



**2023 - 2024**  
**Model Arab League**  
**BACKGROUND GUIDE**

*Political Affairs Council*

[ncusar.org/modelarableague](https://ncusar.org/modelarableague)

National  
Council  
on US-  
Arab  
Relations



**Original draft by Anusha Loganathan, Chair of the Political Affairs Council at the 2024 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 pleasure to welcome you all to the 2023-2024 Model Arab League season! My name is Anusha Loganathan and I am a senior at Northeastern University pursuing a combined major in Biology and Political Science with a minor in Public Health. It is my honor to be serving as your chair for the Council on Political Affairs at the National University Model Arab League conference this year. I find this council to be particularly interesting due to the intersectional nature of the issues that we discuss and the considerations you will have to make in order to make effective resolutions, and I hope you too will enjoy creating policy to tackle these pressing topics.

I have put together this background guide to serve as a starting point for your research and preparation for this conference, but I hope that you will dive deeper into the topics and their impact on the nation you are representing. I have found that accurately representing a country and their views, even when you don't agree with them, is one of the hardest parts of Model Arab League or any form of model debate for that matter. The best way I have found to make it easier is to gather as much information on your country's policies and culture so that you can best represent their ideas and values in debate. I hope that you learn more about your country, the Arab League, and global politics through this experience and take the skills you will gain from this with you wherever your future leads.

Finally, I would like to leave you with this advice: take a deep breath, relax, and keep your placard in the air. I hope that all of you are able to learn and grow as debaters and writers, but this is only possible if you participate and put yourself out there. As corny as it may sound, you only get out of this experience as much as you put in, so take every opportunity you can to add to the discussion and get your ideas onto paper. Do not be afraid of speaking up or defending your country's views, but also remember that collaboration is key, especially in the Arab League.

I wish you all the best in your research and preparation, and I cannot wait to solutions you come up with to these challenging political issues. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me at [Loganathan.a@northeastern.edu](mailto:Loganathan.a@northeastern.edu).

Best,

Anusha Loganathan

## **Topic I: Exploring means for women and underrepresented populations to have equitable access to positions of leadership.**

### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

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

Globally, there is a lack of women and minorities in positions of leadership, be that in government or private institutions. More than 80 countries have never had a female head of state, and it will take an estimated 146 years to reach gender parity in politics around the world. Of the Arab states, only the United Arab Emirates is rated in the top 100 countries reaching equality, while 4 of the bottom 10 states are Arab nations.<sup>1</sup> It is important to have women and minorities in positions of leadership to bring to light issues that are important to them, and would have been normally overlooked by a governing body that is primarily male or of the dominant social group. Between 1995 and 2018, the number of female national parliamentarians rose from 11.3% to almost 24%, which is a very slow rise over more than 20 years.<sup>2</sup>

Currently, many of the barriers to increased participation in civic life and leadership are social ones: stigma against women in positions of power, social norms dictating what kinds of jobs people traditionally have, roles of women in the home, and the limits women have once they are married.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, legal barriers, like those that require women to have a male's approval to get a job or a driver's license, as well as the lack of legal protections for women make it difficult for more diverse populations to have leadership roles.<sup>4</sup> The lack of regulation around appointments to positions of power also makes it difficult, as there is little transparency and fairness surrounding these positions. Even in the cases where women are appointed to ministerial positions, they are often considered "soft ministries" because they are usually social positions or related only to the needs of women or children and lack real decision-making power.<sup>5</sup>

One of the factors that many successful women in Arab states point to as a major positive force is the presence of other female role models in their field.<sup>6</sup> Programs aimed at young

---

<sup>1</sup>AbiRafeh, Lina. "Going Backward Is Not an Option: The Challenge of Equality for Arab Women." Arab Center Washington DC, 22 April 2022, <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/going-backward-is-not-an-option-the-challenge-of-equality-for-arab-women/>.

<sup>2</sup>Zakarneh, Rana. "A New Generation of Women Leaders Is Making Waves in the Arab World." World Economic Forum, 5 April 2019, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/04/a-new-generation-of-arab-women-leaders/>.

<sup>3</sup>Asi, Yara M. "Women at Work in the Arab World: Trends, Gaps, and Effects on the Region." Arab Center Washington DC, 27 April 2022, <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/women-at-work-in-the-arab-world-trends-gaps-and-effects-on-the-region/>.

<sup>4</sup>"Gender Equality - Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development." OECD, 2022, <https://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/gender-equality-in-public-life/>.

<sup>5</sup>UNICEF. Situational Analysis of Women and Girls in the Middle East and North Africa, UNICEF, November 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/mena/reports/situational-analysis-women-and-girls-middle-east-and-north-africa/>.

<sup>6</sup>Zakarneh, Rana

women or marginalized groups to increase their participation and allow for more exposure to multiple different areas of work, not just those that are deemed socially appropriate for women, are vital to building up a more socially aware and equal society.<sup>7</sup> Youth engagement is important on that front as well, given the high rates of youth unemployment in the region, and lack of civic engagement. Young men participate in civic organizations and volunteering organizations at about a rate of 22%, while women only do so at a rate of 13%.<sup>8</sup> Reducing this gap will increase youth participation in society and introduce women to forms of civic engagement and participation that were not available to them before.

In addition to civic participation, leadership roles held by women in the private sector are very low, due in part to many of the issues above, but also because many firms lack the incentive to hire more women or appoint them to higher positions in company leadership. Including women in leadership and hiring roles creates an environment for increased participation in decision-making and creates a more equitable environment for women in the future for that company.<sup>9</sup> The same goes for positions in university leadership. With women making up the majority of students in many universities in the Arab world, the fact that only 7% of Arab universities have a female head is a far cry from equal representation. Additionally, 9 Arab countries have no female academic leaders at all.<sup>10</sup> In order for women to receive equal opportunities, there must be people who prioritize their advancement in positions of leadership.

