United Nations Security Council

Study Guide for Zurich Model United Nations 2023

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April 27 – 30, 2023

Zurich, Switzerland

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Letter from the Chairs

Dear Delegates

Political extremism, once believed to be a problem of the past, has instead increased in the 21st century. From coordinated attacks like 9/11 to cross-border terrorism on several continents and political violence exercised by governments, this plague has many faces. It directly affects the security and livelihood of millions of people around the world, many of whom are already suffering the adverse effects of recent crises such as COVID-19. Democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms are essential values of this organization that are increasingly in a precarious state due to political extremism. This issue therefore warrants our renewed attention.

As member states of the Security Council, you are in the unique position to direct the United Nations' resources and attention towards the issues we will discuss. With this special ability comes a heightened responsibility. The people affected every day by political extremism and the member states of the United Nations have placed their trust in this Council to collaborate and find solutions that bring back peace and stability. Coordinating an effective response will require extensive preparation, a willingness to compromise, a continuous commitment to the values of this organization, and most importantly, the ability to think creatively and work passionately. We have full faith in you to meet these challenges with the sophistication and expertise this Council stands for.

We look forward to welcoming you to Zurich in a few weeks and doing some great work together!

Diplomatic regards, Henry and Lena

An introduction to the Security Council

The Security Council, the United Nations' principal crisis-management body, is empowered to impose obligations on the 193 UN member states to maintain peace and international security. The body consists of 15 members. Five of those are permanent members: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China. These members can block any resolution from passing using their veto power. This is a contentious topic as it gives them disproportionate power in the Council. The other ten are elected by a two-third majority in the General Assembly to serve a 2-year term, with five replaced each year on January 1. The non-permanent seats are divided in regional groups: The African Group is represented by three members; the Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, and Western European and Others groups by two apiece; and the Eastern European Group by one. Traditionally, one of the seats assigned to either the Asia-Pacific Group or the African Group is filled by a nation from the Arab world, alternating between the groups.

The Security Council's members meet regularly to assess threats to international security, including civil wars, natural disasters, arms proliferation, and terrorism. It is the only body whose resolutions are binding, and therefore has the ability to influence directly the behavior of the member states. Unlike the General Assembly, the Security Council is not bound to sessions. Each Security Council member must have a representative available at UN Headquarters at all times in case an emergency meeting becomes necessary.

Due to the public scrutiny of the Security Council Chamber, much of the work of the Security Council is conducted in informal consultations, in the so-called "conference room". next to the Security Council Chamber. The room was used for "informal consultations", which soon became the primary meeting format for the Security Council. Only members of the Security Council are permitted in the conference room for consultations. No formal record is kept of the informal consultations. As a result, the delegations can negotiate with each other in secret, striking deals and compromises without having their every word transcribed into the permanent record. The privacy of the conference room also makes it possible for the delegates to deal with each other in a friendly manner.

Topic A: The Insurgency Issue in Nigeria

The insurgency issue in Nigeria remains one of the greatest unresolved issues on the African continent. Historically, it can be traced back to colonial times and since then has cost tens of thousand lives. The multitude of facades is characteristic to the conflict and have led several attempts to resolve the issue to demise, reaching from the SARS or the MNJTF. As so often, civilians suffer most under the conflict with Boko Haram, but it should also be noted that it undermines the political and economic stability of the entire region. Therefore, we invite you to carefully familiarize yourself with the background of the conflict and the attempts that failed so far so that you can jointly develop an avenue to resolve the countless issues that come with the insurgency in Nigeria. In order to understand and resolve it, one needs to have a more detailed understanding of where the conflict can be traced back to historically, but also which dimensions the conflict touches on. The following guide offers a basis of information necessary to conduct further research which we more than encourage you to do.

History

To get a deeper sense of where the insurgency issue in Nigeria has its origin, one has to go back to the time when Nigeria gained independence in the year 1960. Since then, deep-rooted inequalities and differences have developed in the country which can be understood as the key reasons for the outbreak of the insurgence, but also the government reaction.

