



2016-2017

Model Arab League

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Council on Political Affairs

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Original draft by Alayna Williams, Chair of the Council on Political Affairs at the 2017 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from the dedicated staff and volunteers at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations

Honorable Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the 2016-2017 Model Arab League and the Council on Political Affairs. My name is Alayna Williams, and it is an honor to serve as your Chair for both the Southeast Regional Conference and the National University Model Arab League Conference. I am a senior at Mercer University in Macon, GA, pursuing majors in International Affairs, Women's and Gender Studies, and Spanish. This is my third year participating in the Model Arab League program, and I look forward to all of the great opportunities this year holds. Throughout my time in the Model Arab League program, I have honed my public speaking, writing, and diplomacy skills. I also had the opportunity to travel to the MENA region for the first time through the National Council's 2015 Qatar Exchange Fellowship program. I encourage each of you to take advantage of all the opportunities you have through the Model Arab League program and to fully engage in every conference you have the opportunity to attend!

The Council on Political Affairs is an integral part of the Arab League. The topics you will address below describe serious challenges faced by the region. As delegates, it is your role to find solutions and create resolutions tailored to these issues while still adhering to your country's policies. Preparation is essential to a productive conference. Therefore, I encourage each of you to research your country's policies on each individual topic by using all forms of information that are available to you, including journals and databases. Additionally, it is extremely useful to understand the positions of the League's other members in order to best strategize. Furthermore, you should consider all of the dimensions that affect your committee and its challenges including political structures, economic realities, and current events. It is also crucial that you take on your role to the best of your ability. You represent your country's interests, and it is important to consider these interests throughout the entirety of the conference.

Finally, take full advantage of the opportunity you have before you. Speak up early and often in the conference in order to establish yourself as a strong player in the room. Make your positions clear while respecting, addressing, and cooperating with the other delegates. Share your knowledge, learn something new, and enjoy yourself.

I look forward to meeting you all!

Best of Luck,

Alayna Williams

Topic I: Examining and promoting the protection of religious minorities within member states through integration in political processes and implementation of institutional safeguards

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

Member states of the Arab League have long been struggling with sectarianism and the negative impact it has on the rights of religious minorities. For this topic, a religious minority will refer to any religion or sect of a religion that is underrepresented either in terms of population demographics or representation within a particular area, state, or the region as a whole. Delegates must determine what exactly “protection” entails as it may include both physical protections and abstract protections. This means that protections might not only include freedom from attack, bodily harm, or injury, but also freedom to express and practice one’s religion openly.

The Political Affairs Council is charged with determining how integration into political processes and the establishment of institutional safeguards for religious minorities can help to accomplish this goal. Integration into political processes refers to increasing involvement in politics for religious minorities, and safeguards refer to various measures taken to prevent harm or damage towards religious minorities. The Council must determine how to establish these critical policies while respecting the sovereignty of each member state.

B. History in the Arab World

Religious persecution is on the rise in the Middle East and North Africa. This presents a threat to religious minorities across the MENA region including Christians, Jews, and members of smaller sects of Islam.¹ Intolerance of religious minorities has taken many forms, including forced conversions, crucifixions, and beheadings.² However, the challenges that religious minorities face are not only limited to violence and intimidation, but also include lack of political representation, difficulty accessing services and jobs, and a lack of control over religious sites and places of worship.³ The Political Affairs Council is tasked with establishing institutional safeguards and incorporating religious minorities into political processes in order to address these challenges.

Most of the population in the Middle East adheres to either Sunni Islam, which has the greatest following in most countries, or Shia Islam, which is centered in Iraq. Violence between the two sects in Iraq has increased sectarian tensions in neighboring areas including Lebanon and Syria where religious minorities continue to face major challenges. Jews and Christians have also

¹ Sherwood, Harriet. "Christians Flee Growing Persecution in Africa and Middle East." *The Guardian*. N.p., 13 Jan. 2016. Web. 11 July 2016. <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/13/christians-flee-growing-persecution-africa-middle-east>>.

² Griswold, Eliza. "Is This the End of Christianity in the Middle East?" *New York Times*. 22 July 2015. Web. 11 July 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/26/magazine/is-this-the-end-of-christianity-in-the-middle-east.html?_r=0>.