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

In the past, many Arab League Nations have had a poor track record with the treatment of women and underrepresented populations. To start, women have struggled for many years to receive equal status to men, especially politically, socially, and economically.<sup>11</sup> In recent years, the Arab League has made an increased effort to prioritize the voices of women and other underrepresented populations. However, the League has stayed silent on the issue of allowing women and other marginalized communities to have equal status in civic life.<sup>12</sup> Across the League, there is wide variation in how nations have implemented policies promoting the inclusion of women in political and social settings in society. For example, Tunisia requires that women make up at least 50% of party candidates running in national elections. Furthermore, they

---

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Chami, Celine. "Arab Women in Leadership: Creating a More Inclusive Workplace." Headspring Executive Development, 4 May 2022,

<https://www.headspringexecutive.com/arab-women-in-leadership-creating-a-more-inclusive-workplace/>.

<sup>10</sup> Eleraqi, Amr, and Islam Salahuddin. "Arab Women Are Left out of University Leadership - Al-Fanar Media." Al-Fanar Media, 4 December 2018,

<https://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2018/12/arab-women-are-left-out-of-university-leadership/>.

<sup>11</sup> HRMI. "Human Rights Tracker." HRMI, 2023, <https://rightstracker.org/en/group/10>.

<sup>12</sup> UN Women. "Arab League Presents Regional Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security." UN Women – Arab States, 13 October 2015,

<https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/10/arab-league-presents-regional-action-plan>.

require more than 30% of candidates running at the municipal level to be women.<sup>13</sup> This is one of the most progressive policies in the Arab League around the direct participation of women in political life. This contrasts nations like Saudi Arabia and Yemen where women represent 19% and 0.3% of the national parliament, respectively.<sup>14</sup>

Previous action at the Arab League level is scarce surrounding this issue. However, in 2017, the League released a declaration of rights for people with disabilities in the Arab League.<sup>15</sup> This was seen as a progressive step for disabled populations throughout the League and is laying the groundwork for other underrepresented populations to have the opportunity to begin a conversation at the League level arguing the importance of their protection. Although the League has made changes in the recent past and has updated policies and social norms to standards recognized across the world, certain communities continue to face hardship in Arab States.<sup>16</sup> LGBTQIA+ communities and other underrepresented populations continue to be oppressed societally and marginalized in most nations within the Arab League.<sup>17</sup> Much of this oppression and the lack of urgency to make meaningful change stems from some states' conservative views on religion.

Some nations with the most glaring examples of resistance to modernization are Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Sudan.<sup>18</sup> These nations have some of the most restrictive values of religion built into society and, in the past, have placed strict regulations in place banning women from driving, not allowing them to vote, and making their existence and prosperity reliant on the actions of their father or husband.<sup>19</sup> In some nations, such as Saudi Arabia, a relaxation in these strict policies has been seen in recent years. However, underlying social and religious traditions still drive much of the belief systems that societies in the Arab League hold as the norm.<sup>20</sup> Most notably, Saudi Arabia, a nation that has recently granted women the ability to drive, still requires women to have a male guardian to go about many normal tasks.<sup>21</sup> These include traveling,

---

<sup>13</sup> Chellali, Salsabil. "Tunisia Tramples Gender Parity Ahead of Parliamentary Elections." Human Rights Watch, 2 November 2022,

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/11/02/tunisia-tramples-gender-parity-ahead-parliamentary-elections>.

<sup>14</sup>World Bank. "Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments (%) - Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Rep., Sudan." World Bank Open Data, 2023,

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?locations=SA-YE-SD>.

<sup>15</sup>Loza, Nasser, and Mostafa Hussein Omar. "The Rights of Persons with Mental Disabilities: Is the UN Convention the Answer? an Arab Perspective." BJPsych international, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 1 August 2017, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5618897/>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup>Gelardi, Chris. "How Brave LGBTQ Arab Activists Are Challenging Stigma in Their Everyday Lives." Global Citizen, Global Citizen, 19 April 2018, <https://www.globalcitizen.org/fr/content/lgbtq-arab-world/>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup>Amnesty International. "Saudi Arabia Codifies Male Guardianship and Gender Discrimination." Amnesty International, 9 November 2022,

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2022/12/saudi-arabia-codifies-male-guardianship-and-gender-discrimination/>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup>Ibid

working, and of course, marrying. Many other nations in the Gulf region also have conservative religious values that continue to hold women to standards that often leads to oppression, dependency, and lack of freedom. These values can also drive other social norms, such as the oppression of free speech, violations of common worker protections and freedoms, and reduced democratic tendencies.<sup>22</sup>

While much of the Arab world still has much progress to make on making changes to create a more equal society for women and underrepresented population, recent changes at both the Arab League level and at the national level leaves hope for the future. The Arab League encourages nations to follow in the footsteps of nations like Tunisia, with their inclusive policies on women's involvement in government.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, many nations around the world have implemented policies like Tunisia, and discussions of mandating a certain percentage of women to participate in government will become more common and necessary to have a fair and equal society.<sup>24</sup> In many ways, the Arab League might have the most progress to make on these issues, because of the conservative religious and societal traditions as well as values that are ingrained into much of the Arab League. However, the Council of Arab Political Affairs offers the proper setting to bolster equality for women and other populations that have been traditionally marginalized, bringing the Arab League into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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

In considering solutions to the current issue, it is important to keep in mind the structural, economic, and cultural differences between League nations. As such, potential solutions should focus on shared values and problems many nations face. Examining the causes of such problems and current barriers in place will help lead to actionable solutions.

Policies to increase positions of leadership in both the public and private sectors held by women and other minority groups can come from governments, regulators, or companies themselves and can include items like quotas, disclosure of gender equity policies and composition in the company, or the active recruitment of qualified women to replace outgoing male members on boards.<sup>25</sup> In Jordan, for example, an initiative to increase the visibility of qualified female candidates to private sector boards of the banking industry, primarily, was

---

<sup>22</sup> Women Count. "Country Fact Sheet: UN Women Data Hub." UN Women Data Hub, 2023, <https://data.unwomen.org/country/yemen#:~:text=The%20adolescent%20birth%20rate%20is,parliament%20were%20held%20by%20women>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> UN Women. "Facts and Figures: Women's Leadership and Political Participation." UN Women – Headquarters, 7 March 2023, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>.