Before 2002

When Nigeria gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1960 and formed the First Republic of Nigeria, it already was dominated by three different ethnic groups: the Hausa in the north, the Yoruba in the west, and the Igbo in the east. The first government was led by the muslim Hausa, which created the first imbalance in the political system of Nigeria. The year 1966 saw two military coups: one led by the Yoruba and a counter-coup led by the

Hausa again. These coups sparked the escalation of ethnical conflicts in the country and led up to a civil war which would last three years and cost over a million lives. In the following years of stabilization, Nigeria experienced a boom powered by major oil discoveries. However, this boom did not facilitate the expected rise of living standards and fueled multiple more coups during the year 1975, which mostly failed. During this time, a second imbalance developed in the country which was of economical nature: the southern part of Nigeria profited significantly more from the oil boom and developed a wealthy elite which sent their children abroad to receive Western education. On the other hand, the conservative north remained deeply skeptical of such developments and thus developed a different set of values and a different education system. After several coups in 1977, 1983, and 1985 the country slowly edged towards democracy again. In 1993, democratic elections were held again, only to be declared null and void. The road to democracy ended abruptly with a coup d'etat by General Sani Abacha which lead to a six year dictatorship. When he died in 1998, his successor administered the drafting of a new constitution and allowed free elections again. Under elected president Olusegun Obasanjo the Fourth Republic now made meaningful steps towards democracy again.

2002 and the formation of Boko Haram

After the return of democracy to Nigeria based on a federal system, the northern states made use of their newly gained power to introduce Sharia law to their criminal code. Since the northern regions were more conservative, the changes did not go far enough for some, however. The islamic scholar Mohammed Yusuf opposed democratic elections and western education and managed to gain significant support in the northern countryside, leading to the founding of Boko Haram in 2002. Initially, the group was active in a very limited area and constrained its actions to minor clashes with security forces until they were requested to leave the area by the christian federal institutions and several other religious institutions in 2004, sparking violent attacks on police stations. Still, the conflict was mainly limited to clashes with police and military forces. After the elections 2007, which were condemned as non-democratic, Umaru Ya´Ádua came to power but died in 2010, giving rise to Vice President Goodluck Jonathan. In 2009, security forces attempted a crackdown of the group

in northern provinces which resulted in broader terror attacks in the region and riots in cities in the northern border region. 780 deaths were reported after the clashes in the cities and the group leader Yusuf was killed by police forces under dubious circumstances. This date is widely considered the beginning of insurgency in the north since in the following years, the group became increasingly violent and a growing number of civilians became the target of the attacks. In 2010, Boko Haram attacked several police stations and a prison, freeing over 700 inmates. Moreover, during the presidential elections held in 2011, several car bombings were reported, as well as four political murders and attacks on churches, which Boko Haram claimed. For the year 2011 alone, Boko Haram has been made responsible for 510 deaths. In the following years, attacks saw an increasing intensity and various targets with western influence, reaching from universities to newspapers, not only in Nigeria itself, but also in neighboring countries.

Developments after the government response in 2015

At the beginning of 2015, an alliance of Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger raised a military campaign against Boko Haram. The advances by the Chad army neutralising hundreds of insurgents were answered by Boko Haram with suicide bombings and several massacres carried out in the northern border region. Within the first three months of the year, 700 civilians are estimated to have lost their lives. This peak of violence was accompanied by an alliance between Boko Haram and the Islamic State. In March, the Nigerian Army announced it had regained control over 11 of 14 districts. In light of these clashes the 2015 elections were held, in which Muhammadu Buhari came to power and introduced a Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) tasked especially with responding to crimes related to insurgency, such as kidnapping or robbery. In December, the government claimed to have defeated Boko Haram, whose fighters were believed to have fled towards the Nigeria-Cameroon border. However, Boko Haram forces were never fully defeated and regained control over a few strongholds and continued to commit suicide attacks almost on a daily basis throughout the years 2016 to 2020, despite never amounting to the previous scale. In recent years, the SARS has gained significant attention due to claims of corruption, police violence, and human rights abuse. Despite being intended to remain in

their camps until called upon, they were found acting at their own discretion. Several NGOs have accused SARS of arbitrary roadblocks, beatings, and shooting civilians and of unsustainable suspicions of terrorism. Since 2019, more people have fallen victim to the SARS than to terrorist attacks. These allegations of human rights violations lead to the endSARS-movement. The government however claims this organization to be the only effective weapon against insurgency in the north.

Current Situation

As of now, insurgent groups still hold several strongholds in the north of Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin (LCB). The civil society is torn between the north-south tensions, as well as the tensions between Boko Haram and SARS, with severe consequences for politics, the economy, and humanitarian situation in the region.

