



2024 - 2025

Model Arab League BACKGROUND GUIDE

Summit of Arab Heads of State

ncusar.org/modelarableague

**National
Council
on US-
Arab
Relations**



Original draft by Pashion Israel, Chair of the Summit of Arab Heads of State at the 2025 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 am excited to have the honor of serving as your chair for the 2024-2025 National University Model Arab League for the Summit of Arab Heads of State. My name is Pashion Israel, and I am a senior at Converse University with majors in History and Political Science and a minor in American Sign Language. I had the joy of representing Qatar in Arab Heads of State during my freshman year, and I am overjoyed at returning to my favorite council.

I expect that debate on this council will get quite contentious at times, so I urge you to show the utmost respect to your fellow delegates both in and out of the council room. This council is unique in that you have the privilege of representing the head of state for your country. This council requires that you have an in-depth knowledge of your country's policy, not in one aspect, but in all. The topics that this council will cover have a wide range, and touch on issues brought up in other councils, including Palestinian Affairs and Social Affairs. I hope that this background guide will provide you with a good jumping-off point for your research, and I am happy to serve as an additional resource as well.

My final piece of advice is to embrace the problems you are faced with head-on. Your position on the Heads of State is a powerful one and allows for creative solutions. I look forward to seeing you all at NUMAL. Don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns, my email is pmisrael001@converse.edu.

Sincerely,

Pashion M. Israel
Chair of the Summit of Arab Heads of State

Topic I: Assessing the impact of outside and non-state actors on the Arab League's stability and sovereignty to prevent outside interference in League policy.

I. Introduction

A. General Background

Sovereignty is the backbone of the Arab League, both in regard to interactions between League members and between the League and states outside of it. The Arab League itself is in a very contentious position on the world stage, holding a unique geographical position between mainland Asia and Europe, as well as providing the world with oil. For many years, Arab states have been under the control and authority of other countries, and in recent decades the states have more openly solidified their sovereignty.

Non-state actors often find themselves interfering with League policy, whether it be militia groups, Islamic terror groups, or others. These groups often push themselves into the politics of a country by force via a coup, or through economic means. This causes instability within League states, which often have a history of instability already.

States within the Arab League also have a tendency to rely on outside state actors when looking for stability. The Arab League itself has been in cooperation with the African Union and European Union on a variety of military, economic, and political issues. The Arab world's need for stability and the Western world's ability to help with this can lead to an overreliance on the West. In particular, the United States

B. History in the Arab World

The United States and Iran have been engaging in proxy warfare in the Middle East for a number of months. Americans have been targeted in multiple countries in the Arab League, including Syria, Iraq, and Jordan.¹ These attacks have put the citizens of the Arab League in danger. In addition to Iranian attacks on American targets, the United States has responded with a plethora of attacks on so-called Iranian targets in League states. Drone attacks and air assaults put a target on the backs of innocent Arab League citizens.

¹ Proctor, Rebecca Anne. "How US-Iran Proxy Wars Are Keeping the Middle East on Edge." *Arab News*, 24 Feb. 2024, www.arabnews.com/node/2465036/middle-east.

Outside of the proxy warfare with the United States, Iran has a history of directly influencing Arab League states. According to the American Security Project, “[Iran] has provoked and exacerbated conflicts that have resulted in mass civilian casualties, displacement, and destruction of infrastructure.”² Hezbollah in Lebanon is one group that Iran uses to destabilize the region. Hezbollah gets a large amount of their funding from Iran, receiving an estimated \$700 million a year.³ Other groups Iran either funds or supports include the Houthi group in Yemen and the Assad regime in Syria. Both of these groups have had known destabilizing effects on the region, including through illicit arms trafficking, and the military and financial support of paramilitary groups.

The United States has a long history of interference in the region. The military support the United States provides to countries in the Middle East is often directly used in military interventions that destabilize the region, including most recently in Israel.⁴ In addition to funding and sending military technology to states, the United States is a direct player in the Middle East militarily, with around 45,000 troops stationed in the region.⁵

The Arab League has a responsibility to its citizens to protect them, and the military interference of the U.S., Iran, Russia, and non-state actors disrupts this. Paramilitary actions continue to destabilize the region and place Arab League citizens at risk.⁶ In addition to paramilitary and non-state intervention in the Arab world, the political and economic influence of Western countries prevents the Arab League from being able to be internally stable and self-reliant.