<sup>25</sup> OECD Data. "Achieving Gender Balance in Corporate Leadership in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)." OECD, <https://www.oecd.org/gender/data/achieving-gender-balance-in-corporate-leadership-in-the-middle-east-and-north-af-rica-mena.htm>. Accessed 31 July 2023.

launched in 2022, and has aided in the increase of female representation on the boards of directors and senior management positions in banks from just around 3.5% in 2015 to a projected 20% and 25% respectively by 2024.<sup>26</sup> By working with groups like the International Labor Organization or NGOs like Women on Boards in Jordan, they are able to create effective policies and plans to increase female representation in the private sector.<sup>27</sup>

Addressing education gaps may also prove fruitful for some nations, as one of the barriers to women receiving positions of leadership or having upwards mobility in their area of work is a lack of equitable education for women in the region. While some states, like Qatar and Tunisia, have a higher percentage of women pursuing degrees than men, this is not true for all Arab nations, especially the poorer ones.<sup>28</sup> Although women are less likely to receive an education, once they do, they often out-perform their male counterparts at a university level, which points to this being an issue of access to education and job opportunities rather than an issue of innate skill or knowledge.<sup>29</sup>

## ***II. Questions to Consider in Your Research:***

- Does having quotas for minorities and women in parliament or government actually work to increase civic participation?
- What kinds of groups outside of government could help to increase participation and work experience for these groups?
- How can governments facilitate the initial push for women to enter leadership positions and help to increase their representation?
- What current barriers to leadership exist in your nation and what current measures are being taken to address them?
- What sectors could benefit from minority leadership and how would that change how they operate?

## ***III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer:***

- What is the role of governments in increasing leadership in the private sector?
- How can the Arab League facilitate change while respecting states' cultural norms?
- How would current power structures change to allow for more diverse representation?

---

<sup>26</sup> "New National Initiative Aims to Put More Women on Jordan's Corporate Boards." Women in Management: New National Initiative Aims to Put More Women on Jordan's Corporate Boards, 5 Oct. 2022, [www.ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/news/WCMS\\_857665/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/news/WCMS_857665/lang--en/index.htm).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Chaaban, Jad, Navtej Dhillon, et al. "Unlocking the Potential of Educated Arab Women." Brookings, 7 Oct. 2016, [www.brookings.edu/articles/unlocking-the-potential-of-educated-arab-women/](http://www.brookings.edu/articles/unlocking-the-potential-of-educated-arab-women/).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

- Could there be changes to the Arab League that would help facilitate equality in the Arab World?

#### **IV. Additional Resources**

##### [The World Bank Database: Women in National Parliament:](#)

*This site shows data on the percent of national parliament seats held by women in a variety of countries, including many members of the Arab League. This can guide your understanding of current standards and norms as well as help you find countries to look to for solutions that can be implemented based on your country's policy.*

##### [Women at Work in the Arab World](#)

*This article from the Arab Center in Washington, DC discusses current issues and trends in female employment in the Arab world, including topics of education and job opportunities as well as possible effects of increasing women's employment in the region and the impacts on family life as well as the local economy.*

##### [HRMI Rights Tracker:](#)

*This site includes data from annual surveys and information not only on specific groups, but also different rights and the fulfillment of those rights in different countries, including the right to work and the right to a subsistence income. It has information on women and girls amongst other groups, like people with disabilities or the LGBTQ community.*

##### [Five Effective Ways to Improve Women in Politics](#)

*The United Nations Development Programme has outlined specific ways to increase female leadership in nations like those in the Arab League, and in this article, Ukraine. Although there are differences in the governments and economies of the countries, the program's goals and strategies can be helpful in guiding your research and potential solutions.*



## **Topic II: Examining the role of technology in government accountability and civilian trust**

### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

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

Globally, governments have been experiencing a crisis of trust, in part due to an increase in misinformation, inequality, and a lack of transparency.<sup>30</sup> The Arab world is no exception to this trend, as seen from the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011 and more recent protests and conflicts that have occurred in countries like Syria and Tunisia.<sup>31</sup> Many leaders who face these issues of trust point to two possible roots: the perception that the government is unable to facilitate reliable transactions or that the government does not share its values with its constituents.<sup>32</sup> There is also increased polarization between the rich and the poor over public trust, due to the perception that the government prioritizes the needs of the rich over those of the poor.<sup>33</sup> In trying to solve these issues, many leaders have been turning to technological means of connecting with their constituents and creating more transparency around government.

In a Knight Foundation publication on the different implementation of technological solutions for trust on a city-level in the US, Spain, and Argentina, they discussed how the majority of solutions regarding increasing trust fall into two main categories: increasing the reputational value of the institution (showing that the government can be trusted) or increasing the reputation of human and non-human representatives of the city (using social media, blockchains, and other third party sources to inspire trust in the work of the institution). In employing these strategies, policymakers can create more efficient and streamlined transactions as well as create more relatable institutions and proxies for the constituents to trust.<sup>34</sup>

There are some drawbacks to the implementation of technological solutions, especially when it comes to data protection and regulations. Constituents are increasingly concerned about the safety of the data collected on them by the government and corporations, especially with

---

<sup>30</sup> Published, and Eric Gordon. "With Trust in Government Waning, Can New Technologies Make It Easier to Govern?" Knight Foundation, 5 Dec. 2022, [knightfoundation.org/articles/with-trust-in-government-waning-can-new-technologies-make-it-easier-to-govern/](https://knightfoundation.org/articles/with-trust-in-government-waning-can-new-technologies-make-it-easier-to-govern/).

<sup>31</sup>Kayyali, Abdul-Wahab. "The Arab World's Trust in Government and the Perils of Generalization." Arab Barometer, 23 June 2020, [www.arabbarometer.org/2020/06/the-arab-worlds-trust-in-government-and-the-perils-of-generalization/](https://www.arabbarometer.org/2020/06/the-arab-worlds-trust-in-government-and-the-perils-of-generalization/).

<sup>32</sup>Gordon, Eric, and Guarna, T. "Solving for Trust: Innovations in Smart Urban Governance" [white paper]. John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, 2022.

