



SOCHUM

Background Guide



EagleMUNC

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www.EagleMUNC.org

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Introduction

Letter from the Chair:

Hello Delegates,

Welcome to EagleMUNC VIII! My name is Matthew Spana, and I will be your chair of the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM). I am a Senior at Boston College studying Computer Science. This is my third year participating in EagleMUNC and second as a chair. I have been involved in Model UN since early High School and believe it offers the most fun and engaging academic activities available to a student. I have always enjoyed the unique experiences and stories only found at Model UN conferences, and I hope you will all leave this committee with one to share.

As you may or may not know, SOCHUM is one of the United Nations General Assembly's actual main committees, so you will be engaging with each other to solve relevant issues our leaders are currently facing. Issues you may discuss include refugee crises, human rights and women's rights, war, poverty, and systematic oppression, among many others. I am sure many of you are passionate about these topics, so I am looking forward to meaningful and productive discussion with your peers. Best of luck in your research, and please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns at spanam@bc.edu.

Good luck!

Matthew Spana

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Historical Background

The United Nations was established in 1945, following the conclusion of the Second World War. In San Francisco, California, fifty countries, represented by delegates, came together at the United Nations Conference on International Organization. At the end of the conference The Charter of the United Nations was drafted. The Charter was ratified by the United States, China, France, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, and was officially established on October 24, 1945. The five countries that ratified the United Nations Charter became the five permanent members, with 46 other states joining the United Nations as well. The total of fifty signatories became fifty-one when Poland signed the Charter later, becoming the last original Member State. ¹

At the core of the United Nations is the General Assembly (GA). The GA is the main body of the UN where all 193 current member states come together and are tasked with policymaking. The GA is the only UN assembly in which all member nations are present. Every September, the GA comes together in New York City and holds its annual session. Integral decisions, such as orders of peace, security, and human rights are discussed and decided at this session and require a two-thirds majority to pass. Each year, the GA elects a member to serve as GA president; for the upcoming 74th

¹"History of the United Nations." United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/sections/history/history-united-nations/>.

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(2019-2020) session, the President will be Ambassador Tijani Muhammed-Bande of Nigeria.²



Top: 74th GA Session President, Ambassador Tijani Muhammed-Bande of Nigeria³

Bottom: UN GA Hall⁴

²"Distinguished Nigerian Ambassador Elected President of UNGA." Council on Foreign Relations. June 14, 2019. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/distinguished-nigerian-ambassador-elected-president-unga>.

³ Ibid.

⁴"Main Organs." United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/main-organs/index.html>.

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The General Assembly of the United Nations has six main committees:

- **Disarmament & International Security**
- **Economic & Financial**
- **Social, Humanitarian & Cultural** (our committee)
- **Special Political & Decolonization**
- **Administrative & Budgetary**
- **Legal.**

The General Assembly (GA) allocates topics and issues relating to human rights issues all over the world.⁵ A crucial component of SOCHUM's work are questions concerning human rights and reports of the Human Rights Council, established in 2006. SOCHUM meets annually in October and works to conduct its business by the end of

⁵ "United Nations, Third Committee, Social, Humanitarian, Cultural, Main Body, Main Organs, General Assembly." United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/index.shtml>.

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November. During the 72nd session (2017-2018) of the GA, SOCHUM deliberated more than sixty draft resolutions with over half submitted under a solely human rights agenda; three of these draft resolutions were country specific.⁶

SOCHUM discusses questions such as ones pertaining to refugee treatment, women's rights, civil rights, child protection, the treatment of indigenous peoples, and other humanitarian issues. Notably, SOCHUM debates their agenda items individually, rather than opening up the floor to free debate, and that is how the committee will operate at EagleMUNC VIII. The Chairperson of SOCHUM for the 73rd Session is H.E. Mahmoud Saikal of Afghanistan.⁷

⁶ "United Nations, Third Committee, Social, Humanitarian, Cultural, Main Body, Main Organs, General Assembly." United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/index.shtml>.