Political Situation

The division of the country is also mirrored by the political system, in which the Congress is dominated by the northern All Progressive Party (APC) and the southern People's Democratic Party (PDP). The insurgency issue has kindled political polarization among the parties and an increasing militarization, leading to concerns over accountability. Due to the SARS-controversy, Nigeria has fallen in several political rankings, including the corruption ranking and fragile state index. In 2022, Nigeria was demoted to an autocratic regime following the postponing of elections and increased influence of the executive on the judiciary. The government claims these measures to be necessary in order to act against Boko Haram. Moreover, Boko Haram attacks during elections have resulted in significantly lower election turnout and a loss of trust in the government.

Socio-Economic Situation

Despite its wealth in natural resources making Nigeria the richest country of the African continent, it has one of the lowest per-capita incomes. Scholars trace this phenomenon

back to high corruption and an increasing gap between the super-wealthy elites and the poorer general population. Economically, the country is split into an industrial and wealthy south, and a rural and poor north. During the 1990s, a significant flow of people could be observed towards the south since the north was lacking working opportunities. Some scholars claim that the lack of working opportunities is a major driver of the influx of fighters in Boko Haram because of a lack of job and career perspectives. During the attacks throughout the 2000s, over 30% of the northern infrastructure and up to 50% of the industrial capacity of the north were destroyed, leading to a fall in trade volume, both inland and foreign. Not only has industrial productivity fallen, however, but also agricultural productivity has dropped by half because farmers were forced to give up their land. This has been accompanied by a rapid outflow of capital, resulting in an economic breakdown of the weak economy in the north, further contributing to the above mentioned trend. The steady flow of inland migration towards the south continues and threatens to overwhelm the Nigerian government.

Humanitarian Situation

The civilian population has suffered greatly under the insurgency and the following government response. It is estimated that over 12 million people are displaced, of which 3.2 million have fled abroad to Cameroon or Chad. This issue is amplified by a shortage of shelter, food, and medical treatment. The WHO laments several issues in the health sector: a significant brain drain of medical professionals and a lack of medical supplies contributes to the death rate among infants around 10%. Moreover not even one out of two citizens has access to clean drinking water. It is estimated that one third of the Nigerian population suffers malnutrition. Another effect of the insurgency is a grave endangerment of the youth. Not only are children subject to attacks on schools and universities, they are often also abducted to serve as child soldiers, both leading to severe psychological consequences. Because education institutions have to close down frequently in the face of the imminent threat of terror attacks, education standards in Nigeria are among the worst in Africa, especially in the north. It is also reported that Boko Haram and even SARS make use of

gender-based violence. Sexual abuse is a common crime against women and girls during terror attacks and also SARS-soldiers have been reported to have committed sexual abuse.

Stakeholders

The conflict breaks down to two different levels. On a regional level, the conflict is fought between the Nigerian government, assisted by its neighboring countries Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria, and Boko Haram. On a supranational level, Nigeria is supported by several western powers, such as the United States. Russia and China play a limited role in the conflict. Whereas they both have provided training and financial aid to Nigeria, both were careful not to get involved in the fight against insurgency.

Nigeria

The country visibly crumbles under the insurgency issue in its north. As already pointed out, the economy of the north is severely weakened because of the insurgency. The political system is losing the trust in its system in a twofold way: whereas the government has not yet found a way to reasonably ensure the security of its citizens in the north, its response with SARS troops is alleged of committing grave human right violations. Despite increasing its investment in security measures by 120%, the situation has not improved since 2015. The interest of the government is thus first to regain the monopoly of force in the short term to revive the economy and political support and then to find a long term solution for addressing the division of the country on multiple levels. The main issue the government thus faces is how to give security forces the freedom they need to operate effectively against the insurgents and at the same time hold them accountable for possible power abuse.

Boko Haram

The aim of Boko Haram is to introduce the Sharia law to the entire state and prohibit Western influence, such as Western education, democracy or capitalism. During the peak of

their influence, they held 15 provinces in the north of the country but were pushed back by a military coalition to hold only 4 provinces to this day. In these provinces they are still deeply rooted and enjoy support of a reasonable amount of people, mostly young people without work, as Amnesty International notes. In 2015, the group officially joined the Islamic State to gain more legitimacy. Since then, they have managed to hold their territory, probably supported by weapons reaching them from Chad and Libya.