<sup>33</sup>Prado, Borja. "How Tech Can Rebuild Public Trust in Government." Atlantic Council, 5 Jan. 2022, [www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/economy-of-trust-content-series/how-tech-can-rebuild-public-trust-in-government/](https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/economy-of-trust-content-series/how-tech-can-rebuild-public-trust-in-government/).

<sup>34</sup> Gordon and Guarna, 2022

emerging technology solutions that may not be well-regulated.<sup>35</sup> Without security around the new systems being implemented, governments run the risk of further eroding citizen trust due to data leaks or cyber attacks and disruptions.<sup>36</sup> Considerations about transparency and security are vital when implementing new technologies to ensure that government trust is increased rather than diminished.

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

Technology has long been a herald of change in the Arab world, from the use of cellphones and videos in the orchestration of the Arab Spring uprisings to the more recent creation of smart cities throughout the region.<sup>37</sup> With the widespread adoption of internet and smartphone usage in the region, along with the lowest rate of internet adoption being 51 of every 100 people in Yemen, technological solutions have come to the forefront of many issues that states in the region face.<sup>38</sup> Technology and the internet have also become a powerful tool in government accountability, with social media posts being used to call out injustice and government misconduct. For example, a video was taken of an Iranian protester's death, which became one of the most widely viewed instances of state-sanctioned killing and brought to light the cruelty of the government.<sup>39</sup> The introduction of new technologies have given citizens more avenues of creating trust with their governments and holding some power in holding their leaders accountable. It also offers governments more opportunities to build trust by utilizing technology to more effectively meet their goals and connect with their customers and stakeholders.<sup>40</sup>

Governments have included technological solutions in their goals and ideals for upcoming projects, like the creation of smart cities and the integration of services online.<sup>41</sup> These

---

<sup>35</sup>"Building Trust in Government's Use of Data." KPMG, [kpmg.com/xx/en/home/insights/2018/06/building-trust-in-governments-use-of-data.html](https://www.kpmg.com/xx/en/home/insights/2018/06/building-trust-in-governments-use-of-data.html). Accessed 30 July 2023.

<sup>36</sup>PricewaterhouseCoopers. "Government and Public Services." *PwC*, [www.pwc.com/ca/en/industries/government-and-public-services.html](https://www.pwc.com/ca/en/industries/government-and-public-services.html). Accessed 30 July 2023.

<sup>37</sup>"The New, Unsustainable Order of Arab Digital Autocracy." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [carnegieendowment.org/2023/05/03/new-unsustainable-order-of-arab-digital-autocracy-pub-89525](https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/05/03/new-unsustainable-order-of-arab-digital-autocracy-pub-89525). Accessed 31 July 2023.

<sup>38</sup>Hemming, Rae. "Digital Authoritarianism in the Middle East." *The Security Distillery*, 19 May 2023, [thesecuritydistillery.org/all-articles/digital-authoritarianism-in-the-middle-east](https://thesecuritydistillery.org/all-articles/digital-authoritarianism-in-the-middle-east).

<sup>39</sup>"The New, Unsustainable Order of Arab Digital Autocracy." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [carnegieendowment.org/2023/05/03/new-unsustainable-order-of-arab-digital-autocracy-pub-89525](https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/05/03/new-unsustainable-order-of-arab-digital-autocracy-pub-89525). Accessed 31 July 2023.

<sup>40</sup>Kawas, Mouhamad. "Council Post: Digital Transformation in the Middle East: Challenges and Opportunities." *Forbes*, 17 Apr. 2023, [www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2023/04/17/digital-transformation-in-the-middle-east-challenges-and-opportunities/?sh=497e27305b34](https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2023/04/17/digital-transformation-in-the-middle-east-challenges-and-opportunities/?sh=497e27305b34).

<sup>41</sup>Haddad, Jad, et al. "The Eight Digital Trends Defining the GCC's Future." *The Eight Digital Trends Defining The GCC's Future*, 22 Mar. 2022, [www.oliverwyman.com/middle-east/our-expertise/insights/2022/mar/the-eight-digital-trends-defining-the-gcc-future.html#five](https://www.oliverwyman.com/middle-east/our-expertise/insights/2022/mar/the-eight-digital-trends-defining-the-gcc-future.html#five).

opportunities to better meet the needs of their citizens create chances to build trust and increase the reliability of the government. Consulting groups analyzed the trends of Arab states in adopting public sector digitization and found that the major issues lay in their culture of stability and resistance to change, a lack of specialized talent, and ineffective progress monitoring.<sup>42</sup> Creating a regulatory body, like the Digital Government Authority in Saudi Arabia, can help in addressing some of these issues as well as in ensuring compliance with global standards and smooth implementation of new solutions.<sup>43</sup>

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

These solutions can vary depending on the needs and infrastructure ability of the nation. Many governments start with creating more accessible and streamlined processes through networks and technology, like the FedNet cloud infrastructure created by the United Arab Emirates, which allows government bodies to communicate more effectively and eventually offer more secure and accountable services to the general public.<sup>44</sup> This kind of implementation allows governments to connect their services to the people in a more convenient manner as well as facilitate better communication within the government, both of which improve the government's ability to provide for its people and build their trust.

Similarly, Kuwait has released a Sahel app which brings together a variety of digitized government services all in one app to make said services more accessible to its citizens. By creating means of easier communication and increased transparency about government services, states can increase their constituents' trust in the government's ability to facilitate transactions and meet their needs.

There is some hesitation in the expansion of digital services and technology use by the government, given the possibility of digital authoritarianism. As more of people's lives are being digitized, there is concern that the government may be able to access and control more of the information in peoples' lives, leading to censorship, surveillance, and the spread of misinformation.<sup>45</sup> With the aid that social media has provided in government accountability comes a platform for propaganda and an easy way for governments to track and target activists.<sup>46</sup> It is important to consider the potential harms that technological solutions could pose and the effect they could ultimately have on citizen trust.

---

<sup>42</sup> Boston Consulting Group. "Government Digital Transformation in the Middle East." 2022, [URL](#).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Government of the United Arab Emirates. "United Arab Emirates Official Portal." [u.ae/en/](#). Accessed 2 September 2023.

