



**2022 - 2023**

# **Model Arab League BACKGROUND GUIDE**

**Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers**

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**National  
Council  
on US-  
Arab  
Relations**



**Original draft by Pashion Israel, Chair of the Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers at the 2023 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from the dedicated staff and volunteers at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations**

Honorable Delegates,

I have the great privilege of welcoming you to the 2022-2023 season of Model Arab League! My name is Pashion Israel and I will be serving as your Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers Chair for the National University Model Arab League conference this year. I am a sophomore at Converse University in Spartanburg, South Carolina studying History, Politics, American Sign Language, and Secondary Education. This will be my second year participating in Model Arab League, with my first year spent on Heads of State as a delegate.

During this model, I encourage you all to step out of your comfort zone. Speak up, be respectful of your fellow delegates, and have fun. The Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers gets the opportunity to delve into some truly unique topics involving any and all social matters in the region, from human rights to refugees, and more. I hope this background guide will provide a beneficial starting point for your research. I can't wait to meet all of you this spring at NUMAL!

Don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns, my email is [pmisrael001@converse.edu](mailto:pmisrael001@converse.edu).

- Pashion M. Israel

## **Topic I: Evaluating methods of mitigating water insecurity in the MENA region, with special attention to women and refugees.**

### **I. Introduction**

#### **A. General Background**

Water insecurity, or water scarcity, is a lack of potable water, or lack of ability to get it.<sup>1</sup> Lack of clean drinking water can lead to problems such as poverty, poor sanitation, and higher risk of transmitting diseases such as cholera, dysentery, hepatitis A, and typhus, among others.<sup>2</sup>

Globally, at least 2 billion people live in water insecurity either all year, or for part of the year. In addition to health concerns, living in a water scarce environment places extra stress on those already experiencing inequality, such as women, children, and refugees.

Women and girls, especially those in rural areas, are often tasked with retrieving water for their families and communities, and many have to travel for several hours in order to retrieve it. With so much time every day spent on collecting water, many girls are unable to attend school, and are at a higher risk of coming in contact with contaminated water.<sup>3</sup>

Water scarcity affects refugees at an increased rate, with over half of all refugees experiencing some level of scarcity. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), out of the 4.4 million refugees from 176 sites reporting to the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Monitoring System, as of 2021, 63% of refugees did not have access to the recommended 20 liters of water per day per person.<sup>4</sup>

#### **B. History in the Arab World**

Water insecurity is extremely common in the MENA region, and it is the most water-scarce region in the world. In an area that hosts 5% of the world's population, it has access to only 1%

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<sup>1</sup> World Vision Australia. "Global Water Crisis: Facts, FAQs, and How to Help." Global Water Crisis - Water Scarcity Facts & How To Help | World Vision Australia, <https://www.worldvision.com.au/global-water-crisis-facts>.

<sup>2</sup> "Drinking-Water." World Health Organization, World Health Organization, 21 Mar. 2022, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/drinking-water>.

<sup>3</sup> Lewis, Lori. "Water and Women's Inequality." The Water Project, <https://thewaterproject.org/water-scarcity/women-and-water-inequality>.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. ANNUAL REPORT 2021 on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/6298a9774.pdf#zoom=95>.

of the world's water resources.<sup>5</sup> A major contributor to the water scarcity in the region is the disparity between agricultural water use and agricultural share in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Across the Middle East, agriculture uses up to 85% of available freshwater, while only accounting for around 8% of the total GDP.<sup>6</sup> With between 2500 and 4500mm of water evaporating each year, and the region only getting 70-130mm of rainfall each year, it's no wonder that drought is extremely common in the arid environment of the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>7</sup>

While things have gotten better over the past few decades, with Diarrheal Diseases dropping from the third most common cause of death in the Arab World in 1990 to the sixth most common in 2010, it remains the second most common cause of death and disability for low income individuals.<sup>8</sup> One particular issue that impacts those in the MENA region is the ongoing refugee crisis. In Jordan, for example, an influx of Syrian refugees in the north has quickened the depletion of the Yarmouk-Jordan River, the country's main river system.<sup>9</sup> Those in refugee camps are often living in unsafe conditions and without the proper tools needed to purify drinking water, making water-borne illnesses extremely common. This is exacerbated even more for female refugees, who are often put in charge of not only fetching water, but treating those who have fallen ill, putting them at an increased risk of contracting these illnesses.