³ Khan, Seema. "Helpdesk Research Report: Religious Identity and Inequality in the MENA Region." *Government and Social Development Resource Center*. 27 Apr. 2011. Web. 12 July 2016. <<http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/hd768.pdf>>.

faced varying degrees of discrimination, but have found some protection as they are “people of the book.”⁴ However, other religions are not always given much tolerance, and the contemporary rise of Islamic fundamentalism has exacerbated problems for all religious minorities, including those outside of mainstream Islam. For example, the Baha’is, Alawis, Assyrians, and Yazidis are among those groups which have suffered varying levels of religious intolerance.⁵

Ultimately, the experiences of religious minorities often depend on the state in which they are located. For instance, religious freedom is not explicitly protected in Saudi Arabia, thus Shia Muslims and other minorities face discrimination in education, employment, political representation, religious practice and the media.⁶ However, the treatment of religious minorities is dependent not only on whether or not the group constitutes a minority of the population in that state, but also whether they are a minority within the government. For example, Shias in Bahrain and Sunnis in Syria continue to face persecution due to lack of government representation, despite the fact that they make up the majority of their state’s population.⁷ These governments often resort to repressive measures in order to control the marginalized majority.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

In order to address the challenges facing religious minorities, it is essential to first consider the varying degrees of the issue across the Arab League. Delegates may need to define what constitutes a religious minority and identify which groups are religious minorities in each respective state. Delegates may then define what rights or assurances these minorities ought to be guaranteed. The Arab Charter on Human Rights may prove useful in this task. After having considered this framework, solutions should be two-fold in that they will focus on incorporating religious minorities into political processes and establishing institutional safeguards. There are many approaches as to how this can be done. For example, delegates may consider the use of quotas with regard to increasing political representation. Nevertheless, it is critical to bear in mind the position of each delegate’s respective state as this will likely be a contentious issue given the varying nature of the problem within each member nation.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What religious minorities are present in your country and what challenges do they face?
- How have religious minorities in your state been treated historically? What major tragedies and triumphs have occurred for these minority groups?
- Are religious minorities in your country adequately represented in political processes?

⁴ "Middle East Overview." *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*. Minority Rights Group International, Sept. 2012. Web. 11 July 2016. <<http://minorityrights.org/minorities/overview-of-middle-east/>>.

⁵ "Middle East and North Africa." *World Directory of Minorities*. N.p., 2008. Web. 11 July 2016. <<http://www.faqs.org/minorities/Middle-East-and-North-Africa/Middle-East-and-North-Africa.html>>.

⁶ "Helpdesk Research Report: Religious Identity and Inequality in the MENA Region."

⁷ "Oppressed Majority: Ideal Persecution of Shia in Bahrain." *Salam DHR*. Web. 11 July 2016. <<http://www.salam-dhr.org/?p=556>>.

- Does your country already have any safeguards in place with regards to the rights of religious minorities? What additional safeguards would your country be amenable to?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How does one define a religious minority?
- What exactly does “protection” entail for minorities? What fundamental rights are religious minorities guaranteed across the League, and where is the basis for these rights?
- How can the League provide measures to integrate religious minorities into political processes without disrespecting the sovereignty of each member nation?
- How can the League encourage member nations to adopt institutional safeguards within their state?

IV. Additional Resources

- [The Wilson Center - The Future of Religious Minorities in the Middle East](#)
In this two hour video, a panel of experts shares its views on the current status of religious minorities in Middle East, especially in light of developments after the “Arab Spring.” The speakers also provide strategies and recommendations for how these minorities can be protected.
- [Minorities at Risk - Minority Group Assessments for Middle East and North Africa](#)
This web page from Minorities at Risk describes the status of various religious minorities within many states in the MENA region. It explains the challenges that these religious minorities face and the potential risks they could pose if their rights are not addressed.
- [The Arab Charter on Human Rights](#)
The Arab Charter on Human Rights details the basic human rights and freedoms which ought to be upheld according to the Arab League. Article 37 may prove particularly useful for delegates as it explicitly addresses the rights of minorities.
- [BBC News - Sunnis and Shia: Islam's Ancient Schism](#)
This article explains the historical rift between the Sunni and Shia sects of Islam. It also explains their current distribution across the Middle East and the role that sectarianism has played in recent conflicts.

Topic II: Analyzing and responding to international pressure on Arab states to ‘liberalize,’ particularly in the spheres of expression and law

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

In recent years, the Arab World has become subject to increasing international pressure to “liberalize.” This international pressure may come from intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations, individual states – particularly powerful Western states – or non-governmental organizations and various members of civil society. This so called “liberalization” often refers to an increasing emphasis on human rights, democracy, and especially those freedoms deemed necessary by the West. Delegates must grapple with the ramifications of choosing whether or not to liberalize in response to this international pressure. More importantly, delegates must establish what exactly “liberalization” means, with particular consideration for expression and law. Delegates may find it especially challenging to come to a consensus on this issue as more liberal states may recognize the various advantages that come with conforming to international pressure, while others may find liberalization to simply be another form of Western imperialism.