<sup>45</sup> Hemming, Rae. "Digital Authoritarianism in the Middle East." *The Security Distillery*, 19 May 2023, [thesecuritydistillery.org/all-articles/digital-authoritarianism-in-the-middle-east](#)

<sup>46</sup> *The New, Unsustainable Order of Arab Digital Autocracy*, [carnegieendowment.org/2023/05/03/new-unsustainable-order-of-arab-digital-autocracy-pub-89525](#). Accessed 31 July 2023.

## **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research:**

- What kind of technological infrastructure does your country currently have in place?
- What are the factors contributing to government distrust in the Arab world?
- Who are the predominant users of social media in your country?
- How do social media regulations intersect with human rights in your country?
- How has the Arab League worked to digitize their organization and how has that impacted the perception of the League?

## **III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer:**

- What can bodies like the Arab League do to foster trust in the governments of its member states?
- What limits and regulations should be placed on data collection and surveillance enacted by the government?
- How much information should governments share with their constituents?
- What are systems of accountability that citizens can look?

## **IV. Additional Resources:**

### [Restoring Trust in Government](#)

*The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has made it a focus of theirs to work with their member and non-member states to increase trust in government through the identification of issues and implementation of solutions, especially in relation to economic issues the nation may be facing.*

### [Transforming Government through Digitization](#)

*This report from McKinsey discusses the considerations governments should take when thinking about digitizing the services they provide and the strategies they should take based on their needs and culture.*

### [Digital Government for Development](#)

*The World Bank has defined three broad characteristics of future government services, Contextual, Coordinated, and Cognitive, which they find will be important to consider when creating an effective digital environment. In this article they discuss these characteristics and the importance of data and communication.*

### [The Struggle for Middle East Democracy](#)

*In this article from the Brookings Institute, the different challenges for democracy and governance in the Middle East were discussed, including issues involving Western nations, uprisings, and the switch from autocracy to democracy in some countries. Looking at how governments formed and the issues they went through can inform how to increase trust.*

### **Topic III: Developing strategies to address concerns of protest groups in an effort to increase youth participation in government and prevent radicalization**

#### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

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

Young people, especially those who face poverty and unemployment, are often targeted by extremist groups, as they are in a more vulnerable position and easier to exploit.<sup>47</sup> When individuals feel as though their needs are not being met and they cannot voice their concerns, radical groups are able to turn them against the government that they perceive does not work for them. In many cases that perception is more powerful than poverty when it comes to ease of radicalization.<sup>48</sup> One way to decrease the vulnerability young people have to extremist group recruitment would be to ensure that they are more actively participating in civil society and are able to engage with their government in a meaningful way.<sup>49</sup> By ensuring that their needs are heard and engaging in peace-keeping or constructive social activity, governments can work to decrease the number of terrorist organizations and protect peace in their state.

One of the major drivers of extremist ideology globally is unemployment, which leads to a lack of purpose, as well as a lack of income and means to survive.<sup>50</sup> A study in regions of Northern Ghana revealed that the main cause for youth radicalization was unemployment, with rates of youth unemployment at nearly 40% in some regions.<sup>51</sup> They also found that political vigilantism was the second leading cause, which is concerning given that the traditional response to threats of extremism tends to be increased policing and security measures in the area.<sup>52</sup> It is important, therefore, to consider other methods of protecting young people from terrorist organizations, like increasing civic involvement, job creation, or policy changes to aid those who are most vulnerable.

---

<sup>47</sup> OSCE. "Youth Engagement to Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism." <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/c/b/103352.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup>Washington Post. "Youth Radicalization Is on the Rise: Here's What We Know About Why." 25 Aug. 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/25/youth-radicalization-is-on-the-rise-heres-what-we-know-about-why/>.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "Is Unemployment to Blame for Radicalization?" 22 May 2015, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2015/05/22/is-unemployment-to-blame-for-radicalization-pub-60179>.

<sup>51</sup>United Nations Ghana. "Youth Unemployment: Most Common Driver of Vulnerability to Violent Extremism and Radicalization." <https://ghana.un.org/en/238758-youth-unemployment-most-common-driver-vulnerability-violent-extremism-and-radicalisation>.

<sup>52</sup>Washington Post. "Youth Radicalization Is on the Rise: Here's What We Know About Why." 25 Aug. 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/25/youth-radicalization-is-on-the-rise-heres-what-we-know-about-why/>.

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

Many Arab nations used to function on a social contract of patronage to a regime, where in exchange for consent to rule, the regime would provide economic and social goods, like security, healthcare, social services, education, and jobs. The growth in the youth population, conflict, a new information economy, and the penetration of global markets changed how this social contract was enacted and they were no longer able to offer the same quality of goods and services to their citizens anymore. In Egypt, for example, university graduates were promised a civil service job once they graduated, but by the early 2000s, graduates were waiting an average of 8 years for this promised job.<sup>53</sup> When reforms were made, they prioritized the political and economic elites and pushed aside the working class.<sup>54</sup> This ultimately led to protests, civil unrest, and, eventually, the Arab Spring uprisings. Nearly a decade after these protests, unemployment rates have continued to rise from global highs in 2009 and protests have begun again in many states, like Iraq and Sudan, with demands for political reform and social justice.<sup>55</sup> The social and economic challenges that existed during the first Arab Spring continue to grow and events like the COVID-19 pandemic and current regional conflict create further instability, all of which contribute to an increasingly tense political climate, as well as unaddressed needs of the people.

More recently, in Oman, similar protests occurred. In May 2021, Omanis gathered to protest mass layoffs, unemployment, and lack of action from Sultan Haitham and his predecessor on economic issues that plagued the country during and after the COVID-19 pandemic as well as low oil prices at the time.<sup>56</sup> These protests were driven by young people who faced not only the trials of the Coronavirus pandemic, but also the unemployment rate that had reached 10% due to a lack of economic development.<sup>57</sup> The government responded to these protests with far less force than the 2011 uprisings, where unnecessary and lethal force was used. Sultan Haitham also responded swiftly to the concerns being brought up and introduced measures that would create upwards of 30,000 jobs in the public and private sectors as well as other relief measures for those facing unemployment.<sup>58</sup> Although there is still concern about the lasting power of these measures, the Sultan has shown careful thought about future economic reform and the reality of the situation, creating more trust in the government and its responses. Other nations facing similar issues could look to the Omani government to try and address the unrest they face and

---

<sup>53</sup> Brookings Institution. "Want to Stabilize the Middle East? Start with Governance." <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/want-to-stabilize-the-middle-east-start-with-governance/>.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid

<sup>55</sup> The Guardian. "Middle East's Young Frustration: Joblessness Fuels Protests." 2 Nov. 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/02/middle-east-young-frustration-joblessness-fuels-protests>.

