

Columun 2024

UNHRC



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Information of the UN

What is the UN

“One place where the world's nations can gather together, discuss common problems and find shared solutions.”

In 1945 the United Nations was formed, an international organization that brings nations together to transform the world and find solutions in benefit of everyone

The work of the UN reaches every corner of the world. Although it is most recognized for its welfare operations and humanitarian aid, there are many other ways in which the UN and its system (specialized agencies, funds and programs) make the world a better place.

The purpose of the UN

The UN was created with the purpose of maintaining global peace, equality, dignity and security, promoting social progress, and supporting all universal human rights for the benefit of the world. The UN focuses on 5 main goals :Maintain International Peace and Security, Protect Human Rights, Deliver Humanitarian Aid, Support Sustainable Development and Climate Action and Uphold International Law

What does the UN provide

The United Nations (UN) provides essential services aimed at fostering global cooperation and addressing international challenges. Its primary functions include:

- **Maintaining Peace and Security:** The UN facilitates conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts through the Security Council, which can authorize military action and impose sanctions.
- **Promoting Human Rights:** It advocates for human rights globally, monitoring abuses and holding violators accountable.
- **Delivering Humanitarian Aid:** The UN provides emergency assistance during crises, including food, shelter, and medical care.

- Supporting Sustainable Development: Initiatives focus on poverty reduction, education, and environmental protection through frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals.

Overall, the UN plays a critical role in global governance and international collaboration.

The objective of COLUMUN

The COLUMUN is a role-play activity in which you will have the opportunity to represent a State Member

of the UN in solving problems along with other members in order to maintain peace around the world

and improve life quality. There are three very important things to consider:

1. The goal of each committee within the MUN is to work collaboratively to come up with a

solution for the topic discussed in response to the challenges presented against the world or

humanity in a diplomatic form.

2. Participants must assume the role of that country's diplomats and each delegation represents

the views of "their" country, reflecting its national interests, rather than their own personal

opinions on an issue.

3. Delegates research their country's position on selected topics, paying particular attention to

their country's perspective on the topics to be discussed at the MUN.

Information about the committee

What is the “committee” and their objectives?

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNHCR), which was replaced by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in 2006, aimed to promote and protect human rights globally. Its key objectives included:

- **Monitoring Human Rights Violations:** Examining and reporting on human rights situations in specific countries and addressing major global human rights issues.
- **Establishing Special Procedures:** Appointing independent experts (Special Rapporteurs) to investigate specific human rights concerns, such as freedom of expression and torture.
- **Promoting International Cooperation:** Encouraging collaboration among states to uphold human rights standards and facilitate dialogue on pressing issues.

The Commission played a crucial role in shaping international human rights norms until its dissolution.

History of the committee

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights was established in 1946 to create the international legal network that protects our fundamental rights and freedoms, in 2006 it was replaced by the Human Rights Council also known as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) which is an intergovernmental body participating in the United Nations system with the task of encouraging the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and addressing situations within human rights violations, especially to make sure the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948, as

a result of the experience of the Second World War isn't broken and its statements are followed to ensure that all humans have access to their rights and freedom.

Features

The Human Rights Council consists of 47 Member States elected directly and individually by a majority of the 193 states of the UN General Assembly

The council meets for three regular sessions per year (March, June and September) for a total of 10 weeks or more. And holds special sessions at the request of any Council member with the support of one-third of the members participating in the council

The Council, composed by 47 Member States, provides a multilateral forum to address human rights violations and country situations. It meets at the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG). It serves as an international forum for dialogue on human rights issues with UN officials and mandated experts, states, civil society, and other participants

The advantages and disadvantages of the committee

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) had several advantages and disadvantages during its existence:

Advantages:

- **Foundation of Human Rights Norms:** The UNHRC was instrumental in drafting key documents like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, establishing global human rights standards .
- **Monitoring Violations:** It provided a platform for investigating and reporting human rights abuses, raising awareness of violations worldwide .
- **Special Procedures:** The Commission established mechanisms to address specific human rights issues and country situations, enhancing its ability to respond to crises .

Disadvantages:

- **Politicization:** The UNHRC faced criticism for being politicized, often dominated by member states with poor human rights records, which undermined its credibility .
- **Limited Effectiveness:** Despite its mandate, the Commission struggled to enforce resolutions or compel compliance from violators, leading to disillusionment among activists .
- **Bias Allegations:** Some members accused the Commission of bias, particularly in its focus on specific countries like Israel, which detracted from its overall mission .

