



2018-2019 Model Arab League BACKGROUND GUIDE

Special Council on Women and Children

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Original draft by *Nina Kalantar*, Chair of the *Special Council on Women and Children* at the 2019 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 my distinct honor to welcome you all to the 2018-2019 Model Arab League Special Council on Women and Children! My name is Nina Kalantar, and I will be serving as your Chair at the 2019 National University Model Arab League conference. I am a senior at Northeastern University majoring in International Affairs and Political Science with minor in Law and Public Policy and a concentration in the Middle East region. This will be my fourth year participating in Model Arab League, and it is by far my favorite model simulation! I have previously participated as a Delegate and Head Delegate at the last three NUMAL conferences, and have chaired for three years at the Northeast Regional Model Arab League conference in Boston, MA.

This year's topic for the Special Council is incredibly meaningful to me, and is one of utmost importance to societal welfare and stability in the Arab region. The Arab world in the contemporary era has been plagued by decades of incessant conflict, subsequently undermining the region's ability to protect its most vulnerable populations. While our topics span a wide range of issues, they focus on the impact displacement and conflict has had on women and children and how the League can comprehensively respond to present challenges facing the Arab world. Discussing issues plaguing women and children in the region will present a challenge for many member states, and I encourage you all to remain in character and stick to your country's policy. The strength of your research and your understanding of recent updates regarding these topics will be incredibly important as we work to enact substantive change in our League's policies.

I look forward to working and learning with you all as we tackle these pressing challenges; please feel free to reach out with any questions or comments you may have!

Cheers,

Nina Kalantar
Chair, Special Council on Women and Children

Topic I: Discussing the intersection between the impacts of the rising extremist movements and women's security in the region

I. Introduction to Topic

A. General Background

Commonly overlooked in debates regarding regional security and the impacts of violent extremism, the protection of women in the Arab world is a discussion in greater need of attention. With increasingly deteriorating conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, and Palestine, the League and its member states will be challenged with developing comprehensive solutions for protecting and utilizing women in the fight against violent extremist forces. Topic 1 will focus on discussing present barriers impacting women's security in the region, and work towards developing financing and monitoring mechanisms for combatting present threats.

A topic central to the debate, and all the more prevalent in the current context, is the new phenomenon of sexual violence as a tactic of terror by extremist groups in the Arab world. The objectives of such terrorism, as noted by UN Special Representative Zainab Hawa Bangura, is "to destroy families and cultures; to strike fear into the hearts of the civilian population; to furnish fighters with women to boost recruitment and retention; to give birth to a new, malleable generation; and to raise funds through the sale of women in slave markets or from ransom paid by their families".¹ The importance of gender inclusion and equal protection practices is all the more necessary given the increasing use of sexual violence as a tactic of terror.

B. History of Topic in the Arab World

Given the increased interconnectedness of the world and rapid technological advancements, extremist movements are no longer confined by borders. Historically, violent extremism has disproportionately affected women and children, since "violent extremists with conservative or reactionary gender agendas are likely to victimize women".² Examples of this can be found throughout the Arab world: "thousands of Yazidi children and women were being forced into sexual slavery in Iraq and Syria at the hands of ISIS" and extremist groups like al-Shabaab have found ways "to engage women better and give them a voice".³ Such methods of coercion and abuse have made mechanisms for women's security all the more necessary in the Arab region.

While sexual violence during conflicts is as old as warfare itself, it has evolved into a tactic of terrorism in countries such as Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, where Daesh (ISIS) has transformed it into "a key tool in the political economy of terrorism".⁴ Stories of sexual violence

¹ "Women and Violent Extremism: A Growing Threat Demands Concerted Action," United States Institute of Peace, accessed July 14, 2018, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2015/08/women-and-violent-extremism-growing-threat-demands-concerted-action>.

² Lori Ann Post, "The Impact of Violent Extremism on the Human Rights of Women and Girls," June 14, 2017, <http://wunrn.com/wp-content/uploads/The-Impact-of-Violent-Extremism-on-Human-Rights-of-Women-Girls.pdf>.