<sup>56</sup> Reuters. "Omanis Protest Unemployment in Rare Show of Discontent." 24 May 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/omanis-protest-unemployment-rare-show-discontent-2021-05-24/>.

<sup>57</sup> Al Jazeera. "Controlling the Situation: Oman Leader Quickly Quells Protests." 3 June 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/3/controlling-the-situation-oman-leader-quickly-quells-protests>.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

ensure that they are able to respond quickly to address the needs of the people in order to prevent further violence or radicalization.

It is not just unemployment, though, that leads to protests. Research has shown that it is more often those who have a more ambiguous employment status who participate in protests than those who are unemployed, especially in the informal work sector. Additionally, issues of general feelings of poverty and lack of opportunity are highly linked to protest.<sup>59</sup> That study also found that these factors are also contributors to participation in political violence.<sup>60</sup> By creating opportunities for the youth to better express their discontent, rather than taking to the street or seeing violent extremism as their only hope to change their nation, governments have a better opportunity to decrease violence within their borders and amongst their people.

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

Solutions to this issue are not going to be a simple fix or a one-time change, but rather a shift in how nations address extremism and how governments communicate with and provide for their citizens. Many times the response to insurgent ideologies exacerbates the issue and further alienates the already vulnerable targets of radical groups. It is vital that we work to create an environment where citizens, especially the youth of the nations, are not forced to turn to extremism to survive. Current responses to extremism often include increased policing in poorer areas and greater scrutiny from the government, which can lead to further alienation of the people most at risk of radicalization.<sup>61</sup> The current plans in place create a more hostile environment which has helped extremist ideology spread, as radicalization factors such as distrust in the state, failing governance, political exclusion, and the lack of opportunities for youth are all made worse by heightened states of security.<sup>62</sup>

The obvious solution is addressing the issues that cause unrest, like economic stagnation and unemployment, which have been exacerbated by COVID-19 as well as fluctuations in global oil prices. This has led to increased protests and discontent in those many nations.<sup>63</sup> Creating more jobs and diversifying the economy is a key way to protect the job market and help it grow. Many countries have an overreliance on hydrocarbons, which limits job opportunities in areas of renewable energy or similar fields and puts those nations at the mercy of global oil and gas

---

<sup>59</sup>Paasonen, Kari. "Does Unemployment Drive Political Violence and Protest? Focusing On the Case of Middle Eastern and North African Youth." *Conflict Trends*, vol. 1, 2022. Oslo: PRIO.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup>Washington Post. "Youth Radicalization Is on the Rise: Here's What We Know About Why." 25 Aug. 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/25/youth-radicalization-is-on-the-rise-heres-what-we-know-about-why/>.

<sup>62</sup>International Crisis Group. "Exploiting Disorder: Al-Qaeda and Islamic State." <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/exploiting-disorder-al-qaeda-and-islamic-state>.

<sup>63</sup>Reuters. "Omanis Protest Unemployment in Rare Show of Discontent." 24 May 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/omanis-protest-unemployment-rare-show-discontent-2021-05-24/>.

prices.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, expanding programs for youth to gain skills outside of university can be helpful in increasing their opportunities in the job market and decreasing unemployment rates and discontent, as well as providing poorer citizens an option for upward social mobility.

Although addressing these issues is important, it is difficult, and creating ways to prevent this discontent from bubbling up again or creating outlets to hear the grievances of the people will be vital to ensure long-term political and social stability in the face of future issues of governance. Engagement in politics and political movements comes in many forms, especially in nations without democratic governments. Many young people engage in informal political action, like in colleges or through political movements, rather than formal interactions with political parties, politicians, or policy-making.<sup>65</sup> It is important to keep this in mind when creating programs or plans to take in the input of the people, as well as the main channels of political action or discussion that they engage in, like online movements or discussion boards, as well as other channels of communication.<sup>66</sup> Creating positions or programs in government, ranging from local to national offices, for young people and civilians to interact with will create not only an increased perception of being heard by their government, but also help to locate problems that affect the people directly and create actionable solutions with the input of those that are directly affected by the problem.<sup>67</sup>

## ***II. Questions to Consider in Your Research:***

- A. What are the primary political interests of youth in the country?
- B. What are the specific needs of youth in your nation?
- C. What systems are currently in place to support poor or underprivileged individuals?
- D. Which governmental bodies or other organizations could help in addressing the issues citizens face?
- E. What kinds of action do extremist groups in your country want and how are they using national issues to further their agenda?

## ***III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer:***

- How can youth effectively communicate their needs with the government?
- What kinds of measures can be taken to limit exposure to radical ideals?
- How can a government ensure it is meeting the needs of all of its people?

---

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

<sup>65</sup>United Nations. "Youth Political Participation." PDF.

<https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-political-participation.pdf>.

<sup>66</sup>OECD. "Young People in the Middle East and North Africa." PDF.

<https://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/Young-people-in-OG.pdf>.

<sup>67</sup>Washington Post. "Youth Radicalization Is on the Rise: Here's What We Know About Why." 25 Aug. 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/25/youth-radicalization-is-on-the-rise-heres-what-we-know-about-why/>.



- How can states change the way they respond to radicalization to better address the root causes of extremist ideology?