⁷ "United Nations, Third Committee, Social, Humanitarian, Cultural, Main Body, Main Organs, General Assembly." United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/73/bio.shtml>.

Topic 1: The #MeToo Movement

In 2006, activist Tarana Burke coined the hashtag #metoo after her own experience with sexual assault. Burke recognized the power of the words “Me Too” as ones that could band victims of sexual assault together. After Harvey Weinstein was exposed by the eighty women with harassment allegations against him, Burke’s #metoo rose in popularity through Twitter. The Me Too movement gained popularity in 2018, and brought attention to sexual assault and harassment. In recent years, around the globe, but more specifically in the United States, there has been an uptick in advocacy against sexual harassment and for support of survivors of sexual assault, with many coming forward to reveal the identities of those who have caused them harm in the past. Responses to this new global movement have been mixed. Some individuals, like Harvey Weinstein, Louis C.K., Jeffery Epstein, and Bill Cosby, have been shamed out of public life and even sentenced to prison time. Others, like newly appointed US Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh and even President Trump, seem to gain more enthusiastic support from some Americans after allegations against them surface, with their supporters arguing that the allegations are merely part of smear campaigns to silence conservative voices. With the utilization of protests, propaganda, and social media, there is an increase in awareness and people begin to listen to those opening up about sexual assault or coming forth with allegations. Although this new platform could be contrived as a positive mechanism for abuse victims, it also allows for doubt,

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judgement, and division. Nevertheless, there is a long road ahead for the quest to bring an end to sexual assault and harassment.

Many have undertaken this substantial fight even in light of intense opposition. People like Olympic gymnast Aly Raisman, a survivor herself, have led the fight against their accusers and brought public support and attention onto this ongoing crisis. While the #metoo movement began in the United States and remains the most prevalent there, it has spread and been translated across the globe: In Italy, #QuellaVoltaChe, in Spain #YoTambien, and in Arab-speaking countries #AnaKaman. ⁸ In Britain, the press nicknamed the Palace of Westminster, "Pestminster" after allegations against members of British Parliament surfaced. Defense secretary, Michael Fallon, and de facto deputy prime minister, Damian Green, both stepped down after admitting allegations were true. ⁹ While those who are accused are now facing the consequences of their actions, those who accuse them face consequences as well. In Japan, a top Finance Ministry bureaucrat was accused of sexual assault by a female journalist. Although he denied the accusation, the Finance bureaucrat resigned. Consequently, the female journalist was ignored and ousted by the TV Network she worked for, sparking a protest of female newspaper workers.¹⁰ While some countries embrace the #MeToo movement more than others, some have struggled to launch the movement entirely. For example, in Russia an attempt at #MeToo was made when a group of

⁸Adam, Karla, and William Booth. "A Year after It Began, Has #MeToo Become a Global Movement?" The Washington Post. October 05, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/a-year-after-it-began-has-metoo-become-a-global-movement/2018/10/05/1fc0929e-c71a-11e8-9c0f-2ffaf6d422aa_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.b04e6970ad8a.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

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approximately five female journalists and a Foreign Ministry spokeswoman went public with allegations of sexual harassment against lawmaker, Leonid Slutsky. The allegations made by these women were dismissed by both the government and the public. Slutsky himself bragged about keeping the #MeToo movement out of Russia. Victim shaming has been a popular response to the #MeToo movement in Russia; when the Harvey Weinstein scandal broke, a group of Russian women stood naked in front of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow holding signs that said "Harvey Weinstein Welcome to Russia."¹¹ While #MeToo, or variations of the movement, have been trending globally, the movement faces a myriad of battles across the world, some steeper than others.

This committee is committed to solving problems of gender equality, promoting justice for all, and condemning all acts of sexual harassment and violence. What can be done to combat this urgent crisis?

Questions to Consider:

1. How can the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee promote the spread of the #MeToo movement to countries where it is not present?
2. How can SOCHUM fight sexual harassment and violence on a global scale?