³ Post.

⁴ "Women and Violent Extremism."

in the Arab region at the hands of violent extremists is devastating, with one account detailing that “a girl sold as a sex slave in the markets of the Syrian city of Raqqa... is likely to change hands five times” and another detailing the account of a Yazidi teenager who “had been forced to marry 15 men, some for as few as three days”.⁵ Many who refuse to cooperate are brutally murdered, exposing the harsh realities plaguing women as a result of extremism in the region.⁶

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

Member states should reflect on the proceedings of previous League ministerial conferences on “Women and Achieving Peace and Security in the Arab Region”, which have aimed to facilitate the implementation of the regional strategy for United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, “which first recognized women’s disproportionate suffering in times of conflict and called for their engagement in peace and security processes and prioritizing them in humanitarian assistance”.⁷ While the League has committed to increasing representation of women in decision-making circles, and in humanitarian assistance projects, there is still a great deal of work to be done. Topics introduced at past League meetings that should be reassessed in the convening of the Special Council include urging for “better reporting mechanisms for sexual violence, better access to services and medical and psychological care for women survivors of sexual violence, and better living conditions and access to basic services for women refugees in the region”.⁸ It is again important to note, however, that discussions pertaining to this topic will vary significantly based on each state’s national policies, and delegates should aim to best represent their country.

Additionally, member states should work towards developing and adopting stronger protections and support for women and girls who are vulnerable to, or are victims of extremism and insurgent groups.⁹ This can be achieved through expanding and enabling counter-insurgent networks among vulnerable women and youth, expanding research on better protection strategies and on how women can systematically provide early warning, involving women in security sectors of government and international bodies, and leveraging social media that elevates women’s voices.¹⁰

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How has the issue of violent extremism, specifically its impact on women been addressed by my state?

⁵ “Women and Violent Extremism.”

⁶ “Women and Violent Extremism.”

⁷ “The League of Arab States and UN Women Conclude the First Ministerial Conference on ‘Women and Achieving Peace and Security in the Arab Region,’” UN Women, September 6, 2016, <http://www.unwomen.org/news/stories/2016/9/ministerial-conference-on-women-and-achieving-peace-and-security-in-the-arab-region>.

⁸ “The League of Arab States and UN Women Conclude the First Ministerial Conference on ‘Women and Achieving Peace and Security in the Arab Region.’”

⁹ “Women and Violent Extremism.”

¹⁰ “Women and Violent Extremism.”

- What political, economic, or cultural barriers exist in my state that would impede resolution to this problem?
- Does religion play a role in my country's position on the rights of women? How does this affect our internal policies?
- Has my state made progress towards implementing UNSC Resolution 1325? What was their position during League discussions and agreements?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How have National Action Plans called for in Resolution 1325 been addressed by member states, and have they been addressed comprehensively?
- How can the League address the growing threat of sexual violence against women in the region?
- What are the current threats posed to women by violent extremist groups?
- How will the League address women refugee flows resulting from internal conflict and terrorism?
- What funding mechanisms are in place to aid women impacted by violent extremism?

IV. Resources to Review

- "Arab League Presents Regional Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security," UN Women | Arab States/North Africa, <http://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/10/arab-league-presents-regional-action-plan>.
- "Landmark Resolution on Women, Peace and Security (Security Council Resolution 1325)," accessed July 14, 2018, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>.
- "Tracking the Trends and Numbers: Islam, Terrorism, Stability, and Conflict in the Middle East," accessed July 14, 2018, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/tracking-trends-and-numbers-islam-terrorism-stability-and-conflict-middle-east>.