#### **IV. Additional Resources:**

##### [Young People's Civic and Political Engagement and Global Citizenship](#)

*The UN Chronicle discusses the trends in political engagement of young people and concerns about the future of democracy. They discuss the importance of social, educational, and historical factors that lead to engagement, or lack thereof, in political organizations and action.*

##### [Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System](#)

*This handbook by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime examines recruitment strategies used by extremist groups and the justice system's actions and impact on the children.*

*Understanding the ways that extremist groups are able to attract new members and exploit youth is important in order to figure out how to protect them and ensure that their needs are met.*

##### [Why Youth Join al-Qaeda](#)

*This special report from the United States Institute of Peace discusses the reasons that make youth more likely to join extremist groups like al-Qaeda. In this, they also look at ways to protect potential recruits and redirect their frustration and anger with the government and society.*

##### [Preventing Extremism in Fragile States: A New Approach](#)

*This report discusses the importance of preventing the spread of extremism and the role that foreign military intervention can play in increasing the likelihood of extremist ideology spreading.*

## **Topic IV: Establishing and enforcing labor standards to expand worker protections in the MENA region**

### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

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

Global labor standards first came into effect after World War I when the International Labor Organization was formed by the Treaty of Versailles and put forth protections and rights of working people to be followed by all members of the organization.<sup>68</sup> It soon became a specialized agency of the UN and now has 187 member states and is the global authority on the creation and enforcement of fair labor practices.<sup>69</sup> The ILO bases its standards on the promotion and protection of basic human rights, and there are 9 International Labor Conventions and 10 Recommendations, which cover topics like hours of work, unemployment, child labor, occupational health and safety.<sup>70</sup> As the primary enforcing body of these standards, the ILO also conducts investigations into complaints and works with the member states to ensure compliance with their labor laws and enforcement procedures. It does not have the power to directly authorize retaliatory trade measures or sanctions on non-compliant states.<sup>71</sup> This fuels skepticism that the ILO may not be effective in its goal, since the only penalty a country might face for breaking labor laws would be bad publicity.

Enforcement also becomes difficult in poorer countries or in countries with limited civil rights protections. Governments may adopt these standards in name and then not enforce them due to costs, or they politicize their enforcement, which continues to negatively affect workers.<sup>72</sup> There are questions of what kind of enforcement works best, or if increased enforcement has negative effects on productivity or labor demand. A 2017 study in Brazil found that increased labor law enforcement decreased plant-level productivity, while another study found that a national campaign for minimum wages led to increased wage compliance and did not harm productivity.<sup>73</sup> There are many factors that can contribute to the actual protection of workers outside of the enforcement of fair labor laws, which can lead to continual harm without careful evaluation and expansion of said laws.

---

<sup>68</sup> International Labour Organization. "About the ILO: History."

<https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/history/lang--en/index.htm>.

<sup>69</sup> International Labour Organization. "About the ILO." <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/lang--en/index.htm>.

<sup>70</sup> International Labour Organization. "Introduction to International Labour Standards: Conventions and Recommendations."

<https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/introduction-to-international-labour-standards/conventions-and-recommendations/lang--en/index.htm>.

<sup>71</sup> Brookings Institution. "Workers' Rights, Labor Standards, and Global Trade."

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/workers-rights-labor-standards-and-global-trade/>.

<sup>72</sup> IZA World of Labor. "Enforcement of Labor Regulations in Developing Countries."

<https://wol.iza.org/articles/enforcement-of-labor-regulations-in-developing-countries/long>.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid

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

Many members of the Arab League are also members of the ILO and have maintained a commitment to the application of fair work standards, yet they continue to face criticism for poor working conditions and unfair hours and wages.<sup>74</sup> The 2022 International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) Global Rights Index found the MENA region to have the worst treatment of its workers, as many countries in the region prevent their workers from creating unions or striking for better working conditions.<sup>75</sup> This is especially true for migrant workers. Qatar, for example, has faced immense controversy over their mistreatment of migrant workers in preparation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, even after signing an agreement with the ILO to address the widespread exploitation of migrant workers.<sup>76</sup>

The kafala system is the main system under which migrant workers are able to be employed in many Gulf nations, including Qatar. The system is formed by a demand for cheap labor and a large number of migrants looking for work. After the World Cup, the system has come under more scrutiny, and demands for reforms have been made.<sup>77</sup> Workers under the kafala system have reported an array of abuses by their employers, including forced confinement, withholding payment, excessive hours with no breaks, and assault.<sup>78</sup> If they tried to leave that job, they risk their legal residency in that country.<sup>79</sup> In many countries, workers are given no formal contracts, just word-of-mouth agreements, which makes it difficult for them to protect themselves from or report unsafe working conditions. They are also usually exempt from a nation's labor laws, which cover things like minimum wage, rest days, work hour limits, and social security programs.<sup>80</sup>

Even in countries outside of the kafala system, migrant workers and employees in general still face a lack of protections and rights. Tunisia, for example, although having a very comprehensive labor code and social security program, has been failing to protect its migrant workers and darker-skinned citizens. Current workers' rights in Tunisia stem primarily from the Labor Code of 1966, which governs work hours, wages, holidays, overtime, and cases of special

---

<sup>74</sup>World Bank. "Built to Include: Reimagining Social Protection in the Middle East and North Africa." <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/publication/built-to-include-reimagining-social-protection-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa>.

<sup>75</sup>Global Rights Index. "Middle East Region." <https://www.globalrightsindex.org/en/2022/regions/middle-east>.

<sup>76</sup> Amnesty International. "Reality Check: Migrant Workers' Rights with Two Years to Qatar 2022 World Cup." <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/02/reality-check-migrant-workers-rights-with-two-years-to-qatar-2022-world-cup/>.

<sup>77</sup> Council on Foreign Relations. "What Is the Kafala System?" <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-kafala-system>.