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

The 2024 Arab League Summit in Bahrain gave special attention to the need for self-reliance within the League and showed a desire for League self-sufficiency.⁷ At the summit, Arab leaders

² Brenner, Claire. “Iran’s Destabilizing Activities in the Middle East -.” *American Security Project*, 5 Mar. 2021, www.americansecurityproject.org/irans-destabilizing-activities-in-the-middle-east.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Khan, Sahar. “The Complicated Case of US Meddling in the Middle East.” *Inkstick*, 13 June 2023, inkstickmedia.com/the-complicated-case-of-us-meddling-in-the-middle-east.

⁵ “Defense of the Middle East.” *Hoover Institution*, www.hoover.org/research/defense-middle-east.

⁶ Tenev, Martin, and Martin Tenev. “Proxy Battles: Iraq, Iran, and the Turmoil in the Middle East.” *ECFR*, 16 Apr. 2024, ecfr.eu/publication/proxy-battles-iraq-iran-and-the-turmoil-in-the-middle-east.

⁷ “Charting New Horizons: The 2024 Arab League Summit in Bahrain and the Quest for Regional Autonomy | BIC-RHR.” *BIC-RHR*, 15 May 2024, www.bic-rhr.com/research/charting-new-horizons-2024-arab-league-summit-bahrain-and-quest-regional-autonomy.

discussed the need to minimize “the necessity for Western military support.”⁸ As part of ensuring the Arab League’s continued stability and sovereignty, it appears that leaders are looking to become much more independent from outside countries.

It is important to take into account the myriad of challenges that come with establishing a firm sense of stability and sovereignty from outside state and non-state actors. In many cases, there is a strong economic, political, or military reliance on these groups. In the case of economic reliance, many Arab states rely on the West for trading, and a significant portion of their economies is influenced and kept afloat by Western countries. However, with this reliance comes an ability for the West to interfere in League policies regarding trade and economics. It has also been pointed out by academics that the Arab world’s deficiencies in the way of economic and technological development can be blamed on a reliance on the west and “Western domination of the Arab region.”⁹ The economies of Arab League states vary wildly, from extremely rich and oil-dependent to failing. Any good solution will take both of these realities, as well as the situations of states that lie between these two extremes, into account.

In this situation, it is important to consider what counts as a “non-state actor”. Some groups that may have previously fit this label are now intimately tied with the governments of Arab League states, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon. Trying to equate groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, who have a history of being supported by Arab League states, but currently exist as non-state actors and do not have any official position within the governments of any League member state, to organizations like Hezbollah, who hold seats in Lebanon’s parliament, is impossible. Making this distinction between groups that are designated terrorist organizations by many states within the League or the League itself, but maintain a level of legitimate governmental influence¹⁰, and groups that hold the same designation, but exist outside the legitimate governments of League states is important.

Solutions should aim to be inclusive of influence in the economic, political, and military spheres of the Arab League. While the goal of this topic is to address the ways in which League sovereignty can be protected and ensured, it cannot be forgotten that Arab states individually also need to maintain sovereignty and that what may be a viable solution to start decreasing military reliance on the United States for one country may be completely devastating to another. Delegates should consider the ways in which the League goes about forming relationships with

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Osman, Omar. “Western Domination, Destructive Governance, and the Perpetual Development Crisis in the Arab Region.” *World Review of Political Economy*, vol. 15, no. 1, Apr. 2024, <https://doi.org/10.13169/worldrevipoliecon.15.1.0082>.

¹⁰ “Arab League Brands Hezbollah ‘Terror’ Group.” *Alarabiya News*, 11 Mar. 2016, english.alarabiya.net/2016/03/11/Arab-League-declares-Lebanon-s-Hezbollah-terror-group.

other entities, be them individual states or multinational organizations, and what this means for the influence these states or groups have on the policy-making within the League.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What relationship does your country have with the United States and Iran? How does this affect what kinds of solutions you will be open to?
- To what extent does your country engage with non-state actors?
- Keeping in mind that many states have political parties or other groups with significant government influence that are directly funded by Iran, what is the best way to tackle the issue of Iranian paramilitary and proxy military forces acting within the League while respecting sovereignty?
- What kind of approach would your country be most in favor of in regards to the use of proxy or paramilitaries in the League? (military, political, etc)

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How can the League work to prevent outside actors from impacting League policies and actions?
- What can the League implement to increase the political protection its own states have from outside actors?
- How can the League ensure its sovereignty from outside actors while also allowing for sovereignty within the League itself?
- What power does the League have (or should it have) to dictate the kinds of relationships Arab League states should have with non-state actors?

