



2016 - 2017 Model Arab League

BACKGROUND GUIDE Council of Social Affairs Ministers

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Original draft by Sidney Jones, Chair of the Council of Social Affairs Ministers 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,

Welcome to the Council of Social Affairs Ministers! My name is Sidney Jones, and I am thrilled to serve as your chair for the National University Model Arab League Conference. I am a senior at Converse College in Spartanburg, SC, with a double major in Politics and History. This is my fourth and final year participating in Model Arab League, and this is my third year serving as a national chair. While I am saddened by the fact that this is my last year participating in MAL, it has been the most challenging yet rewarding experience of my collegiate career. I truly hope that each one of you is able to take away as much as I have been able to.

This year's agenda includes some exciting topics that I believe you will enjoy further researching. Please note that the topics you will be addressing not only affect your country, but the region as a whole. Throughout the duration of this Council, delegates are expected to address the concerns of their country through the discussion of the topics while remaining in character. In addition, respect is to be given to every delegate in the room at all times. This is a learning opportunity for everyone and is expected to remain as such. Help each other, learn from each other, grow from each other.

I am excited to meet all of you soon, and I wish you luck in researching!

All the best,
Sidney Jones

Topic I: Revisiting the 2004 Arab Charter on Human Rights, with considerations made for revisions and increased support from League members

I. Introduction

A. General Background

The Arab Charter on Human Rights (ACHR) was first introduced in 1994, and was designed to establish human rights guidelines in the Arab world, in hopes that members of the League of Arab States would ratify the Charter and model their domestic human rights policies after it. However, the 1994 installment was not ratified by a majority of members, severely limiting the impact and influence that it had. Ten years later, the document was reintroduced at the 26th Summit of the League of Arab States in Tunis, and ultimately entered into force in 2008 after seven members – Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Palestine, and Syria – agreed to ratify it. This was followed by ten more ratifications, bringing the total number to 17 states.¹

The purpose of the ACHR was to more closely align Arab human rights with conceptions held by the international community. While human rights organizations – many from the Arab world² -- have criticized the ACHR for not going far enough, or for its lack of an “effective enforcement mechanism,”³ the text of the Charter itself contains many similarities to documents such as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation’s Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (and in fact, references and reaffirms commitment to those two documents in the preamble).

B. History in the Arab World

While the Charter begins by formally affirming the League’s recognition of human rights, it also recognizes the additional rights to health, education, protection from ill-treatment, and individual security. Still, while the ACHR addresses several critical issues, the League has received criticisms that include the absence of a prohibition of inhumane punishments, and the lack of parity in distribution of these rights; in many cases, non-citizens are not guaranteed the full catalog of ACHR protections. Moreover, because of the emphasis that the League places on individual state sovereignty, many topics are left to be decided by national laws.

That said, the ACHR has been invoked by the League to condemn the atrocities that have occurred between Houthis and the Yemeni government, Israelis and Palestinians, and rebel forces and the Syrian government.⁴ Additionally, League members have been advocating for the creation of a “regional human rights court for Arab League member states” that would be tasked with arbitrating violations of the ACHR and the Charter of the League of Arab States.⁵

¹ "NGO Law Monitor: League of Arab States." The International Center for Not-For-Profit Law. N.p., n.d. Web. July 2016.

² "Memorandum on the Development of Joint Arab Action Presented by 37 Human Rights Organizations." Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, n.d. Web. 04 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=1889&lang=en#>>.

³ "The Enforcement Mechanisms of the Arab Charter on Human Rights and the Need for an Arab Court of Human Rights." Arab Center for International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Education, n.d. Web. 04 Aug. 2016. <http://www.acihl.org/articles.htm?article_id=22>.

⁴ "NGO Law Monitor: League of Arab States." The International Center for Not-For-Profit Law. N.p., n.d. Web. July 2016.

⁵ Ibid.

This emphasis on human rights and the ACHR has become more prevalent following the 2011 inception of the Arab Spring. The uprisings led to both positive and negative consequences for the region, but it unquestionably shifted conversation towards the status of human rights in the region. The Arab Spring called on countries to take initiative and create effective solutions for poverty, women's rights violations, and state repression.⁶ The body should identify if there are any subjects left out of the Charter that may be of particular importance to the constituents of their country.