<sup>78</sup>Amnesty International. "Lebanon: Blow to Migrant Domestic Worker Rights." <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2020/10/lebanon-blow-to-migrant-domestic-worker-rights/>.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Human Rights Watch. "Middle East: Failing to Protect Domestic Workers." <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/10/28/middle-east-failing-protect-domestic-workers>.

leave<sup>81</sup>. Under these laws, workers are not allowed to exceed more than 6 hours of continuous work without a break lasting at least 30-minutes and are entitled to at least 24 consecutive hours of rest in a work week.<sup>82</sup> There are also regulations in place on severance, termination, and definitions in place for fair and unfair terminations.<sup>83</sup> While these protections are expansive, migrant workers are often not included in these protections. Migrant workers in Tunisia have been filling in gaps in the labor market caused by the emigration of young people to Europe to pursue better-paying job opportunities.<sup>84</sup> Although these workers have filled important jobs, like construction and restaurants, they are often mistreated, exploited, and even the subject of racially motivated violence<sup>85</sup>. This is enabled by President Saied's hateful rhetoric, which was seen in his speech on February 21<sup>st</sup> of this year, where he described migrants as part of the "great replacement theory", in which Black Africans will replace the Tunisian people.<sup>86</sup> This incited violence against the Black population in Tunisia, regardless of whether they had lived there their entire lives or had entered the country legally or illegally. Even with the protection of the law, workers are still negatively impacted by the social realities of their country. This kind of harmful rhetoric can be applied to women joining the workforce or other migrant workers in other countries as well.

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

Some countries have made moves to address the injustices and hazards faced by their laborers, but there is still much work to be done. In Lebanon, a new standard unified contract was adopted in September of 2020 which would cap the permissible deductions an employer could make from a worker's salary to 30% and provide increased protections that the original standard contract lacked. The new contract was suspended in October of the same year.<sup>87</sup> This was a major blow to labor movements, especially given the new contract's potential to limit the powers an employer has over migrant workers under the kafala system.<sup>88</sup> When considering possible solutions to aid workers in the MENA region, it is vital to take into account possible

---

<sup>81</sup> Replicon. "Tunisia." 9 February 2023. <https://www.replicon.com/regulation/tunisia/>.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid

<sup>83</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. "Tunisia." September 2015. Paris.

<sup>84</sup> AfricaNews. (2022, April 3). *Sub-saharan African migrant workers fill gaps in Tunisian labour market*. Africanews. Retrieved March 29, 2023, from

<https://www.africanews.com/2022/03/29/sub-saharan-african-workers-fill-gaps-in-tunisian-labour-market/>

<sup>85</sup> Business & Human Rights Resource Centre. (2020, October 25). *Sub-saharan migrant workers in Tunisia are victim of discrimination and economic exploitation, study finds*. Business & Human Rights Resource Centre. Retrieved March 29, 2023, from

<https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/sub-saharan-migrant-workers-in-tunisia-are-victim-of-economic-exploitation-study-finds/>

<sup>86</sup> Inskip, Steve, and Brown, E. C. "International Institutions Are Protesting Tunisia's Racist Crackdown on Migrants." Morning Edition, Washington, DC, NPR, 8 March 2023.

<sup>87</sup> Amnesty International. "Lebanon: Blow to Migrant Domestic Worker Rights."

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2020/10/lebanon-blow-to-migrant-domestic-worker-rights/>.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid

backlash in order to create a policy that is most likely to be implemented and help the workers in the region.

It is important not only to consider expanding rights and protections for workers, but also ways of enforcing the new laws and ensuring the reforms are carried out. Jordan, one of the first countries in the region to reform worker protections to include migrant workers, giving them more legal protections from their employers and providing better working conditions, continues to have issues as there is little to no enforcement of these laws.<sup>89</sup> Even if there are strict laws, without proper enforcement, the conditions of workers will not actually change. Consider methods of holding employers accountable without overstepping government power in the private sector, like reporting incentives or workplace safety checks.

Outside of legal protections, consider the social aspects involved in the treatment of workers in the Arab League. Social protections go hand in hand with enforcement, as ensuring that legal protections are enacted depends on policies that support the worker and enable employer accountability. Such policies could include starting International Labor Project Offices in states to ensure that reforms made meet the needs of the people and are within the nation's means, mandating bilateral labor agreements with social protections included, and things as simple as including migrant workers in social services such as health care and adequate housing. Social services like healthcare are vital not only for keeping workers safe, but also for keeping them employed and decreasing the stigma around them. Many states, especially in the Gulf region, require health checks for migrant workers to find employment, and social stigma surrounding their perceived health creates further alienation from their employers, as they feel like they cannot disclose sickness for fear of losing their jobs. This not only puts their lives at risk, but those of the people they work with, and especially after the coronavirus pandemic, it is incredibly important for nations to address these issues.

## ***II. Questions to Consider in Your Research:***

- What are current regulations regarding worker safety?
- What organizations and bodies are working in the region to improve worker conditions?
- Are worker protections fairly enforced at all levels of work?
- What are the differences in the treatment and rights of formal versus informal workers?
- What are the social norms in place surrounding workers' rights in your country and how do they affect the actual treatment of workers, both migrant and native?

---

<sup>89</sup> Human Rights Watch. "Middle East: Failing to Protect Domestic Workers." 28 October 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/10/28/middle-east-failing-protect-domestic-workers>.

### **III. *Questions a Resolution Might Answer:***

- How can current labor laws and practices be amended?
- What standards of work should non-ILO members be held to?
- What forms of enforcement might be effective in Arab League states?
- Is the kafala system effective, if not, can it be amended to be so?
- How can reforms outside of the legal system help worker's rights?

### **IV. *Additional Resources:***

#### [The Role of Local Government in Protecting Workers' Rights](#)

*This report finds that change towards increased protections often happens on a local level, rather than a national level. It also discusses issues of enforcement and the potential expansion of local government strategies and knowledge of the needs of the people*

#### [The Middle Eastern Consensus on the Kafala System](#)

*This article discusses opinions and ideas around the kafala system of work that is used in many Gulf nations and other Arab League member states. It touches on opinions from workers and the original implementation of the system and how it has become what it has today.*

#### [Employer-Migrant Worker Relationships in the Middle East](#)

*In this white paper from the International Labor Organization, the relationships between employer and migrant employee are explored. They discuss the economic impacts of the current system and the lack of mobility offered in the labor market. They also discuss potential policy solutions to improve fair labor practices.*

#### [Arab Watch on Economic and Social Rights: Informal Employment](#)

*This report from the Ford Foundation discusses the realities of informal work in the Arab world and calls for reforms to better protect workers. It also discusses trends in growth of the informal sector and decline of the formal sector of work, contrary to original notions of work opportunities that would come with economic growth.*