IV. Additional Resources

- [The path forward on Iran and its proxy forces | Brookings Institute](#)
This gives a brilliant overview of different paramilitary and proxy groups Iran funds and controls throughout the Middle East.
- [Strategic Partnership between United Nations, Arab League Vital for Transformation of Region, Senior Official Tells Security Council | United Nations](#)
This source describes recent and future cooperation between the Arab League and the United Nations.
- [Improving Stability in the Arab World | Center for Strategic and International Studies](#)
This source briefly covers some of the causes of instability in the League and offers some ways in which stability can be increased from within the League itself.
- [No Clean Hands: The Interventions of Middle Eastern Powers, 2010-2020 | Quincy](#)

[Institute](#)

This source describes cases of military intervention in the Middle East and their destabilizing effects, including who is responsible and how they are funded.

Topic II: Addressing how the League should act in response to human rights violations from one of its member states.

I. Introduction

A. General Background

In 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).¹¹ This document paved the way for future human rights laws and laid the framework for documents like the Arab Charter on Human Rights.¹² The International Criminal Court (ICC) takes on cases where states and individuals have been found to commit war crimes or crimes against humanity. The ICC has taken up cases against individuals from the Arab world. Three of the twelve open investigations the ICC is conducting are in the Arab League: Darfur, Sudan, Libya, and, most recently, Palestine. However, not every instance of human rights violations finds itself at the ICC, and the ICC is not equipped to handle every instance of human rights violations from every state. Many individuals brought before the ICC are killed before their trial is able to be completed, or remain at large, as their arrest warrant has not been followed. This is the case in the Libya investigation, where two of the individuals being tried died before a conviction could be reached. Al-Tuhamy Mohamed Khaled, under investigation for war crimes in the First Libyan Civil War, died of complications related to COVID-19, and Mahmoud Mustafa Busayf Al-Werfalli, under investigation for war crimes and the “commission of murder as a war crime”, was assassinated.¹³

In many instances, it may be beneficial for states in close proximity, either physically or politically, to act to prevent or stop human rights violations. However, if too strong of action is taken, it can further harm the citizens of that state.¹⁴ Sanctions are usually one of the first lines of defense a country has to show its displeasure with the actions of an ally. However, economic sanctions often harm those in the most vulnerable population in the country being sanctioned, and they have historically caused a drop in the standard of living.

B. History in the Arab World

¹¹ United Nations. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations.” *United Nations*, www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.

¹² League of Arab States. “Arab Charter on Human Rights.” *United Nations Digital Library System*, 2004, digitallibrary.un.org/record/551368?ln=en&v=pdf#files.

¹³ International Criminal Court. *Situation in Libya*. www.icc-cpi.int/situations/libya.

¹⁴ Center for Economic and Policy Research. “The Human Consequences of Economic Sanctions - Center for Economic and Policy Research.” *Center for Economic and Policy Research*, 28 Nov. 2023, cepr.net/report/the-human-consequences-of-economic-sanctions.

In November 2011, The Arab League formally voted on the Syrian Arab Republic's suspension. Of the 22 member states, 18 voted in favor of the suspension, Lebanon and Yemen voted against it, Iraq abstained, and Syria itself did not cast a vote.¹⁵ The stated purpose of the suspension was to encourage the Syrian government to cease the violence that had been occurring in the country since the start of the civil war in March of 2011.¹⁶ In response to the Syrian government enacting violence on its own people and breaking international human rights laws, the League saw fit to suspend the state. The state-sanctioned murder and arrest of political protestors sparked international outrage, and while there was concern from multiple avenues about repercussions to the League's actions for the protestors, the League opted for suspension regardless.