### **C. Finding Solutions to the Problem: Past, Present and Future**

Because water insecurity in the region is caused by a variety of factors, there is not one solution that will be able to fix it. Many organizations and governmental bodies have stepped forward in the last couple decades to target a few of the causes.

ReWater MENA is a project by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and its partners which aims to expand the reuse of water in the MENA region. The project's focus is on the states of Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon.<sup>10</sup> A large obstacle facing the project is the tendency for focus to be placed on men when trying to solve problems like water scarcity. Since women make

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<sup>5</sup> Abumoghli, Iyad. "Water Security in the Arab World." EcoMENA, 10 Apr. 2021, <https://www.ecomena.org/water-arab/>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Odhiambo, George O. "Water Scarcity in the Arabian Peninsula and Socio-Economic Implications - Applied Water Science." SpringerLink, Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 21 June 2016, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13201-016-0440-1>.

<sup>8</sup> Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. "Burden of Disease in the Arab World." Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation University of Washington, University of Washington, [https://www.healthdata.org/sites/default/files/files/infographics/Infographic\\_GBD\\_ArabWorld.pdf](https://www.healthdata.org/sites/default/files/files/infographics/Infographic_GBD_ArabWorld.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> "Water Crisis in the Mena Region • Stimson Center." Stimson Center, 9 Sept. 2021, <https://www.stimson.org/2021/water-crisis-in-the-mena-region/>.

<sup>10</sup> "Overview." *ReWater MENA*, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), <https://rewater-mena.iwmi.org/>.

up most of the agricultural workforce, and are most often the ones transporting water to their families, it is important that they are included in the discussion, and that they are actively participating in water reuse projects like ReWater MENA.<sup>11</sup>

In 2012, the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC) published the *Arab Strategy for Water Security in the Arab Region*, a twenty-year long strategy with the goals of raising awareness for water security, providing a framework for cooperation within the League, and “Achieve sustainable development that is in line with available water resources”.<sup>12</sup> The publication of the strategy identified fifteen challenges that the strategy would face, including, but not limited to, legislative frameworks, water in occupied territories, population growth, and low water usage efficiency.<sup>13</sup> Thus far, this strategy is the most cohesive plan to combat water insecurity in the region.

## II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Are there any NGOs that are currently operating in my state that are helping to alleviate this problem? If so, which ones? Is there anything that may be preventing them from helping in my state (infrastructure, conflict, etc)?
- Is water scarcity a prioritized issue in my state? Have any past or present projects taken place in my state that have successfully increased the amount of available water, or provided easier access to potable water?
- Does my state host refugees? If so, what effect does this have on water usage?

## III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What are steps the League could take to ensure that refugee camps in the region are receiving the recommended amount of water per person?
- What barriers would need to be overcome in order to ensure the cleanliness of water in refugee camps, or other locations with less access to technology?
- What could be done to promote water reuse or other proposed solutions among the population?
- How can the League make getting access to water safer for those in rural areas?

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<sup>11</sup> “Gender Mainstreaming in Water Reuse.” *ReWater MENA*, International Water Management Institute, June 2022, <https://rewater-mena.iwmi.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2022/07/ReWater-MENA-Project-Thematic-Brief-Gender-mainstreaming-in-water-reuse.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Arab Ministerial Water Council, Cairo, Egypt, 2012, *Arab Strategy for Water Security in the Arab Region - To Meet the Challenges and Future Needs for Sustainable Development 2010-2030*, <https://www.susana.org/en/knowledge-hub/resources-and-publications/library/details/3431#>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