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

Something that delegates will need to consider over the course of debate is whether revisions made to the ACHR will result in increased support of the document. While delegates should discuss revisions to the ACHR, delegates should also consider what steps, if any, the League should take to ensure that states amend their national laws in compliance with the ACHR. If member states decide to formally make any revisions to the ACHR, it is essential that the body does so with the hopes of eventually having all member states ratify it. While the body should focus on how the ACHR will affect the Arab community, it is also essential that delegates address the concerns of the international community and non-government organizations, as well as consider the religious constrictions in the region. Member states must be willing to reopen debate on subject matters that have evolved since its first ratification.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Has my country signed and ratified the 2004 Arab Charter on Human Rights, and if not, why is my country hesitant?
- If my country has not ratified the Charter, which parts can be amended to lead my country towards the direction of ratification?
- How did the Arab Spring in 2011 affect how my country views human rights violations and what steps has my country taken to reduce violations in my country?
- How can the Arab League hold member states accountable for complying with the Charter and revising their own laws to model the standards agreed upon in the Charter?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What revisions to the Charter can the Arab League make to ensure its ratification by all 22 members?
- If full ratification is not possible, how can the League move in a direction to encourage member states to revise their laws to incorporate laws that will effectively remove human rights violations from occurring within member states?
- What effective measures towards ending human rights violations have been taken in my own country that may be a model for an Arab-wide recommendation?
- How can the Charter be revised to comply with international law as well as still remaining sensitive to regional and religious restrictions?

⁶ Naber, Nadene. "Women and the Arab Spring: Human Rights from the Ground Up." Women and the Arab Spring: Human Rights from the Ground Up. N.p., 2011. Web. July 2016.

IV. Additional Resources

[1994 Version of the Arab Charter on Human Rights](#)

This is a translated copy of the Arab Charter on Human Rights that was originally written in 1994. Reading through and understanding this version of the Charter will help delegates understand the revisions that were made in 2004 as well as give delegates an idea of what should be changed in future revisions.

[Arab Charter on Human Rights](#)

This is a copy of the 2004 revised Arab Charter on Human Rights. It is important that each delegate thoroughly read through the document in order to see which parts comply or go against their country's current policy.

[Challenges the Charter Faces](#)

This link offers several different resources for delegates to review. It assesses challenges that the Charter faces as well as offers recommendations for the future.

Topic 2: Assessing the impact that religious leaders have on radicalization and employing the religious community to counteract recruitment by and popularity of extremist groups

I. Introduction

A. General Background

Extremist groups in the Middle East have crafted effective recruiting strategies to attract individuals sympathetic to their missions. Many of these messages center on an interpretation of Islam that encourages the use of force and violence to institutionalize and enforce those views; additionally, the core tenets are supplemented by the allure of a sense of inclusion, belonging, and purpose.⁷ This message has resonated with disaffected and marginalized individuals the world over, who form their own loose social networks of friends and peers to advance the ends of extremist ideologies.

To combat this perverse understanding of Islam, religious leaders in the Muslim community have enacted their own strategies to counteract extremist messaging. While Daesh has continued to spread its influence throughout the Middle East and abroad, Islamic leaders have consistently condemned the group's actions. The influence and authority that clerics wield in the Arab world is essential to combatting the spread of extremism, and collaboration between governments and religious leaders will be an essential component of any successful counterterrorism strategy.⁸

B. History in the Arab World

A wave of extremist influence has moved through the Arab world affecting a various range of age groups. However, Arab youth find themselves more susceptible to radicalization, and the increase of youth involvement in extremist organizations within the past decade underscores the urgency for the League to develop a system in which counter recruitment and de-radicalization strategies are central factors. Any individual with access to the internet can view extremist websites, social media outlets, and other sources of propaganda that may lead them down the path to radicalization, making prevalence and visibility of a counter narrative doubly important.⁹

Part of countering recruitment and reducing the popularity of extremist groups in the region includes presenting paths to de-radicalization that include clerical support from religious leaders. This demonstrates that religious leaders do not stand in solidarity with extremist groups, nor do they support the actions taken in the name of Islam by various groups such as Daesh and al-Qaeda. In doing so, religious authorities undermine the legitimacy of extremist groups, and at the very least give pause to those who would support extremist groups in the name of piety. Saudi Arabia has effectively de-radicalized several Arabs that fell into the path of radicalization and extremism at the Prince Mohammed bin Nayef Center for

⁷ Bizina, Margarita, and David H. Gray. "Radicalization of Youth as a Growing Concern for Counter-Terrorism Policy." *Radicalization of Youth as a Growing Concern for Counter-Terrorism Policy* 2014. Web. July 2016.