In May of 2023, the League voted to reinstate Syria as a full member of the Arab League. However, Syria's suspension was not successful in getting the state to cease its violence, and only ostracized the state further. Syria, despite being suspended, still violated the human rights of its citizens. In order for the Arab League to be respected on the world stage, it needs to be able to hold its members accountable.

The situation with Syria shows that suspension is not a viable response to human rights violations, but the League needs some way to hold its member states accountable. Finding a solution that does not ostracize a country's citizens, but is successful at ending government-sanctioned violence is imperative.

It may also be important to discuss how accusations of human rights violations are addressed by the Arab League. In the past, there have been multiple instances of member states openly committing war crimes and violating human rights, and the Arab League not addressing it. In Darfur, Sudan, the Arab League has yet to become involved in the decades-long conflict. Although the Arab League has stated its support of troops being brought into the region, the troops in question were coming from the African Union, not the Arab League.¹⁷ Is there a legitimate way, currently, for the Arab League to address concerns brought forward by the international community? The League's response in the case of Sudan, as well as in the cases of Yemen and Libya,¹⁸ show that while the League may critique its member states and even

¹⁵ MacFarquhar, Neil. "Arab League Votes to Suspend Syria Over Crackdown." *The New York Times*, 12 Nov. 2011, www.nytimes.com/2011/11/13/world/middleeast/arab-league-votes-to-suspend-syria-over-its-crackdown-on-protesters.html#.

¹⁶ "Conflict in Syria | Global Conflict Tracker." *Global Conflict Tracker*, www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-syria.

¹⁷ SudanTribune "Arab League Head Wants Arab Troops in Darfur." *Sudan Tribune*, 15 Aug. 2021, sudantribune.com/article6670.

¹⁸ Washington, Arab Center, DC. "The Arab League's Many Failures." *Arab Center Washington DC*, 23 Jan. 2023, arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-arab-leagues-many-failures.

condemn their actions, it is very rare that any real action is taken to stop or prevent violations of human rights from states in the region.

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

The situation in Syria is one of many instances in which League member states have been accused of human rights abuses. The Arab Spring uprisings of 2011 brought with them a rise in state-sanctioned violence against protestors, which seems to be a common theme across the League.¹⁹

The Arab League has historically stayed silent in response to accusations of human rights abuses from member states. The civil war and ongoing conflict in Libya²⁰ have not led to any significant action from the League to protect Libyans. The same can be said for the Arab Spring in general. No significant action was taken by the League in response to the Arab Spring uprisings and subsequent governmental crackdowns on human rights, especially free speech and the right to protest.²¹

The Arab League at present does not have any concrete way to punish or critique its own member states outside of suspension, which has been proven to not be a viable solution. In addition, it may not be the place for the League itself to decide that its members should impose sanctions on one another. How can the League act in response to human rights violations from its members without destroying any future political relationship the state has with the League and without harming the citizens of the country further?

While sanctions can be a good place to start, it is important to keep in mind that economic sanctions can cause negative effects on the people in the country being sanctioned, from an increase in poverty to a drop in the availability of essential goods.²² In addition, it is important to consider whether or not it is the place for the Summit of Arab Heads of State to impose economic sanctions across the board.

¹⁹ Amnesty International. "MENA: Repression and Violence Fail to Stamp Out Arab Activism 10 Years Since Mass Uprisings of 2011." *Amnesty International*, 8 Aug. 2022, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/02/mena-repression-and-violence-fail-to-stamp-out-arab-activism-10-years-since-mass-uprisings-of-2011.

²⁰ Amnesty International. "Human Rights in Libya." *Amnesty International*, www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/north-africa/libya/report-libya.

²¹ Grimm, Jannis, and Stephan Roll. "Human Rights Dialogue with Arab States." *Stiftung Wissenschaft Und Politik*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.18449/2023C41>.

²² "The Human Consequences of Economic Sanctions - Center for Economic and Policy Research." *Center for Economic and Policy Research*, 28 Nov. 2023, cepr.net/report/the-human-consequences-of-economic-sanctions.