Topic II: Examining the impact of displacement and conflict in preventing children from accessing a stable education and evaluating ways in which the League can reduce the number of children currently out of school

I. Introduction to Topic

A. General Background

With nearly 16 million refugees and 60 million displaced persons around the world today, access to education for children in times of conflict has become all the more unlikely.¹¹ As noted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), refugee children are five times for likely to be out of school, and out of the six million primary and secondary school-age refugees under UNHCR's mandate, 3.7 million have no school to go to.¹² In the Arab world, countries experiencing the highest percentages of children out of school are those taking in high refugee counts, including Lebanon and Turkey. While the Arab League has attempted to rally support and funding for education programs targeting displaced children, there is still a great deal of work to be done. With conflicts continuing to deteriorate in the region, many children are trapped in forced displacement for significantly long periods of time, with many social and psychological needs unfulfilled. Refugees' access to education is rarely tracked through national monitoring systems, meaning that "refugee children and youth are not only disadvantaged, but their educational needs and achievements remain largely invisible".¹³ The Special Committee will face the difficult task of brainstorming ways in which the League can increase accountability and accessibility to education for refugee children in the region.

B. History of Topic in the Arab World

The Middle East and North African region faces incredibly serious displacement and refugee flow concerns given the deteriorating conflicts in many Arab League states. When looking at Syrian and Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons, there are nearly 15 million individuals with an estimated 4 million more in the extreme risk category.¹⁴ Countries including Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen have experienced immense conflict further increasing refugee flows and limiting access to stable education for refugee children. Due to mass migration, "neighboring states have faced severe challenges in absorbing millions of refugees, while North African states and Turkey have emerged as key transit hubs for refugee flows into Europe".¹⁵

¹¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Introduction," UNHCR, accessed July 14, 2018, <http://www.unhcr.org/introduction.html>.

¹² Refugees.

¹³ Refugees.

¹⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Millions of Refugees at Risk in the Middle East as Winter Funds Dwindle," UNHCR, accessed July 14, 2018, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2017/10/59d34b0c4/millions-refugees-risk-middle-east-winter-funds-dwindle.html>.

¹⁵ Marc Lynch Brand Laurie and Marc Lynch Brand Laurie, "Refugees and Displacement in the Middle East," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accessed July 14, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/03/29/refugees-and-displacement-in-middle-east-pub-68479>.

Access to education becomes all the more unlikely given rampant violence and displacement facing refugees. Given the prolonged nature of current conflicts in the MENA region, the international community has attempted to develop methods to mitigate the number of refugee children out of school. Despite more than seven years of war, nearly 4.9 million Syrian children continue to have access to education due to “massive funding from donors [and] unprecedented generosity from host countries and communities”.¹⁶ It is important to note, however, that “nearly 90 percent of children who have access to education are in public schools, both in Syria and in neighboring countries”.¹⁷ For example, in Lebanon and Jordan, Syrian children are able to join their local peers in public schools.¹⁸ Integration will therefore be a central challenge facing League members when discussing solutions to increasing education access for refugee children.

In addition to integration concerns, additional obstacles face primarily countries accepting high numbers of refugees in the MENA region. Some fundamental concerns the League will need to address include reducing barriers to education, such as lack of identification and language skills, addressing causes of dropouts, and reducing child labor and dropouts by increasing adults’ access to work.¹⁹

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

Given the integration of refugee children into the public school system, governments must work to develop a proper integration system that ensures students are placed in the appropriate grade level. With nearly 2.8 million Syrian refugee children still out of school, integrating children that have not received an education for seven years and suffer from immense trauma is a difficult task to tackle.²⁰ Organizations such as UNICEF have called for “continued, flexible, unconditional and long-term funding to the education sector” in order to “improve existing systems and scale up alternative options for children and youth”.²¹ Member states of the Arab League will be challenged to develop comprehensive solutions towards addressing the ever-increasing numbers of refugee children who lack access to education in the region.