⁸ Nozell, Melissa. "Religious Leaders Countering Extremist Violence: How Policy Changes Can Help." United States Institute of Peace. N.p., n.d. Web. July 2016.

⁹ "Recruitment and Radicalization of School-Aged Youth by International Terrorist Groups"; Homeland Security Institute (2009): n. pag. 23 Apr. 2009. Web. July 2016.

Counseling and Care. Individuals participate in a six-week program that includes rehabilitation courses and counseling sessions. These sessions are overseen by clerics in order to emphasize that extremist values are neither shared nor promoted by Islam or its leaders.¹⁰

Condemnation of extremism is not a new phenomenon in the region. In July 2014, after Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared himself leader of Daesh, several Muslim scholars wrote and published a 17-page open letter to Baghdadi. The leaders challenged Baghdadi's claims and insisted that Daesh's interpretation of the Quran is selectively chosen in order to justify its actions. The letter received support from the international community as well as religious leaders in the region.¹¹

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

Considering the prevalent and precise deployment of social and web-based media by extremist groups, it is essential that delegates review the most effective means of countering the messages that these groups are promoting with the positive counter narratives of the region's religious leaders. Fortunately, delegates have a number of existing models and examples of counter-messaging – from inside and outside the Arab world – to assess and critique during their discussions. Because the levels of influence that extremist groups wield in different Arab states vary, there will likely be no “one solution fits all” resolution for this topic, and regional considerations may result in a number of tailored proposals. All recommendations must also take care to preserve individual member state sovereignty.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Have any religious leaders in my country actively spoken against extremist groups?
- If my country has had religious leaders actively speak against extremist groups, what was the response from the group and what effect did their message have on those living in the region?
- What platforms will be most successful in my country in order to convey religious leaders' message?
- How can religious leaders assist de-radicalization programs already in place, and how can they help establish new programs to reduce the popularity of extremist groups?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- Is my resolution specific enough to be effective while still respecting the nature of sectarian differences within the region?
- Will my resolution reach a broader audience than just where the religious leader is located?
- How do I plan to ensure that the impact is relevant in the future? Will my resolution be something that can be used in the future?
- Does my resolution address only one extremist group or can it be used as a model for current groups and groups that may emerge in the future?

¹⁰ Porges, Marisa L. "The Saudi Deradicalization Experiment." Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations, 22 Jan. 2010. Web. July 2016.

¹¹ Feldman, Emily. "How Muslim Groups, Scholars Have Been Fighting ISIS." NBC New York. N.p., n.d. Web. July 2016.

IV. Additional Resources

[Open Letter to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi](#)

This is the open letter written by several Muslim scholars condemning the actions of Daesh. This letter was written in September 2014, and it was translated into 10 languages and signed by multiple supporters.

[Muslim Leaders Condemn Daesh](#)

While this site makes reference to Indian Muslim religious leaders that have issued a religious ruling in India, it could be a resourceful model for the Arab region to review successful documents written by religious leaders that have been effective.

[De-radicalization Programs in Middle East](#)

This link offers an insight into the de-radicalization programs currently in the Middle East. Delegates should look at how religious leaders are already playing a role in this initiative and how they can become more actively involved.

Topic 3: Discussing ways in which the League can promote women's involvement in society, including political and civic integration

I. Introduction

A. General Background

Women's involvement in society is a sensitive yet relevant topic in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region. While roles have evolved and expanded through the years, and progress has unquestionably been made, there are still ways in which the League can promote deeper political and civic integration. This topic is one that can be as wide or as narrow as the body wishes for it to be, though it will almost certainly include issues such as education, employment, and political involvement.

Education is the root of women's involvement in society, and it can serve as a driving force in the improvement of an individual's economic and social standing. The MENA region has dramatically transformed over the past few decades in regards to educating women. Primary school enrollment is high in most MENA countries, gender gaps in secondary schools are disappearing, and more women are enrolling in universities than ever before – in some cases, in greater numbers than men.¹² However, access to education alone is not enough to ensure that women are thriving in society. Delegates should review if the education women are receiving League-wide is enough to integrate women into society both economically and politically. While education is not and should not be the only factor delegates review, it could be used as a starting point in their research to see how women are progressing civically.¹³ One essential element that delegates must keep in mind is that cultural barriers exist in some member states, which will likely influence the feasibility of some proposed solutions.

B. History in the Arab World

While the past decade has seen tremendous growth for women in the MENA region in regards to education and political involvement, there are still barriers that women must overcome in the region in order to remain involved in society. The level of women's political and civic engagement in the MENA region is the lowest in the world. However, many countries have made tremendous strides in educational and economic advancements for women.¹⁴ Many universities are providing opportunities in the Middle East for women through various programs.