Topic 2: Humanitarian Aid Crisis in Yemen

¹¹Okun, Gabrielle. "Russian Women Strip Naked In Front Of US Embassy To Show Support For Harvey Weinstein." The Daily Caller. November 01, 2017. <https://dailycaller.com/2017/11/01/russian-women-strip-naked-in-front-of-us-embassy-to-show-support-for-harvey-weinstein/>.

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One of the most prevalent political and humanitarian crises in our world today is occurring in Yemen. Countless are starving and suffering in poverty as a result of the devastating crisis. One of the Middle East's poorest countries, Yemen's regime change came as a result of the Arab Spring movement in 2011. This transition has resulted in continued massive civil unrest, famine, and political disorganization. Rebels within the country's minority Shia Muslim population, perhaps with the backing of the formerly deposed leader Ali Abdullah Saleh, have attempted to take advantage of the tumultuous situation in order to seize power, adding fuel to the fire of the conflict. Fearing the formation of a Shia government in Yemen, many Sunni Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, have inserted themselves into the conflict. Simultaneously, ISIS and Al-Qaeda forces have orchestrated terrorist attacks in the region to capitalize on the unrest.



Bombing Damage in Yemen¹²

Despite all of the various factors contributing to this conflict, the humanitarian crisis that has occurred at the expense of the country's civilians is perhaps the most pressing concern. Since March of 2015 alone, the conflict has been directly responsible for more than 7,000 civilian deaths and more than 11,000 civilian injuries, according to UN estimates. Some groups fear that the death toll is closer to 70,000. A general lack of food and quality medical care also remains a large problem for the citizens of Yemen, as the war and infighting has exhausted the country's resources and hindered its ability to attain necessary supplies. The largest outbreak of cholera ever recorded is just one example of this aspect of the crisis, with almost 2 million reported cases and nearly 3,000 deaths. Years have gone by without either sufficient support for the victims nor meaningful breakthroughs towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict.¹³



¹² Yemen Crisis: Why is There a War?, BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423>

¹³ Ibid.

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Yemeni Child, Malnourished and Hungry as a Result of the War and Famine¹⁴

Various movements and organizations exist to combat these problems, like the International Federation of Red Cross/Red Crescent societies, but their resources and financial backings are not infinite. These organizations have to focus on issues throughout the world and it is clear that more help is needed, to not only aid the suffering, but prevent future crises. The UN's support of the development of the Famine Action Movement, which works to develop technology to warn of and prevent famine, is a start, but will take time, and is not enough. What can be done to better aid the victims and intervene politically in current world affairs to stop this tragedy?

Questions to Consider:

1. How can SOCHUM provide aid to victims of Yemen's crisis?
2. What can SOCHUM do to aid victims considering financial resources are limited?
3. To what extent should SOCHUM interfere politically when supplying victim aid?

Topic 3: Human Rights Under Threat in North Korea

_____ Over time, the North Korean regime has proven itself to be a totalitarian, one-party jurisdiction led by an unstable dictator, Kim Jong Un. This leaves the committee with one of the most difficult problems in our current world; how can humanitarian aid be provided to the people of a country whose government has beaten its citizens,

¹⁴ Ibid.