#### IV. Additional Resources

- [The MENA Region's Water Crisis: Avoiding Potential Water Wars | The Washington Institute](#)  
*This source offers an analysis of the water scarcity situation in the MENA region, and the possibility of a larger conflict as a result.*
- [Water, Sanitation and Hygiene \(WASH\) | UNICEF](#)  
*This is UNICEF's page on Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene, and has information on their effects in different environments and situations.*
- [Refugees, water balance, and water stress: Lessons learned from Lebanon | SpringerLink](#)  
*This research article looks at the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, its effect on Lebanon's water usage and water scarcity, and how the information gathered from this situation can be used to prevent further water stress.*
- [Burden of Diarrhea in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 1990–2013: Findings from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2013 - PMC](#)  
*This article looks at Diarrheal Diseases in Arab League states, as well as Pakistan and Iran, the morbidity, risk factors, and disabilities attributed to them.*

## **Topic II: Discussing possible changes that could be made on an individual state and league-wide basis to better achieve equality as outlined in the 2004 Arab Charter on Human Rights.**

### **I. Introduction**

#### **A. General Background**

On May 22, 2004, the League of Arab States adopted the Arab Charter on Human Rights (ACHR), and was ratified by 13 of the 22 member states in the Arab League. The purpose of the ACHR was to provide standards for equality, humanitarian values, and unity of the Arab World. The Charter affirmed Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam.<sup>14</sup> Two of the most influential articles are Article 25, which outlines the right of minorities to practice their own religion and speak their own language, and Article 33, which stresses consent in marriage, and preventing violence against women and children. While reforms have been made to the ACHR in recent years, seven of the ten lowest Human Freedom Index scores, which measures personal and economic freedom, belong to member states of the Arab League,<sup>15</sup> which shows that much work is still needed.

#### **B. History in the Arab World**

In the past, the League has leaned on NGOs for assistance when dealing with human rights. This was especially prevalent in the 1980s, which led to multiple local and state-wide human rights organizations.<sup>16</sup> Non-governmental groups participating in activism contributed to the overall trend of human rights increases in the late 20th century, but their influence dwindled with the onset of demonstrations in the 2000s and early 2010s. These demonstrations led to a change of government in Egypt and Tunisia, and constitutional reform in Morocco, but also led to conflict in Syria, Yemen, and Libya.

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<sup>14</sup> United States, Congress, UN. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and League of Arab States. *Arab Charter on Human Rights*, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2004, pp. 1–21. *United Nations Digital Library*, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/551368?ln=en>.

<sup>15</sup> Cato Institute, et al. *Freedom Index by Country 2022*, 2022, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/freedom-index-by-country>.

<sup>16</sup> Duryea, Catherine Baylin. “Human Rights Movements in the Middle East.” *E-International Relations*, 22 May 2019, <https://www.e-ir.info/2019/05/20/human-rights-movements-in-the-middle-east/>.

While for many decades, the human rights situation in the Arab world was looking up, it has stagnated in recent years, and gender-based violence of all kinds remains high in the region, including “honor killings”, which continue to be reported in Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, and Palestine.<sup>17</sup> Strides are still being taken, such as with the increase in women’s rights in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but many people, especially those in younger generations, are seeking more equality and rights for individuals.<sup>18</sup>

### **C. Finding Solutions to the Problem: Past, Present and Future**

In the past decade, the Arab world has been faced with many human rights challenges. In 2009, the League established the Gaza Committee to discuss the armed conflict between the State of Israel and Hamas from December 2008 to January 2009. In 2011, the government of Syria began to allow observers from the League to monitor its progress in releasing political prisoners and negotiating with dissidents, among other actions taken in the hopes of protecting human rights in the state. Another example of League-wide action in 2011 came from the request to the UN Security Council to implement a no-fly zone over Libya. All of these show the League’s capability to work in crisis, and the desire to work towards achieving human rights for everyone in the region.<sup>19</sup>

With that said, there is still much more that the League needs to address if it wants to achieve equality. While Article 33 of the ACHR states that, “No marriage can take place without the full and free consent of both parties,” yet one in five marriages in the MENA region are child marriages.<sup>20</sup> This is a decrease from previous statistics, but is still alarming, and there is much to be done in the future if these numbers should continue to decrease.

The Statute for the Arab Court was adopted by the League of Arab States in September 2014. Its purpose was to create a regional court to hold member states responsible for human rights violations in accordance with the ACHR. However, the guidelines for which cases can be heard

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<sup>17</sup> “Violence against Women in Mena.” *Amnesty International*, 8 Mar. 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/03/mena-gender-based-violence-continues-to-devastate-lives-of-women-across-region/>.