For some countries, while education is a significant stepping stone, it is not enough to fully integrate women into society. Although women are receiving higher education, they are still far less likely to enter into the job market, thus remaining economically trapped. 43.9 percent of Arab women are unemployed in the Middle East, compared to the 22.9 percent male unemployment rate.¹⁵ While women across the region are enrolled in university at an 8%

¹² Kjerfve, Bjorn. "Op-ed: The State of Higher Education in the Middle East." U.S. News & World Report, 17 Dec. 2014. Web. 05 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.usnews.com/news/college-of-tomorrow/articles/2014/12/17/op-ed-the-state-of-higher-education-in-the-middle-east>>.

¹³ Roudi-Fahimi, Farzaneh. "Empowering Women, Developing Society: Female Education in the Middle East and North Africa." Empowering Women, Developing Society: Female Education in the Middle East and North Africa. N.p., n.d. Web. July 2016.

¹⁴ "The Middle East Partnership Initiative." Women in Politics. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 July 2015.

¹⁵ Jalbout, Maysa. "Unlocking the Potential of Educated Arab Women." Brookings. N.p., n.d. Web. July 2016.

higher rate than men, the education still has not resulted in a level playing field for women to sustain employment.¹⁶

Women's involvement in political affairs varies from country to country, though as of Saudi Arabia's 2015 decision, women and men have the same voting rights across the entire Arab League. One goal of this body should be to find solutions that lead to increasing women's abilities to be engaged politically. Some countries have established a seat quota for women's representation in government that they aim to reach. In 2009, the Moroccan government established a 12% quota that resulted in the quota being exceeded by .3 percent.¹⁷ Still, the Middle East as a whole tends to lag behind the global average of 20% women in elected bodies, at around 11%.¹⁸

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

When searching for solutions, delegates should note that this topic has room for a multi-pronged approach, and in order to effectively flesh out this topic, delegates should work towards a number of complementary solutions rather than only one. Delegates should begin by understanding what cultural barriers are in place for women in their countries, while understanding that some states are more progressive in women's involvement than others. Some countries will note that their country needs to improve on educational advancements, while others will need to place more emphasis on economic development because women are already receiving the education they need in their country. Delegates should also research whether or not their country has a high level of political involvement for women; this includes civic engagement such as voting and holding political office. Because there are several countries that have improved women's involvement drastically over the past few decades, these countries will have pathways and guidance to offer other countries that are willing to accept it.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Are girls/women in my country receiving just as much of a quality education as the boys/men are?
- If the answer is no, what steps can my country take that are reasonable fiscally as well as culturally to ensure that women are receiving the education they need to be fully integrated into society?
- Does my country have female leaders in the government? If so, how many? Is it comparable to the amount of male leaders?
- How is my country enabling women to succeed economically? Does my country provide economic and employment opportunities for women?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- Is my resolution culturally sensitive to all member states and does it respect their individual sovereignty while still posing a solution for the topic?

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "The Middle East Partnership Initiative." Women in Politics. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 July 2015.

¹⁸ Bachelet, Michelle. "Women's Empowerment in the Middle East and Worldwide." UN Women, 20 Apr. 2012. Web. 05 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2012/4/women-s-empowerment-in-the-middle-east-and-worldwide>>.

- How will my resolution assist in women's advancement in the region? Is my resolution going to be effective enough to see a noticeable change?
- Are there any programs or organization similar to those in my resolution that are already taking place? If so, how can the League minimize bureaucracy while still leading effective change?
- Do my resolutions for this topic address both short term and long term challenges that women in the MENA region face in regards to societal and civic involvement?

IV. Additional Resources

[Women's Political Involvement in Middle East](#)

This article illustrates how women's political participation has changed over the years. It also pays special attention to the effect that the Arab Spring in 2011 had on women's involvement in political affairs.

[Women in the Arab Spring](#)

While this link is 49 pages long, it may serve as a useful tool for delegates to review. It gives an insight into how women were able to effectively be involved in the Arab Spring through uprisings and social media. It examines how their involvement contributed to the overall results.

[Women's Education in Middle East](#)

This article provides an overview of women's progress in education in various parts of the Middle East.

[Women and Economic Development](#)

This link details how women in the Middle East have and are still advancing economically. It reviews details such as cultural, regional, and governmental barriers that are present as well as how women have overcome them.