Something else to consider is how the Arab League should decide whether or not a country has violated the human rights of its citizens. Should Arab League policies and treaties only be considered, including the Arab Charter on Human Rights and the Rights of the Child, or should international treaties also be taken into account? The ICC is a powerful international body. But its decisions can be controversial and do not always give a straightforward pathway to stop the actions a country was brought before the court for.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How does your country interact with states it finds to be committing human rights violations? Does your state often impose sanctions, pause political collaboration, or something else entirely?
- What is your country's relationship with the International Criminal Court? How will this affect how your country views punishment for human rights violations?
- What lessons can be learned from the situation with Syria? What did the League do correctly, and what should be avoided in the future?
- What system does my country use to determine what constitutes a human rights violation? Is this different from the League's or United Nations' standards?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How can the League be proactive in acting against human rights violations from its members without retroactively punishing member states for their past actions?
- Is an Arab Criminal Court something that should be considered? If so, how would it be staffed, and how can states maintain sovereignty if it is established?
- How can the Arab League ensure that human rights are being respected in each of its member states without violating sovereignty? Where should the line of responsibility be drawn between the individual states and the Arab League and other international bodies?
- What are the limits of Arab League power in regards to prosecuting or otherwise punishing individuals or entire governments?

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.

- [The Arab League's Many Failures | Arab Center DC](#)
An analysis of general institutional problems the League faces, as well as its failures regarding Palestine, Libya, Syria, and Yemen.
- [Middle East and North Africa Regional Overview | Amnesty International](#)
Amnesty International overview of human rights issues facing the Middle East and North Africa, with sections highlighting the conflict in Palestine, women and children, IDPs, migrants, and refugees, among others.
- [Human Rights | United Nations](#)
Reference by the United Nations detailing international human rights laws and the ways the UN works to maintain human rights.
- [International Human Rights Law | United Nations](#)
Information from the OHCHR that gives a general overview of international human rights laws.
- [Preventing human rights violations | United Nations](#)
Details the ways the UN attempts to prevent human rights violations and some preventative measures that have been suggested to prevent the repetition of human rights violations by states that have violated them in the past.
- [Then and now: How Arab states changed course on Syria | Reuters](#)
Article details the relationship between Syria and Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, and Jordan respectively, and how it has changed in the past decade.
- [Syria's normalization signals a new Middle Eastern order | Brookings Institute](#)
This source examines the United States' relationship to the Middle East in relation to the Arab League's reinstatement of Syria and the possible effects this will have on the stability and political position of the region and of the League.
- [International Criminal Court](#)
This is the page for the International Criminal Court. I encourage delegates to be familiar with some of the cases brought before Arab states and individuals.
- [Darfur and the Arab League | Washington Institute](#)
An analysis on the history of the situation in Darfur, Sudan, and the Arab League's involvement or lack thereof.

Topic III: Reassessing current Arab League treaties and agreements and whether they should be updated to match the changing world.

I. Introduction

A. General Background

The Charter of the Arab League is the founding document for the League of Arab States. It was concluded in 1945 and laid the foundations for the current Arab League as we know it today.²³ The League's existence predates the vast majority of other multinational organizations including the United Nations, NATO, and the African Union. Since its founding, the Arab League has adopted a variety of treaties and agreements to facilitate the stated goals of the League. However, many of these treaties are over 20 years old. In the time since the treaties were adopted, the League has endured multiple coups, wars, revolutions, the dissolution of states, and the addition of new states. However, in all this time, these documents have not been updated to reflect the new world that we are now in.

In the time between the adoption of major treaties and documents, the Arab World has undergone much change. The Gulf War and the Iraq War both took place in Arab League territory, and had a devastating effect on the population of the countries involved, with the Gulf war leading to over 100,000 civilian deaths and the displacement of millions,²⁴ and between 180,000 and 210,000 Iraqi civilians being killed²⁵ following the United States' invasion of the country in 2003. Since 2000, there have been uprisings, insurgencies, and civil wars in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Palestine, Lebanon, Bahrain, Libya, and Sudan. This is not taking into account the Arab Spring in 2011, which caused millions to be displaced in Syria and Yemen, and hundreds of thousands to be displaced in Libya.²⁶ The Arab world, as it exists today, is entirely different from how it was when many of its treaties were signed, and these new circumstances need to be taken into account.

B. History in the Arab World

²³ Arab League. *Charter of the Arab League*. 22 Mar. 1945, arableague-us.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Charter%20of%20the%20Arab%20League.pdf.