Additionally, it has been noted that donor funding in response to growing conflicts “has been crucial in enabling host countries to increase classroom spaces, build and renovate schools, hire and train teachers, and develop programs to reach out-of-school children”.²² Fundamental to the success of educational programs for refugee children will be removing obstacles presently facing access to education. One such obstacle is ensuring that a lack of identification documents is not a

¹⁶ “Nearly 5 Million Syrian Children Accessing Education despite over Seven Years of War on Children,” accessed July 14, 2018, /mena/press-releases/nearly-5-million-syrian-children-accessing-education-despite-over-seven-years-war.

¹⁷ “Nearly 5 Million Syrian Children Accessing Education despite over Seven Years of War on Children.”

¹⁸ “Nearly 5 Million Syrian Children Accessing Education despite over Seven Years of War on Children.”

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch | 350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor | New York, and NY 10118-3299 USA | t 1.212.290.4700, “Education for Syrian Refugee Children: What Donors and Host Countries Should Do,” Human Rights Watch, September 16, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/09/16/education-syrian-refugee-children-what-donors-and-host-countries-should-do>.

²⁰ “Nearly 5 Million Syrian Children Accessing Education despite over Seven Years of War on Children.”

²¹ “Nearly 5 Million Syrian Children Accessing Education despite over Seven Years of War on Children.”

²² Avenue, York, and t 1.212.290.4700, “Education for Syrian Refugee Children.”

barrier to education. Many refugees fleeing conflict do not have a form of identification, making it difficult for them to be enrolled in schools. Increasing efficiency and flexibility of such structures is essential in order to ensure all refugee children have access to education. Additionally, the League must address disincentives to education and the causes of dropouts. For example, “for many Syrian children who enroll in Turkish public schools, as 75,000 did last year, the language of instruction is foreign and new, and access to accelerated language learning programs is limited”.²³ Given their inability to understand the curriculum, many students drop out. Member states can work towards substantially increasing access to language support programs for refugees, increasing the number of volunteers from refugee countries, and increasing subsidized transportation to schools.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What are your country’s education rates for the entire population? For specifically refugees? What are the reasons for potentially differences in these numbers?
- What resources does your country have that it is willing to utilize when increasing education access for refugees?
- What is your country currently doing to reduce the impacts of the refugee crisis?
- What reforms would your country be willing to make in order to develop a solution to provide education more evenly across the board?
- What external help could the League utilize to mitigate this issue?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How can the League increase funding to improve the quality of education for refugees?
- How can current practices be reformed in order to solve the lack of education for refugees?
- How can problems with integration be solved by League-enacted policies?
- How can access to education be improved for all people?

²³ Avenue, York, and t 1.212.290.4700.

IV. Additional Resources

- “Education in the Second Largest Refugee Camp in the World | Global Partnership for Education,” accessed July 15, 2018, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/education-second-largest-refugee-camp-world>.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis,” UNHCR, accessed July 14, 2018, <http://www.unhcr.org/missing-out-state-of-education-for-the-worlds-refugees.html>.
- “Educate Refugee Children or Lose Them Forever | War & Conflict | Al Jazeera,” accessed July 15, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/09/educate-refugee-children-lose-160919102949662.html>.

Topic III: Assessing the state of women and children in current and post-conflict areas and formulating strategies on how the League can better address safety concerns

I. Introduction to Topic

A. General Background

Following the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings, conflict and civil unrest has persisted in the Arab region, further threatening the security of vulnerable populations. Women and children are more prone to all types of negligence and exploitation in periods of conflict, including forced participation in acts of violence and armed conflict, poverty, malnutrition, exposure to killing, displacement, separation from family, trafficking, sexual exploitation, and rape of women.²⁴ Both groups also make up the largest percentage of those impacted by current armed conflicts, as about 70% of non-combatant victims of conflict are women and children, and “80% of the millions of refugees, displaced persons and evacuees, including internally displaced individuals worldwide” are women and children.²⁵ Additionally, violence against women has been found to not only be a symptom of war, but a weapon “used for the purpose of spreading terror, destabilizing the society and breaking its resistance, as well as extracting information and rewarding victorious soldiers”.²⁶