Topic A - Protection of minority rights

“Minorities exist in every country of the world, enriching the diversity of their societies. Minority identity is understood to involve subjective and objective elements. The self-identification of the person concerned is taken to be determinative”

Minorities which can be distinguished by ethnicity, religion or language are groups of people which constitute less than half of the population in the entire territory of a State whose members share common characteristics such as culture, religion or language, minorities should be able to enjoy all of the human rights of the nine core human rights treaties. According to the United Nations minorities should be protected with laws such as no discrimination, enjoyment of their own culture, religion, or language, being able to participate in religious, social, cultural, economic and public life, among others.

Despite these frameworks, the realization of minority rights remains inconsistent globally. Many minorities continue to face discrimination and marginalization, highlighting the ongoing need for effective mechanisms to protect their rights and ensure their participation in society.

Background

- **Early Developments:** The concept of minority rights emerged in the 19th century, with early discussions occurring at the Congress of Vienna in 1814, focusing on the treatment of Jews and Poles. The revolutionary Parliament of Hungary first enacted minority rights in 1849, followed by Austria and Belgium in the late 1800s.

- **Post-World War I:** The Paris Peace Conference (1919) established minority rights treaties as a condition for the recognition of new states, reflecting a shift towards formal international commitments to protect minorities. However, these treaties were often ignored, leading to limited enforcement.

Legal Framework

- **League of Nations:** The League introduced minority treaties that aimed to protect ethnic groups within newly formed states after World War I. These treaties laid the groundwork for international legal standards regarding minority rights but faced challenges in implementation.

- **United Nations:** Following World War II, the UN incorporated principles of minority protection into its framework through instruments like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966). The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992) further solidified these protections.

What UNHRC is doing to deal with it

Even though tons of minorities exist, one common situation in between them is that their rights are not always taken into account and respected as they should. Legally the protection of minority rights is stated in article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities is the official document where the basic standards on how to treat minorities are set. At the moment the UNHRC

also known as OHCHR is taking action to ensure the security of minorities and their rights by redesigning the fellowship programmes which is training for human rights and minority rights defenders belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, by the end of the programs the fellows should have advanced knowledge on the UN system and mechanisms in general that can be helpful to protect minority rights. Overall this programme helps human rights activists that are working towards the protection and promotion of minority rights to expand their knowledge and strategies to get to their objective in a more effective way. The UNHRC also provides the The United Nations Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities it is a media platform which allows to raise awareness ,advocacy and capacity building, issues of racial discrimination and the protection of national or ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities

Causes

Many violations of the legal boundaries that are placed to protect our rights occur because of discrimination, racism and exclusion on the grounds of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, sex, language, religion, social origin, property, birth or other status .This acts are normally “justified “ by prejudice and stereotypes that have existed for generations and that still stick around these days , it is mostly the wrong beliefs that some people should just be left out for any of the reasons listed before and minorities, normally being vulnerable groups because of the few people they are constituted by , can sadly most of times be deprived of their rights just for being a part of a minority

Consequences

The consequences of discrimination and not respecting the rights of minorities are mostly health issues, studies have shown that discrimination toward a certain group can suffer a form of minority stress that leads to mental illness and undermine self-worth because low-status individuals may internalize continued negative attitude towards the group they belong to, having this feeling can lead people to have several mental illnesses and even taking their own life because they feel like they do not belong where they are because their minority is not being respected .Discrimination toward a certain group of people can also determine a group's living conditions and

life chances, affecting such areas as education, employment, and housing which interferes with the rights we should all be able to have because of being human

Links to information about topic A:

- <https://www.ohchr.org/en/minorities/un-network-racial-discrimination-and-protection-minorities>
- <https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/persons-risk/minorities-and-indigenous-peoples#:~:text=Applying%20an%20Age%2C%20Gender%20and,to%2C%20minorities%20and%20indigenous%20peoples.>
- <https://www.un.org/en/fight-racism/vulnerable-groups/minorities>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK24680/>

Topic B-Freedom of expression and censorship

“Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right, enshrined in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, there are governments and individuals in positions of power around the globe that threaten this right. A number of freedoms fall under the category of freedom of expression”

Freedom of expression is the right we all human beings have to express ourselves. It is the right to speak freely, to be listened to and participate in all kind of aspects on our lives such as political, artistic, social and many others. Freedom of expression also globes up the concept of having the right to know, look for, receive and share information through any source. Censorship which is the prohibition of words, images, or ideas that are "offensive," even when people are just saying their opinion and enjoying their rights is a form of violating freedom of expression and unfortunately individuals or groups with political or social power are able to use censorship to attack the freedom of people especially with the objective of ensuring transparency and accountability of public figures.

Background

Evolution specialists distinguish the homo sapiens, our predecessor, for its capacity to communicate through complex language, from ancient times to now, individuals wanted to express freely their ideas and opinions in oral or written form while the leaders or rulers did their best to control such expression to maintain their power and control over societies because we as humans have the ability to understand and empathize with others. Before the European enlightenment censorship was a very common practice within governments and their citizens, autocrats suppressed the questioning of their way of ruling, policies, behaviour and even established religions.