²⁴ Ufheil-Somers, Amanda. "The Other Face of War - MERIP." *MERIP*, 11 Oct. 2016, merip.org/1991/07/the-other-face-of-war.

²⁵ "Iraqi Civilians | Costs of War." *The Costs of War*, watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/civilians/iraqi.

²⁶ Robinson, Kali. "The Arab Spring at Ten Years: What's the Legacy of the Uprisings?" *Council on Foreign Relations*, 3 Dec. 2020, www.cfr.org/article/arab-spring-ten-years-whats-legacy-uprisings.

The Arab Charter on Human Rights, the Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation, and the Arab Free Trade Area Agreement are three documents that are essential to the Arab League's continuing prosperity. While they all impact different areas of operation, they all have their faults.

The Arab Charter on Human Rights was adopted in 2004.²⁷ It outlines the inherent rights of all people in Arab League states, but by many accounts, it falls short of international standards. Protections for children, including preventing children from being executed, do not appear in the Charter.²⁸ In addition, there is currently no metric to “punish” or otherwise address the failure of states to follow the guidelines set in place by the Charter. International officials with the United Nations have criticized the Charter for lacking protections for children, non-citizens, and women, but nothing has been done on the League's end to address these concerns.²⁹

The Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation was adopted in 1950 and had the goal of increasing cooperation between the countries in the Arab League on a defensive level. It also created the Joint Defense Council to facilitate joint defense in the region. While the Council has changed over time, the initial Treaty has not. An update may be necessary to encapsulate the current defensive needs of the League, including the threats coming from Israel and Iran.

The Arab Free Trade Area Agreement was adopted in 1997 and established the Greater Arab Free Trade Area.³⁰ Means of economic cooperation need to be reevaluated, especially considering many League states' desire to move away from an oil-based economy in the coming years. Economic cooperation on multiple levels is possible and can be implemented better with improvements or updates to the current Treaty.

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

Internally and externally, the Arab League has changed over the past few decades. With many of its governments now tending towards democracy, Syria's reinstatement, and diplomatic discussions with Israel, the Arab League of today, and, in fact, the Arab world of today, is vastly different than it was when these treaties were initially written up. The world has new standards,

²⁷ “Arab Charter on Human Rights.” *United Nations Digital Library System*, 2004, digitallibrary.un.org/record/551368?ln=en&v=pdf.

²⁸ *Revisiting the Arab Charter for Human Rights*. 18 Apr. 2023, sultanalqassemi.com/articles/revisiting-the-arab-charter-for-human-rights.

²⁹ “Arab Rights Charter Deviates From International Standards, Says UN Official.” *UN News*, 30 Jan. 2008, news.un.org/en/story/2008/01/247292.

³⁰ Abu Al-Ragheb, Ali, et al. *Agreement of Arab Free Trade Area*. 19 Feb. 1997, [rtais.wto.org/rtdocs/16/TOA/English/Pan-Arab%20Free%20Trade%20Area%20Agreement%20\(1997\).pdf](http://rtais.wto.org/rtdocs/16/TOA/English/Pan-Arab%20Free%20Trade%20Area%20Agreement%20(1997).pdf).

and the Arab League must follow suit and ensure that its documentation is up to date and applies to the present world.

The Arab Charter on Human Rights, the Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation, and the Arab Free Trade Area Agreement all have their own strengths and weaknesses.

The Arab Charter on Human Rights has long been documented as failing to meet international standards for human rights bills.³¹ Some aspects of the Charter will likely not change with any future updates, such as the assumption that Zionism is a form of racism, as this remains in line with the political attitudes of the League to this day, even though many states have engaged in diplomatic relationships with Israel in recent years. The situation in Gaza since October 2023 has weakened these relations and has led to challenges to normalization efforts, such as is the case with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.³²

The Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation has only been loosely followed throughout its history. The League as it stands today is not at a point where it would be considered a defense organization, nor does it necessarily need to be, but the League itself should be concerned with maintaining a strong collective defense. It may be helpful to look at international examples, such as NATO, for how to best ensure that collective defense can be ensured while maintaining sovereignty for each state.