While the international community has taken steps to ensure the protection of women and children in current and post-conflict areas, there is still a great deal of work to be done. A central resolution referenced in discussions pertaining to the security of women is UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which called “on all actors involved in negotiating and implementing peace agreements to adopt a gender perspective that included the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration, and post-conflict reconstruction”.²⁷ Support for this monumental resolution signaled the willingness from the Arab states to devote greater attention to the very important issue of the enormous challenges facing women and children in the Arab region under the conditions of conflict and occupation. Additionally, the Declaration of the Protection of Women and Children during Emergency and Armed Conflict, or General Assembly Resolution 2200, stipulated “that the relevant members of the armed conflict must exert all efforts to protect women and children from the sufferings of war”.²⁸ Arab League member states should keep in mind their commitments to international agreements when determining steps to take in protecting women and children from conflict and violence.

²⁴ Yaser Snoubar, “Impact of Wars and Conflicts on Women and Children in Middle East: Health, Psychological, Educational and Social Crisis,” May 22, 2017, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317045854_Impact_of_Wars_and_Conflicts_on_Women_and_Children_in_Middle_East_Health_Psychological_Educational_and_Social_Crisis.

²⁵ General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, Arab Women Organization, and UN Women, “Protection of Arab Women: Peace and Security,” 2012, <http://www.arabwomenorg.org/Content/Publications/strpeceng.pdf>.

²⁶ Arab Women Organization and UN Women.

²⁷ “Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Girls,” accessed July 15, 2018, </publications/impact-armed-conflict-women-and-girls>.

²⁸ Arab Women Organization and UN Women, “Protection of Arab Women: Peace and Security.”

B. History of Topic in the Arab World

Women and children in the Arab world have experienced horrendous consequences as a result of persistent conflict. When looking specifically at women, UN-Women has assessed that political and security situations in many Arab countries have fueled problems giving direct correlation between crises and domestic violence. “During the last conflict in Gaza, intimate partner violence reportedly rose by 700% due to feelings of hopelessness, humiliation, and lack of opportunities”.²⁹ Additionally, “sexual assault presents a major problem in camps for refugees and the displaced”.³⁰ The fear of violence, therefore, permanently constrains women from being able to access social mobility and prosperity.

Children have also experienced the significant tolls as a result of conflicts in the Arab region. For example, “fighting in Yemen has left at least 5,000 children dead or injured according to official figures, with the real number expected to be much higher”.³¹ Children have essentially become frontline targets, commonly used as human shields, killed, maimed and recruited to fight, and “rape, forced marriage, abduction and enslavement have become standard tactics in conflicts in Iraq, Syria and Yemen”.³² Statistics from UNICEF pertaining to the impact of war in the MENA region on children is shocking: with a reported 700 children killed in Afghanistan in the first 9 months of 2017 and thousands more killed in conflicts in Yemen, Iraq, and Syria.³³

Steps have been taken by the League in the past to increase the protection of women and children in conflict zones. In 2014, the United Nations and the League of Arab States signed an agreement to strengthen the protection of children affected by armed conflict in the Arab world. Advancements include “increased global awareness of the issues concerning children affected by armed conflict, as well as development and strengthening of international norms and standards for the protection of children”.³⁴ It is apparent that gaps exist in the protection of women and children, which present challenges for member states when developing solutions to present concerns.

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

Current levels of protection and support for women and children in current and post-conflict areas remains weak because of fragmentation in support efforts amongst countries, NGOs, and intergovernmental bodies. While UNSC Resolution 1325 symbolized international interest in

²⁹ “UN Study Tackles Violence against Women in Arab Region Using Economic Model,” UN News, October 6, 2017, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/10/567972-un-study-tackles-violence-against-women-arab-region-using-economic-model>.

³⁰ “Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War,” accessed July 15, 2018, <https://www.unicef.org/sowc96pk/sexviol.htm>.

³¹ BBC World, “UNICEF Says Scale of Attacks on Children in Conflicts Is Shocking,” December 28, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-42499416>.