Chad, Cameroon and Niger

Since Boko Haram operates around Lake Chad, the neighboring states fear that the insurgency issue might spill over to their territory. After 2015, all three countries witnessed attacks on civilians as well as military targets. The major victim was Chad whose soldiers are frequently subject to attack. Additionally, Cameroon receives a significant influx of Nigerian refugees fleeing the violence of either Boko Haram or the Nigerian military. Because the countries are naturally involved in the conflict in multiple ways, they contributed to the military offensive in 2015 and supported the Nigerian military with 60% of soldiers and 50% of the budget. Additionally, Chad and Nigeria maintain a joint military force against Boko Haram and all four countries continuously collaborate to prevent a spread of insurgents. However, the humanitarian situation with displaced people especially has received little to no attention during this collaboration.

Europe and the United States

Europe has frequently expressed its concern about the insurgency, but primarily about the humanitarian situation. Whereas Germany, Sweden and Italy have criticized the Human Rights violations of both Boko Haram and SARS and limited their financial aid to humanitarian goods, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States have been involved in military operations as well. However, a significant amount of the aid is estimated to be lost due to extensive corruption. In 2015, the United States deployed 300 troops in Chad to assist the government in training operations. In 2014, France delivered a shipment of weapons and ammunition to Nigeria's security forces, including rocket launchers, assault

rifles, and anti-tank mines. France has also provided intelligence support and training to Nigerian forces in their efforts to combat the insurgency. The UK has also provided significant support to Nigeria's security forces. In 2015, the UK government signed a deal to provide Nigeria with military training and equipment worth £5 million, including body armor, helmets, and communication devices. It has also provided intelligence support and training to Nigerian forces and has deployed a small number of military advisors to the country. France and the UK promised to continuously support the military efforts against Boko Haram.

Supranational organizations

Both the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) have been involved in the fight against Boko Haram. The AU established a Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in 2015 consisting of troops from Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Benin, with the mandate to combat Boko Haram and other terrorist groups in the region. The AU provides political and logistical support to the MNJTF and has pledged to assist in funding its operations. The AU has also provided humanitarian assistance to the victims of Boko Haram's violence, particularly in northeastern Nigeria, where the group has displaced millions of people and caused widespread food insecurity. The AU's Peace and Security Council has repeatedly called for increased international support for the MNJTF and for efforts to address the root causes of extremism in the region, including poverty and marginalization.

The UN does not only support the MNJTF logistically, but also addressed the issue repeatedly in multiple councils. The UN Security Council has passed several resolutions calling for increased support for the affected countries, including through the provision of military and logistical assistance. The UN has also worked with the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission to promote a coordinated response to the crisis. Moreover, the UN supported humanitarian aid with $5 billion of financial aid and hundreds of UN workers to provide shelter, food and education. The UN is also convinced that combating the root cause of the issue, i.e. poverty, will help to resolve the issue and thus is engaged in

providing economic opportunities and access to education in the area, especially to marginalized groups.

Actions taken so far

Since the individual states were heavily suspicious of each other traditionally, they failed to cooperate in their actions until the threat around the LCB became iminent for all neighboring countries in 2014, prompting the countries to finally manage to collaborate thenceforward. After the military offensive in 2015 which showed limited success, the African Union and the United Nations also got involved from 2018 forward.

Municipal Actions

During May 2014, the Nigerian government announced a state of emergency and launched a military offensive against Boko Haram which saw initial success but failed in the long term.

Cameroon is the neighboring country that suffers most under the insurgence issue in the region. Boko Haram is made accountable for more than 1,500 deaths and 155,000 refugees. Because the military response during the first years showed little success, Cameroon turned to tackle what they deem the root causes of the issue - too few security measures. Therefore, besides supporting the aforementioned MNJTF, the government adopted several measures to restrict movement, close borders and increase military presence in the north of the country. Despite demands for increased efforts in education and to stimulate the economy, Cameroon has so far only supported military initiatives.