<sup>18</sup> Talei, Rafiah Al. “The Arab Youth: Aspirations for the New Year.” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 11 Jan. 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/86063>.

<sup>19</sup> Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l’Homme. “The Arab League and Human Rights : Challenges Ahead.” *International Federation for Human Rights*, 22 Aug. 2013, <https://www.fidh.org/en/international-advocacy/other-regional-organisations/league-of-arab-states/the-arab-league-and-human-rights-challenges-ahead>.

<sup>20</sup> Karasapan, Omer, and Sajjad Shah. “Forced Displacement and Child Marriage: A Growing Challenge in MENA.” *Brookings*, Brookings, 9 Mar. 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2019/06/19/forced-displacement-and-child-marriage-a-growing-challenge-in-mena/>.



before the court are very strict, and it has been criticized by the International Commission of Jurists for, among other things, having a six-month time limit for filing a complaint.<sup>21</sup>

## II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Has my state ratified the ACHR? If not, what is preventing my state from doing so? If yes, is my state following all the guidelines laid out in the Charter?
- What efforts have been made in my state to ensure equality for those of all race, color, sex, religion, language, political opinion, national origin, social origin, and disability?
- Does my country have a state religion? If so, how are religious minorities treated? What protections currently exist to protect them, if any?

## III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- In what ways has the Arab Court been successful? Is it serving its purpose for the League, or is it in need of reform?
- What obstacles does the Arab Charter on Human Rights face in being successful as a means to protect human rights in the region?
- Is the Arab Charter on Human Rights beneficial in the form it exists in today? Could it be made more efficient through amendments and reform, or does it need to be rewritten?
- How can the League ensure the protection of those who have witnessed or experienced human rights violations?

## IV. Additional Resources

- [Human rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Review of 2019 \[EN/AR\] - World | ReliefWeb](#)  
*This source offers an analysis on the status of human rights and human rights-related protests in the MENA region during 2019.*
- [In MENA Region, Finding a Common Responsibility to Promote Human Rights | International Peace Institute](#)  
*This source details a webinar hosted by the International Peace Institute, and provides multiple expert opinions on how to best promote human rights in the region.*

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<sup>21</sup> International Commission of Jurists. *The Arab Court of Human Rights: A Flawed Statute for an Ineffective Court*, International Commission of Jurists, 2015, <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/MENA-Arab-Court-of-Human-Rights-Publications-Report-2015-ENG.pdf>.

- [Everything you need to know about human rights in Middle East and North Africa Regional Overview](#)

*This source provides a detailed overview of the status of human rights in the region, going into detail about many different aspects of the issue, and giving some recommendations on how to improve.*

- [Middle East/North Africa | Country Page | World | Human Rights Watch](#)

*This is the Human Rights Watch page on the MENA region. It has reports, country-specific resources, and up-to-date news about human rights in the region.*

### **Topic III: Exploring the relationship between minority populations in the region and their access to education as an aid to social mobility.**

#### **I. Introduction**

##### **A. General Background**

There are many ways to classify what constitutes a minority in the Middle East and North Africa. According to the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), the classifications of minorities in the region are religious, Islamic, ethnic/national, majoritarian, political, and trapped. Each of these minority groups deals with unique conditions in each state, and a minority in one might be a majority in another, and many groups fall into more than one category, such as Shia Muslims in Saudi Arabia, which are an Islamic, political, and majoritarian minority.<sup>22</sup>

Proper education for minority populations, particularly in the MENA region, has been used for decades as a method of social mobility, or the ability to move between social classes, usually upward. For minorities who are otherwise excluded from participating in broader society, access to a modern style of education gives minorities resources they need to achieve social and, in some instances, political power. The existence of religiously-based private schools has been used to show the relationship between a minority group and the government it is under, as well as the means a minority group has to achieve political power or economic gain.<sup>23</sup>

##### **B. History in the Arab World**

During the time of the Ottoman Empire, European intervention in the Middle East, under the guise of protecting Christian minorities, led to the implementation of secular Western education. At this time, having a more broad education, as opposed to a solely religious one, brought more economic opportunities. While support of Western or European education led to greater opportunity for Christians and Jews in the Empire, it brought with it suspicion from the government, as it was assumed that support of the schools was support for European interests.<sup>24</sup>

Upward mobility for minorities continued after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In 1940s and 1950s Egypt, Jews and Christians joined communist and leftist parties and movements

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<sup>22</sup> Cavanaugh, Kathleen A. "The Politics of Identity: Minority Discourse in the Mena Region." IEMed, <https://www.iemed.org/publication/the-politics-of-identity-minority-discourse-in-the-mena-region/>.