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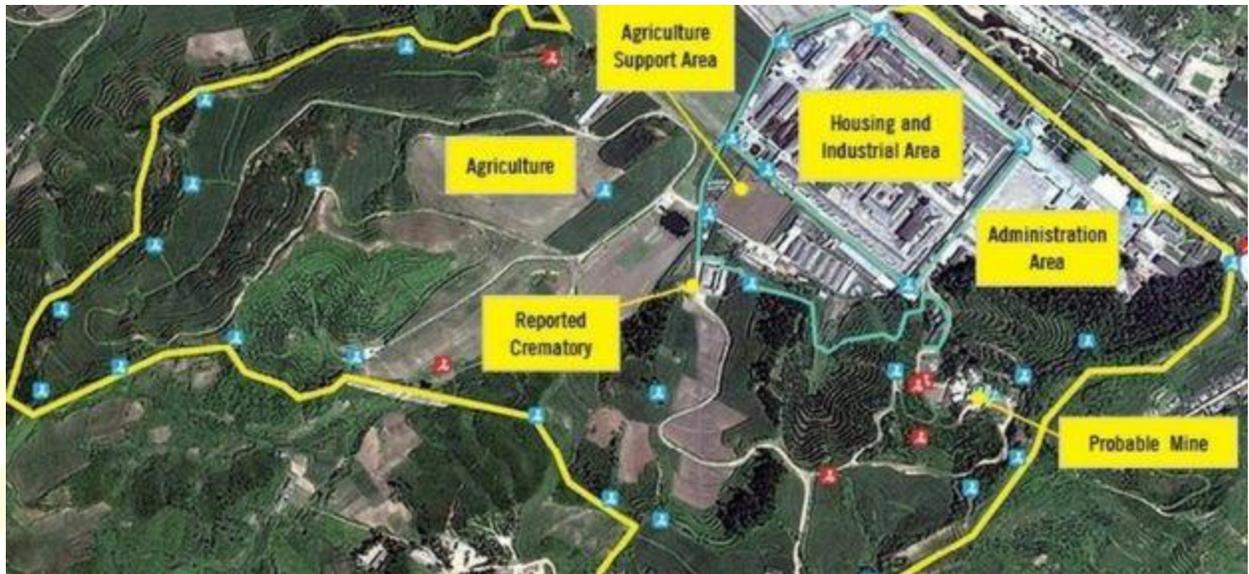
literally and figuratively, into complacency and submission, and brainwashed to the point where many do not even know what rights and dignities are being taken from them?

For three generations, North Korea has been under the domain of the Kim family and during that time the citizens of North Korea have been expected to hold total and complete devotion to them. The government in North Korea sees all: citizens are surveilled through a vast system of cameras on street corners, in stores, outdoor public places, and more.¹⁵ Citizens of North Korea get their news from one sole source: the state media that produces all of their news, information, and entertainment all of which faithfully applauds the government. It has been argued that North Korea's media is the most rigidly controlled in the world, specifically by the organization Reporters Without Borders (RSF), who ranked North Korea's media as last in the World Press Freedom Index. The state's education system is similarly heavily controlled, regulated, and censored, providing students with a nationalist-centric curriculum from a very young age designed to restrict their knowledge of the outside world.¹⁶

¹⁵ O'Carroll, Chad. "Video Surveillance Equipment on Rise inside North Korea." NK News - North Korea News, October 9, 2018. <https://www.nknews.org/2018/10/video-surveillance-equipment-on-rise-inside-north-korea/>.

¹⁶ "North Korea's Human Rights: What's Not Being Talked About." BBC News. BBC, February 18, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-44234505>.

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Satellite Image of Supposed Prison Labor Camp¹⁷

The United Nations has said that North Korean citizens “live under systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations.”¹⁸ The U.S. State Department estimates that as many as 120,000 citizens are imprisoned in labor camps in the country, and that “crimes” as menial as activism against the government or watching a television program produced in South Korea can land someone in these facilities. The work is often grueling and intensive, and use of force, sexual coercion, and even execution is thought to be common. Much of the country does not have sufficient food or medical care, and severe hunger and malnourishment is a crisis, especially among children.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.



North Korean Child¹⁹

Tackling a crisis such as this one is infinitely complex for many reasons. Notwithstanding the fact that so many of the citizens of North Korea do not realize their situation, the political implications of trying to provide citizens with humanitarian aid is immense. It is important to consider the escalation of the country's nuclear program, its less than friendly relations with South Korea, Japan, and the United States, and its rather professional relationship with China (and increasingly Russia) in all humanitarian decisions that the committee comes to. Kim Jong Un has proven himself to be an unstable dictator and, considering his access to nuclear weapons, is sure to be a sizeable roadblock on the way to a solution. Thus, the committee should not shy away from discussing potential consequences that reach

¹⁹ Ibid.