Although Chad initially took a neutral stance on the issue and the presence of Boko Haram was limited in Chad before 2015, due to a rapid escalation of the conflict in the following months, over 100,000 people are assumed to have been displaced. Chad, being concerned for their economic relations, responded with military support of the concerted military action against Boko Haram. Additionally the government introduced incentives for tribal leaders to cooperate with the government since the military was lacking the ability to patrol the regained territory, and created vigilante groups which were intended to control smaller

villages for suspect individuals and report them. However, the latter part of the Chad twofold approach failed to produce a significant improvement in the situation yet.

In 2015, the three states and Niger launched a collective military campaign against Boko Haram which was seen as the starting point for concerted efforts by international organizations, such as the AU and the UN.

International Actions

During its 469th meeting in 2014, the African Union first addressed the issue and agreed on a joint humanitarian aid project with a volume of $150 million. Moreover, within the framework of the fight against terrorism, the AU set up a fund accessible to countries such as Nigeria and Cameroon and authorized the implementation of the MNJTF. The AU is not only the most important fundraiser of the taskforce but also supports it with a strategic support cell. In 2018, the AU also adopted a Regional Strategy for Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience (RS-SRR), which includes political cooperation, governance, socioeconomic recovery and environmental sustainability, preventing violent extremism and peacebuilding, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement. However, in recent years, calls have become louder for increased support in tackling root causes such as economic development and education measures. In 2016, the AU launched the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), which is based in Algeria and serves as a center of excellence for counterterrorism efforts across the continent. It provides training, capacity building, and research on terrorism-related issues to AU member states.

Several UN-organisations have addressed the issue so far. The UNHRC addressed the violations and abuses of human rights and atrocities in 2018 and has since then consistently supported Nigeria and other countries on the LCB in providing humanitarian aid such as shelters and medical aid. The Security Council (UNSC) adopted its first resolution addressing Boko Haram´s presence in the LCB in SC/Res 2349. In it, the SC expressed its concern about civilian security, especially torture and abuse. Moreover, it condemned the terrorist attacks and neglect of human right conventions. Also, it urged the implementation of military measures against Boko Haram, human rights measures and for tackling root causes. Other committees such as the UNOWAS have echoed the resolution frequently and

work together closely with the AU in providing humanitarian aid but demand more emphasis on tackling the root causes of the conflict.

Guiding Questions

In order for the committee to properly address the issue and pass a meaningful resolution, we would like it to consider the following questions during debate and answer them in a detailed way in the draft resolution:

I.   What are the root causes of the issue that can be identified?
II.   What could short term solutions to ensure the security of civilians in endangered regions look like?
III. Which role should supranational organizations play in providing humanitarian aid, combating the insurgency issue and resolving the political tensions within Nigeria?
IV.   How should the actions of Nigeria to combat insurgency be constrained?
V.   How can the issue of violence be addressed in the long term, considering possibilities in the economic, educational, and humanitarian dimension?

Research Starters

CFR Nigeria Security Tracker:

https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483

OHCHR Report on insurgency:

https://www.google.de/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwizmd_6vKL-AhXyQ_EDHey0BOoQFnoECAwQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ohchr.org%2Fsite

s%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2FHRBodies%2FHRC%2FRegularSessions%2FSession30%2FDocuments%2FA-HRC-30-67_en.docx&usg=AOvVaw0hFntoCDBN4ho1EMjNqua5

UNHRC on the insurgency issue:

https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2019/2/5c6139e74/nigerian-refugees-struggle-aftermath-boko-haram-attacks.html

Topic B: Political Unrest in Iran

History

In order to understand the context of the current political unrest, we have to take a brief look at the recent history of Iran. After the 1953 Iranian coup d'état, the monarchical government under Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi aligned Iran with the Western Bloc and cultivated a close relationship with the United States in order to consolidate Pahlavi's power as an authoritarian ruler. Relying heavily on American support amidst the Cold War, he remained the Shah of Iran for 26 years after the coup, effectively keeping the country from swaying towards the influence of the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union. Beginning in 1963, Pahlavi implemented a number of reforms aimed at modernizing Iranian society, in what is known as the White Revolution. The Iranian religious leader Ruhollah Khomeini's continued vocal opposition to the modernization campaign led to his exile from Iran in 1964. However, as major ideological tensions persisted between Pahlavi and Khomeini, anti-government demonstrations began in October 1977, eventually developing into a campaign of civil resistance that included elements of secularism and Islamism. In August 1978, the deaths of between 377 and 470 people in the *Cinema Rex* fire came to serve as a catalyst for a popular revolutionary movement across all of Iran, and large-scale strikes and demonstrations paralyzed the entire country for the remainder of that year. On 16 January 1979, Pahlavi left the country and went into exile as the last Iranian monarch, leaving behind his duties to Iran's Regency Council and the opposition-based Iranian prime minister. On 1 February 1979, Khomeini returned to Iran, following an invitation by the government. Following the March 1979 Islamic Republic referendum, in which, according to official figures at least, 98% of Iranian voters approved the country's shift to an Islamic republic, the new government began efforts to draft the present-day Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