<sup>23</sup> Le Thomas, Catherine. "EDUCATION AND MINORITY EMPOWERMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST." *Religious Minorities in the Middle East: Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation*, edited by Anh Nga Longva and Anne Sofie Roald, Brill, 2012, pp. 267–88. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv2giwnw4.16>.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

alongside Muslims, and worked together to build a state in which class and social status was determined by factors other than familial ties or belonging to a minority community. This was aided by the inclusion of minorities into government. However, as the century progressed, identity politics became more commonplace and minorities became once again separated from the majority,<sup>25</sup> which has led to an increased need for more methods of social mobility.

### **C. Finding Solutions to the Problem: Past, Present and Future**

Education for minorities is necessary to aid in social mobility. Some states are making strides towards making their education systems more accepting of minorities, such as the United Arab Emirates who, in 2022, reformed many of the standards and textbooks used in their schools. The reformed textbooks are now teaching values of openness and diversity, and are preparing students for a world with a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.<sup>26</sup> While many states in the Arab League have laws protecting religious freedom, they are often ignored by law enforcement, and in practice, governments often restrict the religious freedom of individuals within their state.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic hit minority communities hard, and increased the inequalities already present when looking at minority and majority groups in the region. Many minorities were denied access to proper healthcare during the height of the pandemic, and were further separated from larger society during these years. Many lost their jobs, and, in return, suffered great economic hardship.<sup>27</sup> With already limited financial resources, the switch to hybrid learning during the pandemic greatly affected minorities' access to a proper education.

Throughout the pandemic, UNICEF has continued to provide support for many states in the region, including increasing access to non-formal education, which is especially needed for rural minority communities, who are in desperate need of resources to continue to provide education to their children.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Picard, Elizabeth. "CONCLUSION: NATION-BUILDING AND MINORITY RIGHTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST." *Religious Minorities in the Middle East: Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation*, edited by Anh Nga Longva and Anne Sofie Roald, Brill, 2012, pp. 325–50. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv2gjwnw4.19>.

<sup>26</sup> Sheff, Marcus. "The UAE Education System Is Pushing for Peace and Religious Tolerance. the Rest of the Region Should Follow Suit." *Atlantic Council*, 2 Mar. 2022, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-uae-education-system-is-pushing-for-peace-and-religious-tolerance-the-rest-of-the-region-should-follow-suit/>.

<sup>27</sup> "MENA: COVID-19 Amplified Inequalities and Was Used to Further Ramp up Repression." *Amnesty International*, 7 Apr. 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/04/mena-covid-19-amplified-inequalities-and-was-used-to-further-ramp-up-repression/>.

<sup>28</sup> "Education." *UNICEF Middle East and North Africa*, 9 Sept. 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/mena/education>.

## II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Are there any laws in my state that restrict the ability for religious minorities to receive a non-Islamic education? How common is secular or non-Islamic religious education in my state?
- How are minorities in my state protected by the legal system? Is the protection actual or just on paper?
- Do people in my state have access to education? What roadblocks exist that prevent people from receiving an education? Do these roadblocks affect minorities more or at the same level as the majority?

## III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How can religious freedom be promoted within the League? What barriers to religious freedom currently exist in the region, and how could they be overcome?
- In what ways can the League increase the accessibility of higher education for minorities?
- What barriers to education exist in rural minority communities? How can the League make education more accessible for those living in isolated areas?
- How does statelessness play into receiving an education? How can the League promote national identity and ensure citizenship for individuals in the region?

