

SOCHUM

A Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

I would to welcome you to the 39th session of the Mid-South Model of United Nations (MSMUN) and specifically to the Social Humanitarian, and Cultural (SOCHUM) committee. My name is Lutfie Gjurra and I will be your SOCHUM head chair. I am a junior majoring in International Studies and minoring in German. I am looking forward to meeting you while chairing our committee and guide you through a process of debating, learning, and searching for effective resolutions. I would like to take some time and explain to you the reasons behind my choices regarding our three topics.

In the past decade, our world suffered from multiple humanitarian crises, including the Syrian Refugee Crisis spreading across Europe, the rising number of unaccompanied minors travelling through foreign countries and being separating of their families, and intense discrimination targeting specific communities. Therefore, I chose the following topics with intent to provide solutions and protection to victims of all the issued mentioned above; 1. Addressing Mental Care in Humanitarian Crises, 2. Regulating Human Rights for Unaccompanied Migrant Minors and Adolescents, 3. Addressing LGBT+ Rights and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. I motivate you to put effort in your search and come prepared to discuss the topics since our lobbying time is very limited.

I hope these issues provide you with inspiration in order to participate in a fruitful debate and I encourage you to open-up to this experience as it is unique opportunity to grow along with your fellow delegates and gain valuable knowledge. Still, you must remember to enjoy your time at the conference and make unforgettable memories. Please feel free to send me an email at gjulu-21@rhodes.edu in case you have any questions.

Best Regards,

Lutfie Gjurra

Introduction of the SOCHUM Committee

The United Nations Social Humanitarian, and Cultural (SOCHUM) committee is the third subcommittee of the United Nations General Assembly (GA) and was established in 1948 after Eleanor Roosevelt's speech to the GA while presenting a draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The main goals of SOCHUM are the protection and promotion of human rights. The member-states are called each year (during October-November) to present their views on variety of topics concerning human rights violation and human security. It is common for the SOCHUM to work closely with UN agencies, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which provide assistance with carrying out important humanitarian missions and engage into work that reflects the resolutions of SOCHUM.

Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the member-states usually do not share the same views on the definitions in the UDHR and do not always operate under articles of this document. Many conflicts arise due to different cultural and religious perspectives. Nonetheless, SOCHUM operates with respect to each member-state's culture, therefore, the floor is yielded to controversial opinions, which usually increases the gap among the formed blocs.

Under no circumstances though the resolutions provided by SOCHUM are discriminatory based on culture and religion. It is mandatory to maintain respect among all member-states and diplomatic language is always used at all times while referring to the rest of the committee or to the chairs. These conditions are vital for a well-functioning and prolific results since it is usual for controversy to exist in the SOCHUM committee, however, the preservation of human rights is in every case expected to be above differences among cultures and traditions. Through collaboration

and hard work, the SOCHUM has achieved to assist millions of people in need worldwide, but there is certainly much more to be done.

1. Addressing Mental Care in Humanitarian Crises

A. Introducing the issue

Unfortunately, the mental health of victims in humanitarian crises is often overlooked by health providers. The victims are exposed to trauma, loss, and acute stress which may lead to severe psychological reactions, such as depression and post-traumatic stress. Mental disorders tend to interfere with the victims' daily life as their symptoms include insomnia, malfunctional anxiety, and chronic pain and may undermine their ability to survive and integrate into a new community. Furthermore, healthcare providers usually lack the knowledge to indicate the difference between symptoms caused by a mental disorder and those caused by emotional distress. Therefore, the victims will not receive the proper care they need. Even if the victims inform their providers about an existing psychological diagnosis, a non-specialized healthcare provider will not be able to properly treat them. It is therefore crucial to include specialized mental health professionals in healthcare missions.

B. History and Past UN Actions

Studies showed that 33% of medical casualties during WWI & WWII were due to psychiatric causes. In the late 1980s, more than 300,000 Cambodians who lived on the Thai-Cambodia border were violently forced to relocate. Almost 70% of them showed signs of depression and 37% experienced post-traumatic stress. Fortunately, the severity of the situation was recognized by the UN and they start offering mental health services at camp sites in 1988. They also send humanitarian relief workers in the Balkans during the Balkan conflict, because in 1995, a study of Bosnian refugees demonstrated that 45% appeared to show from symptoms of depression. Moreover, in 1999, studies interpreted results of premature death in humanitarian crisis victims to be related to continuous suffering from mental disorders. Sadly, there is no collection of data that indicates the effectiveness of the humanitarian interventions.

C. Latest Developments

In 2014, 60 million people were forced to abandon their homes due to conflict and natural disasters. It was difficult to collect accurate statistics regarding mental disorders during humanitarian crises since they vary in nature and content. However, a meta-analysis with strong surveys conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) showed that 15-20% of the victims suffered from depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In 2015, the WHO recorded data from 90 refugee camps, which indicated that mental health care is not always provided. In fact, only 4.3 mental and neurological visits per 1000 persons per month occurred in the camps, while the demand was much higher. Fortunately, the same year, WHO and UNHCR released the *mhGAP Humanitarian Intervention Guide* (mhGAP-HIG) to provide vital guidelines to first-line healthcare providers in order to deal with mental and neurological issues. Today the mhGAP-HIG is used to as an evidence-based manual in order to manage humanitarian crisis conditions.