On March 8, 1979, less than a month after the Islamic Revolution consolidated its control, thousands of women poured into the streets of Tehran to protest the new government's proposed policies, which went beyond the compulsory hijab or clothing covering a woman's entire body. The laws introduced after the revolution "basically established

institutionalized discrimination. Here, women's lives [were] valued at half of that of a man, their testimony [was] valued half of that of a man, and they [had] lost the right to divorce, the right to the custody of their children" (McGrath, 2022). Government and Islamic leaders attempted to calm the protests. The Ayatollah's aides reacted to the protests by saying that he had merely called for the wearing of "modest dress". This statement by Mahmoud Taleghani from the government, assuring the public that the hijab would not be enforced, only encouraged, resulted in calming the protests.

The protests resulted in a temporary retraction of the decree of mandatory veiling. When the left and the liberals were eliminated, and the conservatives secured solitary control, however, veiling was enforced on all women. This began with the "Islamification of offices" in July 1980, when unveiled women were refused entry to government offices and public buildings, and banned from appearing unveiled at their workplace, under risk of being fired. On the streets, unveiled women were attacked by revolutionaries. In July 1981, an edict of mandatory veiling in public was introduced, which was followed in 1983 by an Islamic Punishment Law introducing corporal punishment on unveiled women: "Women who appear in public without hijab will be sentenced to whipping up to 74 lashes." The law was enforced by members of the Islamic Revolution Committees patrolling the streets, and later by the Guidance Patrols, also called the Morality Police.

The next notable protests arose in 2009, after the hardline incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was re-elected in a disputed vote. After the polls closed, the regime began shutting down campaign offices of reformist opposition candidates and met any opposition activists with truncheons and tear gas. Millions of citizens responded to calls to action and took to the streets of Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, and other cities. The 2009 protests, much like today, were arranged on a cellular level, street by street, from the bottom up.

In the past five years, there have been a number of smaller protests and strikes concerned with poverty and economic mismanagement. Iran's economy is reliant on the oil industry but the revenues from it have been severely curtailed because of crippling U.S. sanctions, contributing to high levels of inflation, inequality, and unemployment. One particularly fatal

movement protesting an overnight fuel price hike in November 2019 was labeled "Bloody November," as Iranian authorities killed as many as 1,500 protesters.

The Current Situation

Political and Economic Situation

The former head of Iran's judiciary, Ebrahim Raisi, rose to the presidency in June instead of being investigated for crimes against humanity related to the mass enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions of 1988, reflecting systemic impunity in Iran. Presidential elections were held in a repressive environment with a markedly low turnout. Authorities barred women, members of religious minorities and critics from running, and threatened to prosecute anyone encouraging election boycotts. Ongoing US sanctions, Covid-19 and corruption deepened Iran's economic crisis, characterized by high inflation, job losses and low or unpaid wages. Strikes and rallies punctuated the year as authorities failed to prioritize adequate wages, housing, healthcare, food security and education in public budgets.

Human Rights and Freedoms

Iran continues to be one of the world's most consistent implementers of the death penalty. According to rights groups, in 2021 Iran had executed at least 254 people as of November 8, including at least seven people on alleged terrorism-related charges. The judiciary also executed at least one individual sentenced to death for crimes they allegedly committed as a child. Under Iran's current penal code, judges can use their discretion to spare individuals who committed their alleged crime as children from the death penalty. However, several individuals who were retried under the penal code for crimes they allegedly committed as children have then been sentenced to death again.

Iranian law considers acts such as "insulting the prophet," "apostasy," same-sex relations, adultery, drinking alcohol, and certain non-violent drug-related offenses as crimes punishable by death. The law also prescribes the inhumane punishment of flogging for more than 100 offenses, including "disrupting public order," a charge that has been used to sentence individuals to flogging for their participation in protests.