B. History in the Arab World

On November 6, 2003, President George W. Bush delivered a speech in which he publicly criticized America’s Arab allies for their authoritarian ways and explicitly cited democratization as a leading objective of U.S. Middle East policy. This was the first time a U.S. president engaged in such outright criticism of the Middle East’s lack of liberalization.⁸ However, it was only the beginning of the international pressure that member states of the Arab League would be forced to endure from Western nations with regards to liberalization. The topic of liberalization has been especially pertinent since the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011 brought down authoritarian regimes in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt as millions of citizens demanded political, economic, and social justice.⁹ As a result of the Arab Spring, the Arab League has been forced to consider more critically the possibility of liberalization with regards to expression and law.

One of the major debates with regards to liberalization has been the role of Islamic law, or sharia. In response to the dilemma of balancing sharia and secular legalist practices, Arab governments have emphasized the role of sharia in their governing structures. Meanwhile, the legal structures they establish on paper are more in line with Western conceptions of rule of law.¹⁰

⁸ Hawthorne, Amy "Middle Eastern Democracy: Is Civil Society the Answer?" *Carnegie Papers*. Mar. 2004. Web. 3 July 2016. <<http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CarnegiePaper44.pdf>>.

⁹ Mazarei, Adnan, and Tokhir Mirzoev. "Four Years after the Spring." *International Monetary Fund*. N.p., June 2015. Web. 20 July 2016. <<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2015/06/mazarei.htm>>.

¹⁰ Mednicoff, David. "The Rule of Law and Arab Political Liberalization: Three Models for Change." *Harvard Journal of Middle Eastern Politics and Policy*(2012): 55-83. Web. 20 July 2016. <http://people.umass.edu/mednic/public_html/mednicoffruleoflaw.pdf>.

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that there is also great variation within the MENA region when it comes to states' willingness to liberalize, as some countries are much more responsive to international pressure. For example, there have been unprecedented levels of hyper-globalization in Gulf cities such as Doha and Dubai.¹¹ Therefore, it is necessary to recognize that this is a widely contested issue within the Arab League, and receptiveness to the idea is contingent upon a number of factors, including history, economics, and geopolitical position.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

While some states are open to the idea of liberalization, a number of Arab states have voiced strong objections to the notion of political reform as defined by the West. These reservations are based on varying religious positions but also on tradition governing the selection of rulers. Legal reforms are also problematic to these states because many apply some variation of sharia law. This presents a particular challenge as the League struggles to reconcile the need to liberalize with traditional values, some of which may be perceived as contradictory to one another. Delegates must carefully consider this dilemma as they construct resolutions for this topic, as a complete separation of religion and state will not hold much appeal in contemporary Arab states. Rather, political contestation and balance is necessary to address this challenge.¹² Delegates should weigh the various benefits of having the support of the international community, while recognizing that there are certain concessions that will not be made.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Does my country currently have any “liberalized” policies in place with regards to expression and law? What are they?
- What are the pros and cons of deciding whether or not to liberalize with regards to the League’s relationship with the international community?
- What negative ramifications could the decision to liberalize have on Arab culture, and my state’s culture?
- How did the Arab Spring influence the opinions of my state’s population with regards to the liberalization of expression and law?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What exactly is “liberalization” referring to, and what does it entail?
- How can the League reconcile traditional religious beliefs with increasing international pressure to liberalize?

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

- How can the League as a whole encourage or incentivize more conservative member states to liberalize their policies?
- What forms of liberalization will the League consider too extreme? How can the League continue to protect state sovereignty in this regard?

IV. Additional Resources

- [USAID - Liberalization and Democratization in the Middle East and North Africa](#)
This collection of scholarly articles offers different perspectives on the viability of liberalization and democratization in the MENA region. Different articles contain case studies on specific states which will aid delegates in determining the position and history of their state with regards to liberalization.
- [Middle East Report - Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World](#)
This article on Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab world will aid delegates in the construction of arguments for the advantages and disadvantages of liberalization for Arab League member nations.
- [BBC News - Who are the winners and losers from the Arab Spring?](#)
This article attempts to determine who the “winners and losers” of the Arab spring were. Given that this was one of the most notable, citizen-based attempts for liberalization in the spheres of law and expression, it is important for delegates to understand the outcomes of that movement.
- [International Journal of Not-For-Profit Law - The Trauma of Civil Society in the Middle East and Africa](#)
This article argues that Arab League governments will need legal reform that enables expression by emphasizing the importance of an active civil society.