³² “Children under Attack at Shocking Scale in Conflicts around the World, Says UNICEF,” UNICEF, accessed July 15, 2018, https://www.unicef.org/media/media_102357.html.

³³ “Children under Attack at Shocking Scale in Conflicts around the World, Says UNICEF.”

³⁴ “New UN-Arab League Pact Aims to Better Protect Children Affected by Armed Conflict,” UN News, September 22, 2014, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2014/09/478122>.

protecting women from the impacts of conflict, it is clear “that additional efforts are still needed to reinforce mechanisms for the prevention of violence against women during wars and for the investigation of incidents associated with it.”³⁵ In order for any significant change to be enabled through Arab League action, monitoring mechanisms and cooperation amongst states is vital.

A significant barrier preventing the protection of women in conflict zones is a lack of representation in decision-making bodies. Women present valuable and fundamental forces in peace-building, conflict resolution, and the reconstruction of post-conflict areas, and “the equitable access and full participation of women in power structures and their involvement in conflict prevention, management and resolution operations is of great importance in the preservation of international peace and security”.³⁶ Member states should take into account their commitment to UNSC Resolution 1325 when finding ways to increase women participation in conflict resolution matters.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What is your country currently doing to ensure the protection of women and children in current and post-conflict zones?
- Is your country a signatory or party to UNSC Resolution 1325 or UNGA Resolution 2200?
- What is your country’s involvement in present conflicts in the Arab region?
- What can your country contribute to in debates regarding protecting women and children?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What are measures that can be taken to maintain the safety of victims of armed combat with an emphasis on women and children?
- How can women be more involved in the conflict settlement process?
- How can international requirements for conflict be expanded to prosecute military personnel and political commanders responsible for war crimes involving the persecution, or assault of women and children?

³⁵ Arab Women Organization and UN Women, “Protection of Arab Women: Peace and Security.”

³⁶ Arab Women Organization and UN Women.

IV. Additional Resources

- “UN WOMEN For Arab States &The Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee),” 2003,
<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/Womenconflictsituations/RegionalConsultationAmmanJan2013.pdf>.
- “GA Resolution 3318 Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict,” December 14, 1974,
http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.19_declaration%20protection%20women%20armed%20conflict.pdf.

Topic IV: Revisiting and evaluating the League’s commitment to the 2004 Arab Charter on Human Rights, giving special emphasis on Article 33 and its effectiveness, and implementing strategies to strengthen the framework provided

I. Introduction to Topic

A. General Background

The Arab Charter on Human Rights (ACHR), was adopted by the League of Arab States on May 22, 2004, and symbolizes the affirmation of principles found in the United Nations Charter, the International Covenants on Human Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam.³⁷ Article 33 of the Charter states that “the state and society shall ensure the protection of the family, the strengthening of family ties, the protection of its members and the prohibition of all forms of violence and abuse in the relations among its members, and particularly against women and children”.³⁸ Additionally, the article stipulates that Arab League member states “shall take all necessary legislative, administrative and judicial measures to guarantee the protection, survival, development and well-being of the child in an atmosphere of freedom and dignity”.³⁹ The League’s commitment to protecting women and children is an essential foundational mechanism for reaffirming member states’ commitment to upholding international law. While the 2004 Charter has undergone reforms in the years following its creation, there is still significant work to be done in order to ensure the protection of women and children in the Arab world.

B. History of Topic in the Arab World

The 2004 Arab Charter on Human Rights came as an effort for the League of Arab States to modernize, and signaled “a formal commitment to international human rights law”.⁴⁰ Additionally, the 2004 Charter affirmed Palestinian independence and states that “even though the outward signs of this independence have remained veiled as a result of force majeure, an Arab delegate from Palestine should participate in the League’s work until this country enjoys actual independence”.⁴¹ It is important to note, however, that the Charter did accommodate many Arab states’ positions on issues in international law, such as the “death penalty, women’s rights, rights of non-citizens, and freedoms of expression and religion”.