## IV. Additional Resources

- [Religious Education in the Arab World: Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Egypt as Models](#)  
*This study explores Islamic and Christian education in Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Egypt. It shows the effects of religious education, and gives recommendations on how to increase these effects.*
- [COVID-19: ARE CHILDREN ABLE TO CONTINUE LEARNING DURING SCHOOL CLOSURES?](#)  
*This UNICEF fact sheet details the effect of hybrid or online learning during the pandemic, and how it has affected people of different income levels and location.*
- [Social Mobility Index - Reports](#)  
*This report, by the World Economic Forum, details the social mobility of many countries around the world. The data can be sorted by education, diversity in schools, and technology access, among others.*
- [Improving social mobility key to overcoming inequality](#)  
*This source provides discussion of the Social Mobility Index, and how the findings can be used to promote equality.*

- [US Report on Religious Freedom: Middle East and North Africa](#)

*This report, released by the Wilson Center, details the state of religious freedom in MENA states, and explains the law, and how it is utilized.*

## **Topic IV: Discussing the rising rates of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and ways to implement protections for both IDPs and stateless persons throughout the region.**

### **I. Introduction**

#### **A. General Background**

A refugee is any person who has fled their country of origin out of fear of, or to escape persecution, violence, or any number of disasters that may cause their home state to be unsafe. Similar to a refugee is an IDP, or Internally Displaced Person. IDPs are individuals who, like refugees, are fleeing their homes to escape unsafe situations. However, unlike refugees, IDPs do not leave their country of origin, but rather, are displaced within it. A stateless person, on the other hand, while they may be a refugee or IDP, does not have a nationality. According to the 1954 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, a stateless person is, “s a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law.”<sup>29</sup>

Worldwide, over 53 million people are considered internally displaced,<sup>30</sup> and between 4 and 10 million are stateless.<sup>31</sup>

#### **B. History in the Arab World**

Displacement in the Middle East and North Africa is nothing new, but recent years have seen the number of IDPs grow massively due to inter-state conflict, civil wars, and international disputes. Mass displacement of individuals in the region has been happening since the British Mandate in 1947. The Lebanese Civil War from 1975-1991 displaced nearly a quarter of the state’s population, either within Lebanon, or as refugees. The conflict in Syria has led to 6 million

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<sup>29</sup> *Convention Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*, New York, 28 September 1954, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 360, No. 5158, p. 117, available from [https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=V-3&chapter=5&Temp=mtdsg2&clang=en](https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=V-3&chapter=5&Temp=mtdsg2&clang=en).

<sup>30</sup> “Forced Displacement: Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Internally Displaced Persons (Idps).” European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/forced-displacement-refugees-asylum-seekers-and-internally-displaced-persons-idps\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/forced-displacement-refugees-asylum-seekers-and-internally-displaced-persons-idps_en).

<sup>31</sup> “Statelessness - United States Department of State.” U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of State, 1 Dec. 2020, <https://www.state.gov/other-policy-issues/statelessness/#:~:text=How%20Many%20Stateless%20People%20Are,10%20million%20due%20to%20underreporting>.

fleeing the country, and a greater 10 million becoming internally displaced.<sup>32</sup> In Iraq, Desert Storm caused over 9 million Iraqis to become displaced or refugees as of 2020.<sup>33</sup>

Between 2010 and 2019, over 30 million people in the MENA region became displaced, with over 12 million remaining displaced at the end of 2019. The number of IDPs in the region has experienced a stark rise since the early 2010s, especially in the states of Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, and Palestine.<sup>34</sup> These rates may contribute to unforeseen consequences, as only the immediate cost of displacement is apparent at this point. High loss of income has been estimated using the number of IDPs in the region, but does not account for the economic toll taken on the communities or origin or the host communities that have taken these individuals in. The majority of IDPs are between the ages of 25-59, but over 4 million are under the age of 15, and face serious consequences if not provided with enough resources to care for themselves.<sup>35</sup>

Statelessness in the region, much like the rate of internal displacement, has many compounding factors. Many discriminatory nationality laws exist in the MENA region, with 12 out of the 27 countries in the world that do not give mothers the same rights in transferring nationality to their children as fathers are MENA states. In many cases, children born out of wedlock are not legally recognized by the state in which they reside, and, in the case of Yemen, non-Arabs or Muslims are barred from naturalization. Ethnicity and race is also used in many states to deprive individuals of citizenship. Statelessness is poorly researched, and only a few states in the region have data on how many stateless people reside there.<sup>36</sup>