Iranian authorities severely restricted freedoms of assembly and expression. Over the past three years, security forces have responded to widespread protests stemming from economic rights issues with excessive and unlawful force, including lethal force, and arrested thousands of protestors. Scores of human rights defenders remain behind bars while authorities continue to harass, arrest, and prosecute those seeking accountability and justice, including human rights lawyers Nasrin Sotoudeh, Mohamad Najafi, and Amirsalar Davoudi.

Iran's parliament has been working on a draft bill that seeks to impose further restrictions on internet access for people in Iran. The bill includes a provision requiring international technology companies to have a legal representative in Iran to comply with Iranian law and cooperate with authorities. Iranian authorities have long surveilled users and prosecuted them for views they expressed online and censored online spaces. The bill also seeks to criminalize the production and distribution of censorship circumvention tools (VPNs) commonly used in Iran to access a wide range of websites that are blocked by authorities.

Women face discrimination in personal status matters related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and decisions relating to children. Under the Passports Law, a married woman may not obtain a passport or travel outside the country without the written permission of her husband who can revoke such permission at any time. Under the civil code, a husband is accorded the right to choose the place of living and can prevent his wife from having certain occupations if he deems them against "family values." Iranian law allows girls to marry at 13 and boys at age 15, as well as at younger ages if authorized by a judge.

Current Wave of Protests and Government Response

The current waves of protests were catalyzed by the death of 22-year old Jina "Mahsa" Amini. On September 13, Amini was arrested by Iran's morality police for "improperly" wearing her hijab, and according to her family and local media, severely beaten. She died three days later while still in police custody. Amini is not the first person to die in custody of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, nor was she the last. Iranian government officials say some 300 people have been killed amid their crackdowns on the protests, though human rights groups say the death toll is closer to 500. However, Amini's name has become synonymous with the theocratic government's repression of its citizens, and has also transformed into a hashtag that, as of November 30, 2022, had been used 79 million times.

The outrage over Amini's death has united protesters who are concerned with a variety of issues spanning from the political situation to human rights abuses. The protests have been ongoing for several months and Tehran has now turned to its notoriously harsh legal system to mete out severe punishments, including the death penalty, in a bid to deter further demonstrations. Since the beginning of the protests, it is estimated almost 20.000 people have been arrested, including human rights defenders, students, lawyers, journalists, and civil society activists, and over 500 people have been killed, among them more than 50 children. There are serious concerns that the Iranian regime is poised to execute numerous protesters, after four people were hanged following secretive trials and several more are currently sentenced to death. Iran decided to hold public trials for 1,000 people arrested in connection to the ongoing protests, and some of the charges carry the death penalty. According to Iranian officials, the average age of those arrested is 15 years, raising concerns about the potential mistreatment of minors in police custody. Human rights organizations have reported instances of mistreatment, physical and mental abuse, neglect, and torture in Iranian prisons. These prisons are also dangerously overcrowded, following years of increased arrests.

In February 2023, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei issued a decree as part of a yearly pardoning the supreme leader does before the anniversary of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution. According to this decree, he vowed that "tens of thousands" of protesters would be released from custody. However, human rights leaders in Iran are skeptical of the validity of the decree,

arguing that the government has yet to say who will be released, and further, that the release should extend to all those currently detained.

UN and International Action

UN and Security Council Involvement

On 24 March 2011, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution re-establishing the mandate of a Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Resolution 37/30 requests the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran to submit a report on the implementation of the mandate to the Human Rights Council at its fortieth session and to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session and calls upon the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur, to permit access to visit the country, and to provide all information necessary to allow the fulfillment of the mandate. On 6 July 2018, Mr. Javaid Rehman was appointed as the third Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran since re-establishment of the mandate. He has since written several reports on the situation and shared his expertise with several UN bodies looking to alleviate the situation.

On December 14, 2022, United Nations member states voted to oust Iran from the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UN Women), the foremost intergovernmental body tasked with protecting women's rights and promoting gender equality. Iran was in the midst of a four-year elected term on the Commission. The United States introduced the resolution, which received 29 votes in favor and eight against, with 16 countries abstaining. This was the first time a member state had ever been ousted from the body.

