes. Since there was no direct dispute between Myanmar and Gambia at the time of submission there was no grounds for a case of any kind, and since Gambia was unaffected by the perpetrator they were not able to submit a case regarding them. While the court has since dismissed these objections, Myanmar remains on a non-guilty stance.

12. Costa Rica

While having no direct involvement/statement surrounding the Rohingya refugee crisis, Costa Rica has long been a host to refugees fleeing from deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Nicaragua (hosting over 300,000 since 2018). Costa Rica can sympathize with Bangladesh as the number of incoming refugees continues to increase and overwhelm the Costa Rican government. 13. Bangladesh

Since the first discriminatory laws from the Myanmarian government towards the Rohingya, Bangladesh has taken thousands of Rohingya as refugees. Unfortunately, there are

few resources for the Rohingya in the refugee camps of Bangladesh. As a result, children are unable to receive proper education, the risk of disease in camps is extremely high, over half the water supply is toxic, and those who seek to leave are at risk for sexual enslavement and other forms of smuggler exploitation. Though Bangladesh is trying to help the Rohingya, they need the support of outside countries and governments in order to improve conditions.

14. India

India has provided for around 40,000 Rohingya refugees throughout the country. The government of India believes the Rohingya to be illegal immigrants and has sent dozens of them back to Myanmar since 2018. Many human rights groups and the United Nations itself have criticized this decision and any actions the Indian government takes to remove the refugees. 15. Thailand

Thailand has acted as a transport point for the Rohingya from Myanmar or Bangladesh and Indonesia or Malaysia. Many of the refugees are transported to/from Thailand in human trafficking/smuggling rings which can often be dangerous and exploitative. The Thai government has attempted to arrest traffickers but has been unable to shut down the rings. Since the Thai government registers the refugees as irregular migrants, adults that are apprehended are sent to detention centers and children are placed in shelters. Although the European Union has provided funding to improve services at the shelters, much is still needed.

16. Argentina

Argentina held a court case on the principle of "universal jurisdiction", a term outlined in the Argentinan constitution, to evaluate Myanmar genocide of Rohingya people. Specifically they looked at evidence of the 2017 murder and rape of thousands of Rohingya people by the heads of the Myanmar military. They hope to uphold the universal ideal to guarantee access to a court of law/justice for survivors/victums of humanitarian crimes including genocide. Argentina has been able to take testimony of 7 Rohingya survivors and has collaborated with the United Nations to gather evidence in order to pursue their goal of eventually issuing international arrest warrants. Argentina has insisted that while their case is a great step towards justice, it is extremely important that proper international action is implemented in order to provide justice and prevent future atrocities.

17. Nicaragua

Under the Nicaragua Ortega government the Nicaraguan public has become increasingly repressed. Due to increased violence towards the Nicaraguan public by the Nicaraguan Security Forces and the impending collapse of the Nicaraguan economy, almost half of the Nicaraguan population reported the desire to flee. **(how might this crisis affect Nicaraguan's opinions/actions towards the ICJ case?)**

18. Sweden

Sweden is one of the largest donors to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) which provides support and protection to displaced people around the world. Since 2017 the UNHCR has worked to create better conditions in the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh (where most of the Rohingya refugees reside). Examples of their support include: providing more than 1,500 metric tons of supplies (blankets, tents, kitchen sets, etc.) to Bangladesh, constructing safety sites for the refugees, and improving water and sanitation. 19. Chile

While providing no direct statement concerning the Rohingya refugee crisis, the Chilean government has long been committed to creating safe conditions for refugees. In 2010, Chile passed The Law for the Protection of Refugees which outlines a framework for refugee

protection. The Chile UN Refugee Agency Officer Fabio Varoli believes "refugee issues are of interest to all political sectors" (UNHCR).

20. Morocco

Morocco has ostensibly sent aid including tents, food, medicine and more to the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, but the extent of aid is unspecified. However, in 2013, Morocco introduced The National Immigration and Asylum Policy which provides protection for refugees in Morocco in the form of health care, education, employment, and essential services access, showing some level of commitment to refugee relief.

21. Portugal

The Portuguese Government publicly condemned the Myanmar security forces' violence toward the Rohingya people and called for the "immediate end to the violence" (XinhuaNet). 22. Philippines

With a long history of hosting refugees in the past (Russians after the Russian Revolution and Civil War in the 1920s, Jews from World War II in the 1940s, and Vietnamese and Indo-Chinese groups in the 80s and 90s following the economic collapses and various wars), the Philippines offered citizenship to Rohingya refugees starting in 2019.

23. Indonesia

The number of Rohingya refugees in Indonesia remains quite small as the boat journeys required to get them there are extremely susceptible to capsizing and going missing. Similarly, refugees aboard boats to Indonesia reported instances of physical abuse, malnutrition, and exploitation at the hands of smugglers who guide the trips. Though the Indonesian government has remained supportive of the refugees and sympathetic to the abuses they have faced, refugees are treated as illegal immigrants and find it difficult to remain in Indonesia. Indonesia has also supplied humanitarian aid to camps in Bangladesh despite struggling to find substantial provisions for the refugees in their own country.

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