D. Obstacles that Resolutions should Address

One of the main obstacles of providing mental health assistance is lack of early intervention. There is no evidence of an emergency plan or a protocol that UN agencies can follow in times of crisis, which creates serious treatment delays. Moreover, there is a stigma that revolves around psychological disorders and it prevents victims to ask for help and/or cooperate with mental health specialists. The lack of proper mental health information causes more harm while trying to tackle the issue. Last but certainly not least, there is often a lack of communication resources. During a crisis, it is almost impossible to connect all the victims with a mental health professional who speaks their language.

The achieving goal should be to take advantage of all the resources available. Although the actions of the UN must not interfere with the decisions of a sovereign state, but a collaboration is needed. The UN agencies cannot assist the victims without the help of the country they reside or have sought refuge to.

Some Questions to consider;

- What methods should be used in order to enhance immediate intervention during humanitarian crises?

- Are there any proactive measures that the UN could take (e.g. emergency plans, international mental health centers designated for humanitarian crisis)?
- What is the safest and most respectful manner to approach victims who lack knowledge of mental care treatments?
- How to overcome any possible communication issues? Should UN collaborate with professionals from local communities?
- How to respectfully and effectively collaborate with local agencies and the government that is hosting or has victims of humanitarian crises if needed?

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2. Regulating Human Rights for Unaccompanied Migrant

Minors and Adolescents

A. Introducing the issue

In 1989, the legally-binding by international law United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC) was opened for signature by the GA. The UNCRC included the fundamental children rights and living conditions. Unfortunately, many migrants on the move do not have access basic rights, such as education, decent living

standards, and physical protection. The country of entry may discriminate migrant children from entering their educational system and those children will often remain in camps under poor living conditions. It is even considered fortunate for an unaccompanied child to safely reach a refuge since their journey hides many risks along the way. Moreover, unaccompanied minors and adolescents are often viewed as offenders of the law in case they accessed a foreign country irregular. One another important issue is that there is a great difficulty to reunite unaccompanied children with their legal guardians. There is no sufficient system to realize a future family reunion in case the minors are separated from their guardians. Although the UN and its agencies try their best to assist unaccompanied minors and adolescences, more resolutions are needed worldwide.

B. History and Past UN Actions

In late 2000, the GA released a protocol against the smuggling of Migrants by land, sea, and air. The protocol included a variety of security measures, such as stricter boarder and document control, and instructions how to return smuggling migrants to the country of entry, where they would have the right of permanent residence. Although this protocol fully intended to provide an operative resolution, it has not proven effective during times of crisis, especially for unaccompanied migrant minors and adolescents who tend to be an “easy” target.

In order to improve the living conditions for migrant children in 2006, the UNHCR cooperated with the Youth Department of Council of Europe hosted seminars to provide minors with useful information about the educational system and integrating into the local societies of their entering or destination country of the Council of Europe member-states.

C. Latest Developments

Europol reported that at least 10.000 migrant minors under the age of 18 travelling through Europe are unaccountable for in 2016 alone. They feared that they fell victims of smuggling or human trafficking upon arrival in the continent. Later that year, the United Nations GA called for a summit to address the large movements of refugees and migrants. The result was the signing of the New York Declaration for Refugees and

Migrants. The Declaration provided specific guidelines on the responses of the international community towards migrants and added clauses highlighting the importance of assisting unaccompanied minors on the move.

In early 2018, on the other corner of the world the US administrations decided to initiate the “zero-tolerance” policy regarding families irregularly crossing the US-Mexico border. This policy prevented minor immigrants to be accompanied with their parents after crossing the border. Eventually, unaccompanied immigrant minors would be placed to detection facilities until their parents are being persecuted with the hope to reunite with them in the short future. In June 2018, the United Nations expressed their concerns about the lack of clarification regarding the situation of children in immigration centers. They also highlighted that it was unacceptable for the US to use children to fix their illegal immigration issues and called upon the US government to release all children, who were not even receiving any proper legal assistance. In 2019, new data showed that about 2,9000 children were separated from their families and have not yet been reunited due to the lack of recording communication data during their separation with their families.

D. Obstacles that resolutions should address

Regardless of the hard efforts of the UN to maintain the rights of the unaccompanied migrant minors and adolescents, children rights violations still occur. It appears that the UN needs to provide additional resolutions. The Syrian refugee crisis in Europe and the complications in the Mexico-US boarder have proven that unaccompanied children are not always travelling thought a safe passage during their journey. Moreover, some of their basic rights are being violated, such as the right to have access to free education and home security. They are also often occurrences when they are being prosecuted and convicted for making an irregular entry to a foreign country without taking into consideration their young age. Furthermore, many unaccompanied minors seemed to lack of legal assistance in a foreign country, therefore, they are unable to properly represent themselves and explain their reasons behind their journey. Not being able to have representation from their transit or destination country’s legal system, leaves the unaccompanied in a desperate and isolated situation. However, not having a running method to reunite with their families (if possible) has possibly stronger impact in their

lives than the issues mentioned above. Last but not least, we must expand our process of thinking beyond assisting unaccompanied minors with their move to a foreign country. Issues as future employment rights, healthcare, and possibly providing legal residency must be considered.

