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I. Letter From the Chair

Hello esteemed delegates to the UN Human Rights Council!

My name is Christian Martin. I am a current Freshman hailing from Princeton, New Jersey, yet to declare a major but passionate about international politics and ethics. Likewise, I am thrilled to serve as your chair this conference.

I am fortunate to have several years of Model UN experience under my belt and am a deep believer in the kind of constructive debate that MUN allows for. Thusly, I hope to foster an environment conducive to pluralistic debate but with an undercurrent of compromise and fraternity. The beauty of MUN in my eyes is that one cannot truly excel by stream-rolling those before him/her, but must rely on the cooperation of groups with opposing interests. Along those lines, it is my hope that the delegates to this committee see success this weekend not as any award or recognition but in the improvement of our leading and listening abilities.

This is a committee centered on the belief that all humans are endowed with certain inalienable rights. Many of you will be supporting conflicting positions, whether for autocratic or democratic governments, or for globalists who believe in the power of the international system or populists who seek to weaken it. This committee will supreme test as to whether or not despite our differences, we are still able to unite behind common values of humans. I am excited for what will undoubtedly be an enlightening weekend.

Given our limited time together, I expect that you all are at least somewhat familiar with MUN parliamentary procedure and hope that you come prepared with ideas and well-written position papers. Furthermore, please don’t forget to turn in all position papers by the start of our first committee session to my email (see below)!

Whether this is your first conference or your tenth, I hope you will enjoy your time. I’d also like to emphasize that I’m here to help you! I know that MUN can be stressful, especially if you haven’t attended many conferences, and if there is anything I can do before or during SMUNC, please reach me at cgmartin@stanford.edu with any questions or concerns.

Looking for to meeting y’all!

Christian Martin
II. **Topic A: Religious In(tolerance)**

   **A. Background**

   According to the Pew Research Center, religious restrictions and social hostilities involving religion have skyrocketed in the decade from 2007 to 2017. Pew finds, “the latest data shows that 52 governments – including some in very populous countries like China, Indonesia and Russia – impose either “high” or “very high” levels of restrictions on religion, up from 40 in 2007. And the number of countries where people are experiencing the highest levels of social hostilities involving religion has risen from 39 to 56 over the course of the study.”

   Given that Article 18 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted in 1948, one of the founding charters of this body) guarantees “the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance” this committee has the critical mandate of combating and turning this tide. Furthermore, in 1981, the UN adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, which expanded upon the original UDHR by calling upon member states to rescind laws that discriminated upon religions.
Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. Source: Al Jazeera

Contemporary examples of religious intolerance would include the Chinese persecution of Uighurs in Xian, Burmese attacks on Rohingya Muslim populations, and the French so-called "burkini bans", outlawing certain kinds of religious wear.

B. Relevant Documents

The UNHRC has issued several resolutions since its inception in 2006 regarding religious intolerance. You should make an effort to read through all of them, but pay particular attention to Council resolution 16/18.Passed in 2011, the resolution was viewed by activists as a turning point with regard to the role of the international community in mitigating religious intolerance. The resolution provides a framework for countries to use to target the root causes of violence and discrimination; however, implementation of the landmark agreement in the years since has been
substantially limited. The resolution and its sister UNGA resolution (resolution 66/167) are meant to be implemented through a series of expert-level meetings known as “the Istanbul Process.” Although there have been six such meetings since 2011, in which stakeholders met to evaluate the status of reforms in domestic law and practice, participation has tapered off in recent years.

Furthermore, you would do well to know the recent Rabat Plan of Action, which specifically outlines governments’ responsibilities to combat the incitement of violence against religious minorities. The Rabat plan outlines a six-part threshold for determining when freedom of expression crosses the line into incitement of violence (and therefore should be prohibited).

C. Helpful Sources

- https://www.openglobalrights.org/un-strategy-to-combat-religious-intolerance-i/

D. Questions to Consider

- How can this body concretely implement plans to better protect religious freedoms?
What ways can we keep member states accountable when they fail to uphold religious tolerance?

How can we balance protections for religious freedom with theocratic member states’ national sovereignty?

Should we focus our efforts on preventing institutional or extragovernmental discrimination of religious groups?

How can we respect states’ abilities to combat terrorism while protecting against religious discrimination?

III.  **Topic B: Capital Punishment**

A. **Background**

Like the previous topic, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights also lays out a right to life⁶ (Article 3). Furthermore, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) lays out specific stipulations for those states that have yet to abolish the death penalty, including the rights to appeal, due process, and the abolition of capital punishment for minors.

However, despite this explicit prohibition, Amnesty International has recorded more than 145 executions of minors since 1990⁷— and those are only the ones documented. Other violations of the ICCPR include denials of trials and appeals.

More broadly, in 2007, the UN issued an official moratorium of the death penalty⁸, calling upon member states to abolish capital punishment in all its forms, known as Resolution 62/149. Yet again, we see many states (20 in 2018 alone) carrying out executions in flagrant
disregard for this resolution (and its many subsequent reaffirmations). In total, Amnesty International finds that 690 executions were recorded in 2018; however, these numbers are to be viewed with extreme skepticism, given that the vast majority of executions take place in China, where the total number of executions are classified as state secrets, with some estimates of thousands of executions taking place there.

Given both the lack of transparency among member states as well as the repeated violations of UN declarations, this committee must look to new and created mechanisms for securing the right to life for all humans.
Relevant Documents

For this topic, it will be imperative that delegates are familiar with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights\textsuperscript{10}, as well as Resolution 62/149\textsuperscript{11}, which lay out to progression of the abolition of the death penalty in the UN.

Helpful Sources

- http://www.deathpenaltyworldwide.org/moratoria.cfm
- http://www.claiminghumanrights.org/right_to_life_definition.html

Questions to Consider

- How can we improve the effectiveness of UN resolution calling for the abolition of the death penalty?
- How can we improve transparency to properly track the number of executions worldwide?
- What other ways can we ensure all people are guaranteed the right to life?
- How can we convince countries where executions are culturally ingrained to actively combat their use?

IV. Works Cited


8“GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS LANDMARK TEXT CALLING FOR MORATORIUM ON DEATH PENALTY | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases.”


9“The 2018 Death Penalty Facts and Figures You Need to Know.” Amnesty International, 10 Apr. 2019,


10“International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.” OHCHR, 16 Dec. 1966,

www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx.

11General Assembly resolution 62/9149, Moratorium on the Use of the Death Penalty,