Later on when the printing press was introduced which allowed the mass production of books leaders imposed control on the publishing of prints since it could risk their power and control over the society to have so much opinion out there. During the enlightenment people started abolishing censorship, one of the first countries to achieve it was sweden soon later other countries such as france norway and the back then british colonies started to fight and implement the same laws against censorship and encouraging people to express freely through any media , especially print which was the most influential at the time.

After World War II the international community noted in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.”, since this article has been used throughout the world as a reminder for the prohibition of censorship regimes

What UNHRC is doing to deal with it

The committee is doing its best efforts to protect and ensure everyone's right of freedom of expression is being taken into account as it is established in the Declaration of Human Rights, this includes the freedom of expressing through any available media, journalists and workers in the field of communication and the right to conscientious objection to military service. At the moment the committee is focusing overall in the safety of journalists through the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity and the implementation of the Rabat plan of action which looks for abolishing the advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that pushes people to violate, discriminate or suppress the freedom of speech

Causes

Censorship is a form in which governmental institutions or individuals of power can control and deprive people of what and what they don't want them to find out, mostly this information is something that can compromise the power regime that a government or certain individual has over a group of population. Censorship can be difficult to understand, some claim that without censorship a lot of people would be discriminated, bullied and attacked in various forms. However, it is important to remember our fundamental rights and that we have the opportunity to seek and share information on any topic that is involved in our lives .

Consequences

The freedom that we all have to express ourselves through any form is so important because it allows us to participate in political, dissent, free expression of our culture, creativity and overall the power to speak up about what we like and what we don't like, freedom of expression also enables dialogue in between individuals, builds understanding and empathy and encourages public knowledge, it also allows us to question governments and regimes to be adjusted to what is better for the citizens, they lead to better policies and more stable societies. Freedom of expression is a foundational right which means that it is necessary and essential so all individuals can enjoy and protect their human rights. When censorship occurs and people are deprived of their right to express freely it has not only been shown by scientific studies that censorship causes people to change their attitude towards the topic and want to learn more but that it also refrains individuals to express themselves and engage in conversation about certain topics because of the fear that governments have caused over people's opinion and what they think. Something known as back flash effect can happen which means when someones ideas or thoughts are encountered towards suppression or censorship the consequence is more violence and rage towards their thoughts not being heard which leads to a lot of violent manifestations and having to take radical measures.

Links to information about topic B :

- <https://www.ohchr.org/en/topic/freedom-expression-and-opinion>
- <https://www.article19.org/what-is-freedom-of-expression/>
- <https://www.aclu.org/documents/what-censorship>
- <https://www.democracyweb.org/study-guide/freedom-of-expression/history>
- <https://www.unesco.org/en/threats-freedom-press-violence-disinformation-censorship>

Official members of the committee

- Norway
- Sweden
- New Zealand
- Canada
- Netherlands
- Germany
- France
- United Kingdom
- Australia
- Argentina

How to research your country

It is important for you to find out information about your country on your own, always keep in mind that.

The origin and purpose of your source are important. The COLUMUN is an opportunity for you to see

what cooperation between states could achieve, and also figure out why the international community

has not solved all the world's problems.

INFORMATION OF YOUR COUNTRY

To know your country investigate these aspects

ASPECT	CHECK
Where is it in the world and what are its neighbors? Which countries are powerful in its region?	
What system of government does it have and who is its leader?	
Is its economy industrialized or mostly agricultural? What are the main sources of income?	
What is the role of religion in the state? How tolerant of different religions and beliefs is its government? Are its laws based on religion or is it secular?	
Are there minority groups? Are these groups treated differently to the majority?	
Are there civil conflicts? What is the government response to this?	
Are there any groups that are fighting to be independent or autonomous?	
What is the country's history?	

<p>Is it a developed or developing country? Does it have adequate infrastructure? Does it struggle to feed its population? Does it owe money to other countries or is it able to be a lender?</p>	
<p>What is the state of its environment?</p>	
<p>What is the social and political position of women and girls?</p>	
<p>Has the country been guilty of human rights violations? What kinds and to what extent?</p>	
<p>Is it open to contacts with other countries? (tourism, business, schools, etc.)</p>	
<p>How does the government get on with other countries? Does it cooperate with or is it a member of international groups such as NATO, the EU, the African Union, etc.?</p>	
<p>Are there individual countries with which it has especially strong ties? Who are its competitors and allies? Major trading partners? Aid donors or recipients? Has it ever fought against another country?</p>	