Topic III: Discussing the impact of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between the P5+1 and Iran and addressing the implications for Arab League defense measures, economic practices, and political discourse

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

In July of 2015, the P5+1 (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia plus Germany) came together with the Islamic Republic of Iran in order to develop a nuclear program for Iran that would be “exclusively peaceful.” This plan is known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The goal of the JCPOA is to allow Iran to “fully enjoy its right to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under the relevant articles of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in line with its obligations therein.”¹³ Supporters of the JCPOA argue that it will prevent Iran from secretly building a nuclear program because Iran has committed itself to “extraordinary and robust monitoring, verification, and inspection.”¹⁴

One notable aspect of this deal is that it called for the lifting of all UN Security Council sanctions as well as multilateral and national sanctions related to Iran’s nuclear program in areas of trade, technology, finance and energy. Past sanctions imposed by the UN, US, and EU have crushed Iran’s economy, costing the nation more than \$160 billion in oil revenue since 2012. As a result of this deal, Iran could gain access to more than \$100 billion in frozen overseas assets.¹⁵ Furthermore, Iran will be able to resume selling oil on international markets and using the global financial system for trade. As a result of the drastic economic and defense changes that Iran will experience, JCPOA could have serious ramifications for the Arab League with regards to defense, economics, and politics.¹⁶

B. History in the Arab World

The positions of Arab League member states regarding the viability of the nuclear deal are varied. Their viewpoints on this plan are rooted in sectarian divisions and their nations’ historical relationships with Iran. The nuclear deal comes as tensions between Iran and Gulf states have reached a historic high.¹⁷ Consequently, countries such as the Gulf states, Jordan, and Morocco are extremely skeptical of the deal.¹⁸ Supporting this assertion, some scholars argue that Iran’s Middle East policy has been detrimental to regional security and stability. Notably, Iran’s pursuit of regional hegemony in the midst of regional turmoil has led to a “proxy war” with Arab

¹³ “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action: Main text.” <https://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/docs/iran_agreement/iran_joint-comprehensive-plan-of-action_en.pdf>

¹⁴ “Iran nuclear deal: Key details.” *BBC News*. 16 Jan. 2016. Web. 19 July 2016. <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33521655>>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action: Main text.”

¹⁷ Farhi, Farideh, Birke, Sarah, Levitt, Matthew, Ibish, Hussein, and Freilich, Chuck. “The Middle East After the Iran Nuclear Deal.” *Council on Foreign Relations*. Council on Foreign Relations, 07 Sept. 2015. Web. 20 July 2016. <<http://www.cfr.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east-after-iran-nuclear-deal/p36963>>.

¹⁸ Payam Mohseni, and Hussein Kalout, eds. “Iran and the Arab World after the Nuclear Deal.” Harvard Kennedy School: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Aug. 2015. Web. 20 July 2016. <<http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/Impact%20on%20Arab%20World%20-%20Web.pdf>>.

nations, spearheaded by Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is attempting to unite Sunni states in an anti-Iran alliance by reaching out to former enemies such as the Muslim Brotherhood movement, Hamas, Sudan, and Turkey.¹⁹

The “Pro-Iran Bloc,” including Syria, Iraq, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and part of the Yemeni political opposition, are much more excited about the nuclear deal as they hope that increased Iranian power will result in positive advancements for Shias across the region. Other countries including Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Sudan “welcomed the agreement with a mixture of joy and concern but were ultimately satisfied with the deal.”²⁰

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action has been an incredibly contentious deal across the League because of the potential impact it could have on Arab League defense measures, economic practices, and political discourse. With regards to defense measures, the deal could hugely influence nuclear proliferation, with many suggesting that it could lead to a nuclear arms race.²¹

The lifting of sanctions against Iran will also have a huge impact on economic practices, though it is uncertain exactly how this will unfold. Some argue that Iranian concern for economic development will provide an incentive for Iran to lessen its role in conflicts in the region. Others suggest that strengthened economic relations with the Arab League would lead to Iranian regional rehabilitation, while still others propose that Iran’s improved economy would “strengthen the middle class and bolster the moderates inside Iran.”²² However, it is important to remember that Iran will also be a strong economic competitor to the Arab League in a market already saturated with oil.