The Security Council has largely remained silent on the issue so far, leaving it in the hands of the Human Rights Council. Accordingly, there have been no sessions, resolutions, or press releases dedicated to discussing Iran. However, there has been some symbolic and

informal action to address the protests. On November 2, the United States and Albania co-hosted a Security Council *Arria formula* meeting to highlight the ongoing repression of women and girls and members of religious and ethnic minority groups in Iran and underscore ongoing unlawful use of force against peaceful protesters. Arria formula meetings are informal gatherings of interested members of the Security Council on topics for which the Council cannot gather consensus to address formally. They "provide interested Council members an opportunity to engage in a direct dialogue with high representatives of Governments and international organizations—often at the latter's request—as well as non-State parties, on matters with which they are concerned, and which fall within the purview of responsibility of the Security Council" (Security Council Report, 2020). The meeting was intended to "identify opportunities to promote credible, international, independent investigations into the Iranian government's human rights violations and abuses" (UN Media, 2022). Three experts briefed the Security Council at the Arria formula meeting: Javaid Rehman (Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran); Shirin Ebadi, (Iranian Human Rights Defender and Nobel Peace Prize Winner), and Nazanin Boniadi (Activist). As it was an informal gathering, there were no formal outcomes or records. However, the meeting was recorded on video and can be watched online in its entirety (see Research starters below).

Collective and Unilateral Member State Action

The protests and subsequent violent repercussions have triggered waves of symbolic and material responses from several states. In December, the 27 EU member states jointly condemned Iran's actions in what is the most strongly worded EU statement on Iran in recent years. The European Union also adopted a series of sanctions packages targeting individuals and entities responsible for the crackdown. Several other European countries, such as Switzerland, followed suit and imposed sanctions accordingly. Similarly, the United States imposed sanctions in a total of nine rounds, increasing in severity. In addition, many countries have unilaterally issued statements and symbols of support for the protesters.

The UN Special Rapporteur has warned that this is not enough, and that an effective response needs to be formulated urgently. "I would stress the international community has

a responsibility to take action, to address impunity for rights violations", he said, saying it was "really important" that the UN and other international bodies "take concrete action" (United Nations, 2022).

Possible Avenues for Action

The political and social situation in Iran is very convoluted and there are several possible avenues for action. However, the following list of suggestions is by no means exhaustive, so you are entirely free and even encouraged to pursue additional avenues for contributing to the debate around the issue in hand

UNHRC Fact-finding mission

On November 24, 2022, the UN Human Rights Council voted overwhelmingly to set up a fact-finding investigation into human rights abuses in Iran. At a special session convened by Germany in Geneva the UNHRC voted by 25 to six to set up the inquiry, with 15 abstaining. The vote is regarded as a significant victory for human rights defenders, since a mechanism now exists to file evidence of abuses by the state, making the possibility of prosecutions in international courts more likely. The resolution calls for the UN to set up an inquiry to "collect, consolidate and analyze evidence of … violation" (Wintour, 2022). However, the Iranian authorities have so far not agreed to host this mission, and it cannot be sent without the consent of the host state. One possible approach for the Council is to get Iran to cooperate with such a mission on behalf of the UNHRC.

Collective Economic Measures

Several countries have imposed sanctions on Iran unilaterally. Most recently, on March 20 Britain sanctioned senior officials from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), including those who it said were responsible for managing the group's financial investments. The European Union and the United States have imposed similar sanctions on individuals and organizations in the Iranian government. They include asset freezes and travel bans. The Council could expand the scope of these sanctions or formalize a collective system of sanctions that would extend to all member states of the Council.

Other Measures

The Council also has a very important symbolic role of commenting on the actions of member states. You can consider releasing a statement condemning the police violence and government inaction to stop the protests. In a similar fashion, you can propose to host more Arria formula meetings or consult the UN Special Rapporteur for Iran to signal that the Council is invested in this issue.

Research Starters

We recommend starting your research beyond this Study Guide by looking at your country's position with regard to Iran's government and policing bodies, as well as all action that has been taken by the UN and member states. We recognize that this is not the most "conventional" UNSC topic, as there have been no official previous meetings and there are limits to what the UNSC can do short of intervening directly. However, we wanted to use such a topic to let you look at functions of the Security Council that are not often utilized otherwise, and work more creatively.

Record of the Arria Formula Meeting of November 2, 2022

Human Rights Watch Country Report

OHCHR: Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran

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