Overall, looking at international examples and focusing on maintaining a strong sense of sovereignty should be priorities.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What is my state's relationship with Arab League treaties?
- What international treaties has my country signed onto, and do any of them contradict Arab League treaties?
- Are there any policies that my country has adopted that may be beneficial to be adopted on a League-wide basis?
- How are these treaties still impacting the Arab world to this day? Is there anything that changing these treaties would disrupt that would negatively affect the people of the Arab world?

³¹ "Arab rights charter deviates from international standards, says UN official." *UN News*, 30 Jan. 2008, news.un.org/en/story/2008/01/247292.

³² Millender, Michaela. "IntelBrief: After October 7th, Is Saudi-Israeli Normalization Just a Mirage?" *The Soufan Center*, 14 Feb. 2024, thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2024-february-14.

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How should the League go about reassessing these treaties and agreements?
- Is the Heads of State the correct body to update these agreements? Would a subcommittee be more beneficial?
- In what order should these documents be updated, and how is priority established?

IV. Additional Resources

- [The League of Arab States and the Arab Charter on Human Rights | Arab Center for International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Education](#)
This source details a brief history of the Arab Charter on Human Rights and highlights some prominent issues with the updated 2004 Charter.
- [New Arab Human Rights Court is Doomed from the Start | Human Rights Watch](#)
This source details problems with a future Arab Court on Human Rights. It is important to know that the discussion of a “future court” made here occurred in 2014 and there has been little update on the timeline for the court opening since then.
- [Greater Arab Free Trade Area and practical challenges | 9th International Conference on Modern Research in Management, Economics and Accounting](#)
This conference paper goes into detail about the specific challenges the Arab Free Trade Agreement faces and gives some possible solutions from a purely economic point of view.
- [The Partial and General Equilibrium Effects of the Greater Arab Free Trade Agreement | The International Trade Journal](#)
This article describes analysis of the GAFTA and its low effectiveness and points the way towards how to make it more effective in the future.

Topic IV: Evaluating the Casablanca Protocol, formally the “Protocol for the Treatment of Palestinians in Arab States,” and discussing expanding the existing League-wide agreement.

I. Introduction

A. General Background

In 1965, the Arab League adopted the Casablanca Protocol.³³ This Protocol outlined protections for Palestinians in Arab states and attempted to standardize the legal status of Palestinians within the Arab League. The current conflict is greatly affecting the Palestinian people, and the needs of Palestinians have changed from when it was originally drafted. The Protocol, in general, is extremely short and only outlines the very basic rights of Palestinians.

The Casablanca Protocol was established at a time when Arab states were just beginning to understand the extent of the Palestinian refugee crisis. “Initially,” according to Human Rights Watch, “the response of host Arab states to the incoming Palestinian refugees was to offer them refuge on the assumption that it would be temporary.”³⁴ Once it was realized that it would not be temporary, Arab states began to turn their focus to preserving the Palestinian identity. The Casablanca Protocol was born out of this focus. The Protocol was made with the intention of standardizing the treatment of Palestinians in Arab states.

This coincides with a rise in Palestinian nationalism, which put the Palestinians residing in Arab states at odds with the governments of those countries. Due to this, many of the Palestinians residing outside of Palestine in the Arab world have a “diminished legal status”, according to “The State of the World’s Refugees”, published by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).³⁵

B. History in the Arab World

Palestine has been a central figure in the Arab League since its inception, and the issues facing the Palestinian people have long since been at the forefront of the League. However, in the years since the adoption of the Protocol, the situation in Palestine has changed significantly, as well as

³³ Refworld - UNHCR’s Global Law and Policy Database. “Protocol for the Treatment of Palestinians in Arab States (‘Casablanca Protocol’).” *Refworld*, 12 Feb. 2024, www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/las/1965/en/36716.

³⁴ “Treatment and Rights in Arab Host States.” *Human Rights Watch*, 28 Oct. 2020, www.hrw.org/news/2002/04/23/treatment-and-rights-arab-host-states.

³⁵ *Statelessness and Citizenship*. www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/3eb7ba7d4.pdf.

the needs of the Palestinians. This is even more true in the months since October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched a terror attack on Israel, prompting a continuous assault on the Gaza Strip, destroying the lives and livelihoods of millions of Palestinians, and leading many of them to flee their homes to the surrounding countries of Jordan and Egypt.