Some Questions to consider;

- How to provide safe passage to unaccompanied minors and adolescents?
- How will unaccompanied minors and adolescence receive a suitable education in transit and/or destination country(s)?
- Where is the most suitable location to host them (e.g. host-families, children-adolescence facilities)?
- How to prevent the authorities of transit and/or destination country(s) from convicting minors and adolescents based on their irregular entry? (e.g. treaties or conventions not to view minor migrants as illegal aliens)
- How to accelerate the process of assigning legal assistance and/or temporal guardians?
- What efforts should be made to reunite unaccompanied children on the road with their legal guardians if the option is available?
- What can be done about receiving a legal residency status if it asked from their legal attorney or guardians? And how can the government fully integrate them to their new society (e.g. employment, healthcare)?

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3. Addressing LGBT+ Rights and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

A. Introducing the issue

"It is unconscionable that people with an actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression different from a particular social norm, are targeted for violence and discrimination in many parts of the world," expressed Vitit Muntarbhorn, the UN's first independent expert on the issue, while submitting his first UN report in New York in 2017. More than 70 states criminalize homosexual behavior and more states discriminate people who engage even in private legal, not only by law but both of age and consensual, LGBT+ relationships. Moreover, people in the LGBT+ community often face privacy violations, discriminatory behavior in social services and/or workspaces, physical and mental abuse, biased prosecution, and even the death penalty in at least 5 countries. Crimes against the LGBT+ community are often based on culture, religions, and conservative traditions. The lack of proper education regarding same-sex relationships and change of sexual identity has also a negative impact on people's opinion. Fortunately, there have been many improvements in the last decade.

diagnostic tests. In 2011, the first resolution regarding sexual orientation and gender identity was officially adopted by the UN, furthermore in 2012, the UN held its first official debate on the matter. During the debate, it was agreed that rights of the LGBT+ community would be included in UDHR and any violation would count as an offence to the international human rights law.

C. Latest Developments

In September 2015, the OHCHR called for a UN meeting to discuss about human rights of intersex people and to show their support. The OHCHR also announced that it is more preferable to address an issue rather than avoiding it, therefore, they launched a website, which started the UN Free and Equal (UNFE) campaign regarding the human rights of the intersex people. During 2017-2018, the OHCHR created a guideline of global standards in world of international business in order to prevent discrimination against LGBT+ people. By April 2018, more than 122 large international companies have adopted the guideline with more than 6 million employees signing up as supporters of the UNFE campaign. In July 2013, the UNFE campaign focused on promoting respect towards LGBT people. In 2017, the international response of the campaign was magnificent as it reached more than 2.44 billion social media streams only in that year alone and more than 30 countries were hosting campaign events,

As for news in the healthcare system, in early 2016, there were many reported incidences in Europe of HIV and syphilis among men who have sex with men (MSM). The WHO investigated the cases of MSM and initiated rapid-point-of-care test while protecting the patient's privacy to ensure treatment. In 2018, the WHO also published guidelines to raise awareness on unhealthy sexual interactions due to disadvantaged and promote proper education regarding the topic.

D. Obstacles that resolutions should address

Many states have a zero-tolerance in public spaces. Therefore, any affection and/or signs of same-sex relations can easily lead to an arrest. The existence of a man-dominant culture and the tradition to biologically create families have led to the spreading of misbeliefs of the people engaging in same-sex relations, changing or not limiting their sexual identity. Moreover, acquiring a social service, such as opening a

bank account or applying for a professional position can be difficulty daily task for the LGBT+ people. They have also a difficulty to even start a family by adopting. Although in many states same-sex couple can get legally married, they do not have the right to adopt, which can benefit a child looking for a new home. Furthermore, transgender people are also often targeted, and many obstacles prevent them from having the life they desire, which violates their right to express themselves. They have many legal complications due to the change of their identity and their health insurances rarely cover any sex-reassigning surgeries. Generally, the actions of the UN have intended to keep the LGBT+ community safe both from state and non-state actors and at least earn right recognition, if not universal acceptance.

Some Questions to consider;

- How can we maximize the tolerance in countries where same-sex relations are considered illegal?
- How can we assist LGBT+ people acquiring social services and health care without any experiences of discrimination (e.g. special facilities)?
- How to pursue governments which do not allow same-sex adoption to open their adoption services to LGBT+ community?
- Are there any methods to finance sex-reasoning surgeries for transgender people?
- What are the most sufficient methods to raise awareness of the LGBT+ community and rights in order to remove discriminatory bias on an international level?

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