A central flaw of the Charter that should be addressed by member states is the lack of compliance mechanisms in place with Arab League resolutions. Since only countries accepting of certain decisions are bound to its agreement, “a premium on national sovereignty and [limiting] the League’s ability to take collective action”.⁴² An example of inaction was

³⁷ “Arab Charter on Human Rights,” May 22, 2004, <https://www.unicef.org/tdad/arabcharterhumanrights.doc>.

³⁸ “Arab Charter on Human Rights.”

³⁹ “Arab Charter on Human Rights.”

⁴⁰ “The Arab League,” Council on Foreign Relations, accessed July 15, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/arab-league>.

⁴¹ “The Arab League.”

⁴² “The Arab League.”

highlighted by NYU Associate Professor Mohamad Bazzi, noting that “during the Lebanese civil war, the Arab League had limited success trying to help negotiate a peace, but in the end it was the individual powers, in this case Syria and Saudi Arabia, that helped end the conflict by convening the Taif Agreement”.⁴³ It is such inaction that has led to nearly half of the members of the Arab League having yet to ratify the Charter, with countries like Lebanon citing concern that the Charter offered less protection for rights than did Lebanon’s own laws.⁴⁴ “Many Arab, regional, and international organizations take the position that they will not lobby actively for the ratification of the Charter because it conflicts with international law in many fundamental areas”.⁴⁵

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

It was believed that the revolts in the MENA region during the Arab Spring would bring about reform across the League, but this has yet to be seen in tangible action. “Many Mideast experts say the Arab League is likely to improve little on its record of collective action until members agree to sacrifice some sovereignty and comply with resolutions”, therefore presenting a challenge for states in tackling growing concerns regarding incessant conflict in the region.⁴⁶

Increasing cooperation amongst Arab League member states will be the biggest obstacle hindering Article 33 from being effective. However, an additional driver to change will be increasing diversity of opinions in member states. While the Arab Spring was unsuccessful in galvanizing significant reforms in the body, it did push many governments to respond to public opinion and transition towards more popular foreign policies.⁴⁷ Arab states will be challenged with ensuring that all member states have an equal voice in debate, and not solely those with the largest supplies of wealth.

The Arab League has in the past shown firm unity in its decision making, as seen when eighteen member states voted to suspend Syrian membership from the body. The fact that the League and its member states have become more willing to intervene “on the behalf of people’s safety, security and well-being in one another’s countries” symbolizes gradual steps being taken to increase unity amongst the body.⁴⁸ Such continued unity and compliance with international customary norms will be essential in order for the body to increase and improve public respect for its actions.

⁴³ “The Arab League.”

⁴⁴ “The Arab Charter on Human Rights,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accessed July 15, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/23951>.

⁴⁵ “The Arab Charter on Human Rights.”

⁴⁶ “The Arab League.”

⁴⁷ “Making the Arab League Matter,” *Foreign Policy* (blog), accessed July 16, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/04/08/making-the-arab-league-matter/>.

⁴⁸ “The Arab League: No Longer Toothless? - CNN.com,” accessed July 16, 2018, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/01/31/world/arab-league-explain/index.html>.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How has your state complied in the past with Arab League resolutions?
- What is your state's position on collective action?
- What reforms does your country want to see in the Arab League?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What are main obstacles in the Arab Charter hindering collective action?
- How effective has Article 33 been in protecting women and children in the region?
- What reforms are needed to increase the League's commitment to protecting women and children?

IV. Additional Resources

- "Arab Charter on Human Rights," May 22, 2004, <https://www.unicef.org/tdad/arabcharterhumanrights.doc>.
- Khaled Elgindy, "A New and Improved Arab League?," *Brookings* (blog), November 30, 2001, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2012/03/27/a-new-and-improved-arab-league/>.
- "OHCHR | Arab Charter on Human Rights," accessed July 16, 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/RuleOfLaw/CompilationDemocracy/Pages/ArabCharter.aspx>.