Topic 4: Examining the feasibility of member states implementing social safety nets for their citizens while considering fiscal solutions for the unemployed, disabled, and retired

I. Introduction

A. General Background

While the idea of social safety nets for the retired is not a new topic in the MENA region, it is one that can be expanded upon. In the 1990s, several MENA countries began understanding the growing presence of poverty within their countries. Since then, the region has seen a growing development in social protection policies. Part of this development was due to the Millennium Developmental Goals (MDGs) and the post-2015 UN development agenda.

Policy shifts in the MENA region have most recently stemmed from the Arab Spring in 2011, which called for social reform and social justice to take place. The League needs to consider ways to implement social safety nets in the region as well as look for ways to combat the negative fiscal implications that are experienced by the unemployed, disabled, and retired.¹⁹ The goal of this body for this topic needs to be finding reasonable ways that countries can provide social assistance by not only relieving the symptoms of poverty, but also ending the root causes of poverty that lead to individuals needing government support.

B. History in the Arab World

While most welfare systems in the region have been employment-based, there is also assistance for vulnerable social groups. As a result of this, the majority of MENA populations are without forms of social security. However, many governments in the region and international organizations have seen the need for increased assistance for impoverished individuals since the uprisings in 2011. Several international organizations have devoted their efforts towards the MENA region in order to make up where governments are unable to provide social assistance. While these organizations do play a crucial role in alleviating the economic hardships associated with unemployment, disabilities and retirement, most governments in the MENA region tend to favor economic development through private-sector investment.²⁰

While there are welfare and social safety nets in place in the region, the League needs to evaluate its effectiveness in alleviating the disparities within assistance received by socially deprived groups. Individuals falling under this category would be those who are not receiving employment-based social assistance, but rather have to rely on social safety nets alone such as public assistance for food, fuel subsidies, and cash transfers. While assistance is available from non-government organizations (NGOs) and through the country's own welfare system, the League must move towards a way to promote economic opportunity for unemployed and

¹⁹ Jawad, Rana. Social Protection and Social Policy Systems in the MENA Region: Emerging Trends (n.d.): 1-27. Web. July 2016.

²⁰"Social Protection Policies in the Middle East and North African Region (MENA): New Priorities, New Debates." University of Bath. N.p., n.d. Web. July 2016.

underemployed groups. Moreover, decreasing government revenues in some states – particularly the GCC – are raising discussions about subsidy and entitlement reform.²¹

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

When seeking a solution for this problem, delegates should review their own country's policies on welfare and social assistance. Many delegates will find that their countries already have such safety nets in place. However, how can the League implement these safety nets region-wide in order to reduce the economic turmoil faced by those that are vulnerable such as the impoverished, handicapped, unemployed, and retired? Delegates should explore how NGOs have helped the region and which programs have been successful for them in their own country. In addition to short term solutions that would include assistance from NGOs and other various organizations, the body should also review long term solutions. What programs can the League implement that will end the causes of poverty and unemployment in order for individuals to have a more fulfilled and fiscally sustainable life rather than just alleviate symptoms?

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What social assistance programs are already in place in my country? Are they successful?
- For what reasons are individuals in my country on these programs? Is it due to unemployment or reasons beyond their control such as handicaps or old age?
- Is my country willing to extend its percentage of funding that it currently has in place in order to extend social safety nets?
- What NGOs and other organizations are active in my country?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- Is my solution feasible considering what my country's budget allows for each year for social assistance?
- Does my solution resemble any programs that other countries already have in place in the region? What can we learn from the failures and successes of any current programs?
- Will my solution help all member states regardless of ability to contribute equally?
- If not, how can countries seek further funding for social assistance in order to lead to positive change across the region?

IV. Additional Resources

[Social Welfare in the Middle East](#)

This is a link to online access of a book written by John Dixon which outlines how social welfare in the Middle East is economically laid out as well as its origins.

²¹ Ghafar, Adel Abdel. "Will the GCC Be Able to Adjust to Lower Oil Prices?" *Brookings*. N.p., 18 Feb. 2016. Web. 05 Aug. 2016. <<https://www.brookings.edu/2016/02/18/will-the-gcc-be-able-to-adjust-to-lower-oil-prices/>>.

[Supporting Social Accountability](#)

This document details successes and failures of previous governments while going through economic and political transitions. It provides information on government initiatives in education, health, and water.

[Social Protection in Middle East](#)

This article will give an overview of the challenges that countries in the MENA region face that include civil unrest and how that disrupts social services, stagnates economic growth, and increases unemployment.