Finally, the plan will influence political discourse as it will alter Iran’s position in regional conflicts. The Gulf states have recognized that they must tolerate the deal and hope that the agreement will eventually ease regional tensions, as evidenced by their 2015 meeting with President Barack Obama at Camp David.²³ However, they also recognize that Iran’s renewed role in the region will result in strengthened support for the Assad regime and Hezbollah.²⁴ More funds and weapons will be available for various Shia proxy armies.²⁵

In searching for a solution, delegates must consider all of the aforementioned possible outcomes. The Council must carefully consider how the deal will affect the League as a whole, as well as individual member states. Potential solutions might focus on defense, economics, or politics and

¹⁹ Farhi, Farideh, et al.

²⁰ Payam Mohseni, and Hussein Kalout, eds.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ “Annex to U.S.–Gulf Cooperation Council Camp David Joint Statement,” Office of the White House Press Secretary, 14 May 2015, <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/05/14/annex-us-gulf-cooperation-council-camp-david-joint-statement>>.

²⁴ Farhi, Farideh, et al.

²⁵ Connolly, Kevin. “Will Iran Nuclear Deal Make the Middle East a Less Safe Place?” *BBC*. 14 July 2015. Web. 20 July 2016. <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33519808>>.

should be designed to mitigate any potential conflict that could affect the Arab League as a result of this deal.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What major events or circumstances have defined my country's relationship with Iran historically?
- What is the current state of my country's relationship with Iran with regards to economic practices, defense measures, and politics?
- What provisions of the JCPOA will affect the Arab League as a whole? Are they generally perceived as positive or negative by my state?
- Does the lifting of sanctions pose a threat to the economic stability and strength of my state?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How will the League's relationship with Iran change as a result of this Plan of Action?
- How can the League avoid political discourse that drives the sectarian conflict that may arise from Iran's renewed strength?
- What can the League do to compete against Iran in a market already saturated with oil?
- How can the League address the potential risk of a nuclear arms race?

IV. Additional Resources

- [Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons](#)
The text to the treaty on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons spells out the requirements that parties to the treaty, including Iran, must adhere to with regards to their nuclear deposits. It is important for delegates to understand the guidelines of the treaty as they consider the restrictions and responsibilities of Iran.
- [Harvard University Belfer Center - The Iran Nuclear Deal: A Definitive Guide](#)
This "definitive guide" provides a concise description of the Nuclear Deal and the accompanying UN Security Council Resolution 2231. It assesses both the strengths and weaknesses of the plans and its potential effectiveness in preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.
- [CNN - Iran nuclear deal full of complex issues and moving parts](#)
This article explains the various details of the Joint Comprehensive plan of action in terms that even those unfamiliar with the deal should be able to understand. It addresses defense, political, and economic aspects of the plan.

- [Foreign Policy - This Map Explains the Saudi-Iran Proxy War](#)
This map details the Saudi-Arabia proxy war with Iran. It shows where different sects of Islam are prevalent as well as which states are supportive of either side. This is useful in understanding the sectarian underpinnings of the League's complicated relationship with Iran.

Topic IV: Evaluating the League's role in diplomatically resolving regional conflicts, with particular consideration for the ongoing war in Syria

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

With this topic, delegates should consider what measures are appropriate for the League to take in resolving regional conflicts. For the purposes of this topic, the Council will define "diplomatically" as a means of negotiation that does not arouse hostility or additional conflict. Therefore, this topic should not address violent or militant solutions, but should focus on increased communication and various forms of diplomacy. This topic does allow for broad recommendations of diplomatic techniques which could ameliorate both interstate and intrastate conflicts across the region. However, the primary focus of this topic should be on addressing the League's role in resolving the ongoing war in Syria.

The Political Affairs Council will need to think critically about what the League's role in regional conflicts should be. The Council must consider the League's obligations to its member states while taking caution not to disrespect state sovereignty. Furthermore, the Council must evaluate the feasibility and usefulness of the diplomatic solutions it proposes in Syria and in other conflicts across the region.

B. History in the Arab World

The Arab world has long struggled to deal with regional conflict, and this is especially true in recent years. In just the last few decades, the Arab world has suffered from two wars against Iraq, two wars against Gaza, two wars against Lebanon, prolonged intermittent political turmoil in Yemen, a civil war that led to the secession of South Sudan in 2011, and a number of other conflicts. Currently, the region is struggling with drastic developments in Libya, Yemen, and notably Syria.²⁶ The League renounces violence for the settlement of conflicts between members and recognizes that League offices should mediate in certain disputes. The ongoing war in Syria is no exception.