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beyond its area of expertise when making decisions. In short, how can aid be given peacefully to a nation whose citizens do not recognize they need it?

Questions to Consider:

1. How should SOCHUM approach the North Korean Government, if at all?
2. To what extent should SOCHUM intervene in North Korean politics and government?
3. How can SOCHUM supply humanitarian aid to the citizens of North Korea?

Topic 4: World Migration/Refugee Crisis

The world knows no age-old problem better than the need to provide refuge for those fleeing violence, persecution, and poverty. Even with the luxuries of diplomacy and technology that we have today, far too many of the seven billion humans on this Earth are forced to endure tragic and unfortunate circumstances.

The ongoing crisis involving Syrian citizens is just one such example. After Bashar al Assad succeeded his father as leader of the country, protests began popping up throughout the country as part of the larger Arab Spring movement. The protests were met with violence and oppression from the Assad government, and opposition groups have since been unable to unify against his regime, leaving the country to falter under the weight of a civil war that is so brutal, chemical weapons have been used, civilians have been killed, and millions of refugees have fled the country. To make matters worse, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has capitalized on the crisis throughout the past few years to commit unspeakable acts of terror and attempt

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to amass territory and followers in the region, although they have been losing both as of late. The world's reaction to the masses of displaced Syrians seeking refuge in other countries in Europe and the Americas has been largely negative. Many countries in Europe have either expressed open hostility to refugees settling there, with some banning their entry altogether. U.S. President Donald Trump has been equally reluctant to let Syrian refugees into America, and has slowly but surely reduced the number of refugees admitted to the United States each year. Not only must we find a way to help end the civil war in Syria, but we must also work with member states to encourage adoption of these desperate and vulnerable people who have nowhere else to go.²⁰

²⁰ Staff, World Vision. "Syrian Refugee Crisis: Facts, FAQs, and How to Help." World Vision, August 19, 2019. <https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/syrian-refugee-crisis-facts>.



Refugees Fleeing Violence in Syria²¹

A similar crisis exists similarly in the Americas with a large number of Hispanic migrants attempting to relocate to the United States. The states of Central America, where the majority of these migrants originate from, are some of the most dangerous states on earth, and their citizens are fleeing to find both safety and opportunity in the United States. However, whilst fleeing domestic abuse, gang violence, and poverty, they are being met with opposition from the Trump administration at the U.S. border, with the President prioritizing immigration reduction and border security as a key component of his agenda. The U.S. has gone as far as separating migrant children from

²¹ Ibid.

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their families and detaining those migrants in decrepit facilities for extended periods of time purposefully to deter migrants from attempting to gain entry.²² This has created another humanitarian crisis in itself. Nevertheless, something must be done to make sure that these migrants are treated humanely and are able to seek the refuge they require, whether through direct humanitarian support, intervention in the countries the migrants are fleeing, or cooperation with the United States to amend their policies.



Young Migrant Girl at the U.S. Border²³

Evidently, the migration crisis manifests itself in many ways throughout the world. It is on the shoulders of this committee to do their part to help the most vulnerable.

²²“Fleeing for Our Lives: Central American Migrant Crisis.” Amnesty International USA, July 29, 2019. <https://www.amnestyusa.org/fleeing-for-our-lives-central-american-migrant-crisis/>.

²³ Ibid.

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Questions to Consider:

1. How can SOCHUM intervene in the Syrian Civil War?
2. What can SOCHUM do for Syrian and Hispanic refugees and how can we reform the negative connotation surrounding their placement?
3. How can SOCHUM improve the treatment of both Hispanic refugees and Syrian refugees in the United States and Europe?
4. How can SOCHUM work directly with governments to ensure fair and equal resettlement of refugees?

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