In addition to the new difficulties facing Palestinians, the Protocol is not sufficient in truly protecting the Palestinians residing in Arab States. Recently, Egypt and Jordan have been preventing many Palestinians from entering their countries.³⁶ The Protocol protects Palestinians once they reside in Arab states, and allows for free travel between Arab states once already residing in one, but says nothing about Palestinians still residing either in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank. Palestinians residing within Palestine are still at risk and have little to no legal protections until they are residing in another League state. Therefore, countries like Egypt and Jordan refusing the entry of Palestinian refugees into their country puts them at greater risk.

The Protocol was put into place at a time when Palestinian nationalism was on the rise but had not solidified. The Protocol was signed decades before the creation of Hamas, the predominant authority in the Gaza Strip. The situation in Palestine has changed to be almost unrecognizable from the time the Protocol was initially put into place, and the situation in Palestine has only gotten more dire.

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

The Protocol does not protect Palestinians in the way it was originally supposed to. The circumstances in Palestine have changed since the Protocol was adopted, and no new agreements have been signed regarding the treatment of Palestinians. In addition, the treatment of Palestinians while they still reside in Palestine is not addressed by the Protocol, yet is of utmost importance to the League.

Some countries within the League have, to this day, not ratified the Protocol, or have signed onto it with reservations, which defeats the original purpose of the Protocol and destabilizes the Palestinians further. In order for the Arab League to hold a united front against the travesties occurring to the Palestinian people, it needs to have a sure and steady way of treating them.

This may include updating the Protocol and including specifications for countries sharing a border with Palestine or Israel, more protections for Palestinian refugees, or more detail about the Right to Return and how this affects Palestinian refugees residing within the Arab League.

³⁶ Jeffery, Jack, and Samy Magdy. "Why Egypt and Other Arab Countries Are Unwilling to Take in Palestinian Refugees From Gaza | AP News." *AP News*, 19 Oct. 2023, apnews.com/article/palestinian-jordan-egypt-israel-refugee-502c06d004767d4b64848d878b66bd3d.

Collaboration with outside bodies may be necessary to ensure that this goes smoothly, but it is necessary, especially considering Israel's unrelentless attacks on Gaza and continued expansion into the West Bank. The Arab League needs to stand strong in its original convictions regarding Palestine and needs to ensure that Palestinians are treated with equality within Arab League states, as this is not happening now.

Any new adoption needs to take into account the way it will affect Arab states' relations with Israel and the United States, as well as how it will affect Palestinians in Palestine, the Arab world, and outside of the League.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- To what extent does the Protocol affect my country?
- Is my state following the Protocol? Has my state signed the Protocol, and does it have reservations?
- Are there any laws or mandates by my state that contradict the Protocol?
- What relationship does my state have with Israel? How will this affect my state's willingness to abide by any changes made to the Protocol?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What aspects of the original Protocol are still necessary to keep in the modern day?
- Are there any aspects of the Protocol that are so outdated they need to be removed? If so, how should the League deal with the repercussions of this?
- What methods does the League have to enforce the Protocol or any new implementations of the Protocol?
- Is the Protocol still necessary given the new humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees?

IV. Additional Resources

- [Egypt's Gaza Dilemma | International Crisis Group](#)
This source details Egypt's relationship with Gaza as the only Arab state bordering it. Includes information relating to the problems Egypt is facing in regards to the refugee population fleeing from Gaza into Egypt via the Rafah Crossing and diplomatic efforts to support these people while keeping Egyptian security and financial stability in mind.

- [Israel's war on Gaza updates | Al Jazeera](#)
Live updates from Al Jazeera on the war in Gaza.
- [Asylum for Palestinians? The theory and practice of a response | Diasporas](#)
This journal article details historical protections for Palestinians, with a focus on those put in place by the United Nations.
- [Human Rights Watch Policy on the Right to Return | Human Rights Watch](#)
Human Rights Watch Policy regarding the right of Palestinians to return to their homeland.
- [Arab States Are Giving Palestinians the Cold Shoulder. Here's Why. | Politico](#)
This source provides more detail on reasons why many Arab states refuse to take in Palestinian refugees.