In the Syrian Civil War, 250,000 individuals have lost their lives, and around 11 million people have been displaced.²⁷ Currently, the Assad government, rebel groups, ISIL, and Kurdish forces are fighting to control the country.²⁸ While there is a clear need for a diplomatic solution between these competing actors, the League's role is difficult to determine. The Arab League has already acted on the crisis in a few different ways. The League suspended Syria's membership in November of 2011, brokered a peace agreement with the Assad regime, and assembled a team of

²⁶ Youssef, Hesham. "Mediation and Conflict Resolution in the Arab World: The Role of the Arab League." *Yearbook on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe* (2015): 299-310. 23 Apr. 2015. Web. 3 July 2016. <<https://ifsh.de/file-CORE/documents/yearbook/english/13/Youssef-en.pdf>>.

²⁷ "Syria: The Story of the Conflict." *BBC News*. 11 Mar. 2016. Web. 07 July 2016. <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26116868>>.

²⁸ "Syria's Civil War Explained." *Al Jazeera*. 24 May 2016. Web. 7 July 2016. <<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/syria-civil-war-explained-160505084119966.html>>

observers to monitor the implementation of its plan.²⁹ Following the suspension decision, the Arab League delivered another historic decision by imposing economic sanctions on the Syrian regime. This was considered one of the League's boldest moves since its establishment.³⁰ There have also been several rounds of peace talks. Unfortunately, all of these actions have failed. Although a ceasefire announced in February 2016 has limited fighting in some parts of Syria, recent government airstrikes in Aleppo have prompted uncertainty about the ceasefire future.³¹ Therefore, the Council will have to assess the failure of these actions in determining the viability of future solutions.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

The Political Council is tasked with determining diplomatic solutions to address various conflicts in the region, particularly the ongoing war in Syria. As neither side has been able to achieve a decisive victory over the other, the international community long ago concluded that only a political solution could end the conflict in Syria.³² The Council must consider how various solutions may encroach on the sovereignty of a particular nation. It must also work to develop a careful balance of taking action to live up to the responsibility of the League without going beyond its purpose and purview.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Why has this issue affected my state? If it hasn't, what is it about my state's policies that have allowed us to avoid involvement?
- What barriers have prevented the League from successfully using diplomatic solutions thus far?
- Have any other solutions been tried? Why were they unsuccessful?
- Where does your country stand on the League's role in using diplomatic solutions?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- At what point in a regional conflict is it necessary for the League to take diplomatic action?
- How far is the League willing to go to ensure peace for Syria?
- What do diplomatic solutions entail?

²⁹ Masters, Jonathan, and Mohammed Aly Sergie. "The Arab League." *Council on Foreign Relations*. N.p., 21 Oct. 2014. Web. 11 July 2016. <<http://www.cfr.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/arab-league/p25967>>.

³⁰ Küçükkeleş, Müjge. "Arab League's Syrian Policy." *Ciaonet*. SETA: Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research, Apr. 2012. Web. 11 July 2016. <<https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/20379/uploads>>.

³¹ "Syria's Civil War Explained."

³² "Syria: The Story of the Conflict."

- Should the League intervene in domestic conflicts, or should diplomacy be limited to interstate conflicts?

IV. Additional Resources

- [Mercy Corps - What you need to know about the Syria crisis](#)
This article provides an in depth account of the origins and magnitude of the crisis in Syria. It offers useful statistics, important events, and implications of the conflict for the rest of the League. Delegates should refer to this article as they consider the urgency of resolving the crisis as well as what diplomatic solutions might be feasible for the crisis in Syria.
- [BBC News - Syria crisis: Arab League fails to stem conflict](#)
This article explains early efforts by the Arab League to resolve the conflict in Syria. Delegates should reference this article as they attempt to understand why previous efforts have failed and how these past solutions can be improved for future diplomatic solutions.
- [Huffington Post - Syria: Why the Ceasefire is Unraveling](#)
This article explains the effects and viability of the recent ceasefires. Delegates should use this source for an updated view on the state of the crisis in Syria.
- [Charter of the League of Arab States](#)
The text of the 1945 Arab League Charter designed to explain the purpose and function of the League. Delegates may find Article 5 particularly useful in addressing this topic as it explains that “any resort to force in order to resolve disputes between two or more member-states of the League is prohibited.” It then explains various aspects of mediation and negotiation which delegates should refer to in determining what diplomatic solutions are appropriate.