### **C. Finding Solutions to the Problem: Past, Present and Future**

Solving the problem of internal displacement is not a simple task. The contributing factors to the current situation in the MENA region are extremely complex and have been compounding for years. Therefore, the objective of this Council should be to develop proper protections for IDPs and stateless persons, including for those at risk of becoming stateless or displaced. Because of the varying amount of information available, and the different impacts these people have in each

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<sup>32</sup> Brand, Laurie, and Marc Lynch. "Refugees and Displacement in the Middle East." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 29 Mar. 2017,

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/03/29/refugees-and-displacement-in-middle-east-pub-68479>.

<sup>33</sup> "Iraqi Refugees." The Costs of War, WATSON INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS, Aug. 2021,

<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/refugees/iraqi#:~:text=As%20of%202021%2C%209.2%20million,communities%20that%20they%20left%20behind>.

<sup>34</sup> "A Decade of Displacement in the Middle East and North Africa." *Internal Displacement Monitoring Center*, <https://story.internal-displacement.org/mena-2021/index.html>.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> "Stateless Persons in the MENA." WorldsStateless.org,

<http://www.worldsstateless.org/continents/middle-east-northern-africa/stateless-persons-in-the-mena#:~:text=Statelessness%20continues%20to%20affect%20hundreds,under%2070%2C000%20from%20previous%20years>.



member state, solutions should look not only at implementations that can be made on a League-wide basis, but also what recommendations can be made to specific member states, depending on their situation.

A major concern for IDPs is the lack of civil documents.<sup>37</sup> Many do not have access to legal identification, and are unable to access government assistance without them. This can put IDPs in a similar situation as stateless persons, who often do not have legal identification to begin with. This can lead to issues with finding a stable job, receiving an education, and leaving the country, if necessary. In addition to this, many of the social and economic impacts of displacement are still unknown.

Lack of information regarding the location and number of stateless persons in many League states poses an issue when trying to provide them with legal protections. A lack of documents, cultural differences, and the difficulty of getting a job and an education place a major disadvantage on those without a nationality.

Tackling this issue will require the commitment of all member states, and an openness to working with outside bodies currently working with IDPs and stateless persons, such as the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion.

## II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Does my state have any legal protections in place for IDPs and/or stateless persons?
- How does my state decide who gets citizenship? How does this affect minority populations? Are there certain groups that are affected by this more than others?
- Does my state have a naturalization process that is accessible to refugees and those of minority groups?
- Do non-citizens in my state have equal access to jobs, education, healthcare, and other necessary services and opportunities?

## III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How can the League encourage the naturalization of stateless persons born in member states?

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<sup>37</sup> “Social Protection: New Study Addresses the Needs of Refugees and Idps to Fight Child Poverty in the Mena Region.” International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), 24 May 2018, [https://ipcig.org/news/29508?language\\_content\\_entity=en](https://ipcig.org/news/29508?language_content_entity=en).

- What protections can be implemented to ensure that displaced persons are safe and have access to basic human resources, such as food, water, and shelter?
- What are ways to more accurately determine the number of IDPs and stateless persons within the League? How would having this data help these individuals?
- What protections currently exist for IDPs and stateless persons? Are they working? What faults exist within the current system of protections and how can they be fixed?

#### IV. Additional Resources

- [The Link Between Refugees and Statelessness](#)  
*This source gives a good background on what statelessness is, how it happens, and how being stateless affects individuals.*
- [The internally displaced in the Middle East and North Africa: Harbingers of future conflict?](#)  
*This source gives background on the reasoning behind many IDPs being displaced across the region, their numbers circa 2017, and possible conflicts the situation could cause.*
- [The Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion \(ISI\)](#)  
*The ISI is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that promotes the right to nationality and rights for stateless persons. It offers a good background on the issue and may prove useful for finding possible solutions.*
- [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre \(IDMC\)](#)  
*The IDMC provides data and analysis on internally displaced persons throughout the world. It is a good place to find research papers on specific states and causes for displacement, as well as general information on the issue in the MENA region.*