Forum: General Assembly Third Committee

Issue: Measures to prevent the manipulation of governmental elections

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Position: Deputy Chair Third Committee

Introduction

Fundamentally, the United Nations is led by governmental leaders of member states. These member states often require elections to facilitate this political process. Elections have been used to elect legislators, regional representatives, and executive positions. After the fall of monarchs and the rise in democracy after World War II, the UN has established a more urgent manner in maintaining the integrity of genuine and uncorrupted elections. While the Cold War showed the influential forces behind the superpowers, Russia and the US, the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction and militant arms waned the use of militant forces upon smaller nations. These often causes devastations after coups or unstable regimes in the long term.

Instead, with the advancement in modern technology, any nation with the certain technological skill can hack or interfere with any electoral processes. Reports of possible cyber-attacks have already dawned upon the United States of America and Germany in 2017. With the US and Germany election speculated to be tampered by the Russian intelligence, the UN faces an unprecedented issue over cyber security involving election tampering. Additionally, the legal consequences and mass scale of cyber warfare has yet to be fully judged. The external interference of elections severely undermines the respect of national sovereignty and hinders the right of political autonomy.

Asides from external interferences, internal interference further complicates the UN's jurisdiction in assisting or observing election. Often times, post-conflict regimes face the greatest challenge in not only preventing local militias from tampering or threatening voting polls but also in maintaining the integrity of election from running candidates. Out of the two, experts have expressed that political intimidation has been growing and the honesty of the electoral commission boards are more important than ever if the UN or other external force lack the jurisdiction to help. These critical elections are also tied in with the development of democracy within these nations while continuing to follow and respect each country's constitution or formal governmental practices.

Definition of Key Terms

National Sovereignty

Under Chapter 1, Article 2, part 7 of the UN Charter, the definition is explicitly stated that all members should refrain during international relations from threatening or using force against territorial integrity or the political independence of any state that may violate the principles of the UN. The principle of sovereignty has been a foundational support in establishing international diplomacy, security, and law. Additionally, the integrity of sovereignty may relate to the sovereignty within governmental institutions. Once sovereignty is in question, it has often led to civil and domestic disputes or contested tensions between countries such as the 2014 Ukraine Crisis during the Crimean referendum, 2014 Hong Kong Protests over legislative reforms, or the 2016 United States Presidential elections in regards to foreign interference.

Self Determination

The right to freely determine the people's political status and to freely engage in their own economic, social, and cultural development. During the formation of the UN Charter, the term "self-determination" was proclaimed as a fundamental right in paving the way towards international diplomacy and law. The term was internationally recognized in Chapter 1, Article 1, part 2 and elaborated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Initially stressed upon for decolonization after World War 2, the term's ambiguity has resulted into conflicts and independence movements over the questions of territorial integrity.

Elections

A formal and organized selection by voting an individual into a political position or office. The UN Department of Political Affairs describes elections to be vital for the UN to progress towards democratic transitions, decolonization, and the implementation of peace agreements such as referendums. The UN itself has been playing crucial roles in providing international assistances to sustain and provide for credible election processes.

Referendum

A governmental and organized vote in which the government poses a political question for citizens to answer. However, the decision of a referendum is only a reference to the government on what the general public prefers concerning the policy. Most commonly, this form of governmental election deals with very evenly divided sides. The most recent controversial referendum regarding the integrity of the political conduct is the Crimean Referendum in 2014, with suspicions of Russia altering vote results.

Plebiscite

Similar to a referendum, it is a vote for the people to decide on a divided governmental policy. However, the difference is that plebiscites are legally binding rather than only used as a reference.

Background Information

The history of elections traces back to the ancient Greek and Roman empires. Throughout history, the use of elections has shifted from electing religious rulers during the Medieval Times to electing governmental officials in the legislature and the executive office. Additionally, the right to vote has been recognized in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures." Without elections, citizens lack their right to politically participate and lack a representative government. An unrepresentative, corrupt, and unreliable election may potentially result into a country's lack of development and recognition of political institutions. Diminished support in governments can often lead to political turmoil and a questionable legitimacy to any elected governmental official. Possible manipulations of governmental elections could be caused by foreign interference or by domestic groups ranging from rival political parties to rebelling warlords.

Foreign Electoral Intervention

Foreign electoral intervention refers to a foreign or external force attempting to influence the outcome of an election. Chapter 1, Article 2, part 7 of the UN Charter states that "Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter". The article establishes the priority of national sovereignty in order to maintain international peace. No state has the right to intervene directly or indirectly the internal affairs of others. Only when a nation is under attack or facing a imminent threat can a nation retaliate or request for an UN armed intervention against the attacking nation, according to Article 51. Additionally, the right of self-

determination further cements the principle of the right to vote within each nation under the UNHCR. Elections also lie under political jurisdiction and sovereignty across all member nations. However, the ambiguity of the term affairs and the particular means brings controversy over foreign electoral interferences.

Past records have shown many states interfering in foreign elections. During the Cold War, many elections in Russia's satellite countries were undermined by political and physical coercion from the Soviet Union. Similarly, the US attempted to influence countries such as Italy, Iran, and Chile. Countries often influence elections through physical coercion and any other armed forces. The most common examples of physical coercion in states are organized coups during the 1970s. During 1975, there is evidence of CIA involvement to overturn the Whitlam Labor government in Australia as well as a counterinsurgency operation in Greece. Countries that have more dominant forces and are more economically developed have more power over smaller nations. A study in 2016 concluded that the US intervened in 81 foreign elections, while Russia (or the Soviet Union) intervened in 36 foreign elections between 1946 and 2000.

However, in the present, any member state with sufficient technology has the capability to conduct cyber-attacks. Over the years, the ambiguity of cyber forces within the context of the UN Charter raises questions. Some legal experts argue that physical coercion and interference should be two separate acts, and that a simple interference does not qualify completely as coercion. Without a clear consensus that a foreign nation has violated the UN Charter, no state or organization can enforce any legal consequences. A prominent example is the White House accusing Russia of hacking and meddling in the 2016 US Presidential Election. The mass media exposure of a cyber-attack upon one of the most powerful countries has led to the looming question over cyber security and political autonomy. Moreover, with the deteriorating relation between Russia and the U.S, global relations for numerous members of the states would be less than ideal. Hence, this is why the US and most other states resort to sanctions to condemn the behavior of foreign interference. The threatened integrity of elections remains vital in maintaining the civic faith in democratic principles and legitimacy of institutions.

Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States

In 1970, the UN established the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among states to establish a clearer legal boundary over electoral interferences. The declaration was a General Assembly resolution and thus not legally binding. However, the document was vital as it is the most thorough explanation of the legal

jurisdictions of member states. The main principle of the resolution required that all States should refrain in their international relations from using forces or threat against territorial integrity and political independence.

The resolution called that a war of aggression included waging propaganda to other states. The new guideline resulted in reduced action of the US and Russia supplying funds to favored political parties in member states, such as the Whitlam Labor government in Australia . Additionally any form of organized and assisted intervention to overthrow the regime of another state that interfere with another state is condemned. The economic and political sovereignty of states was restricted. The declaration was refined to a more authoritative and thorough definition of sovereign boundaries. Thus, after the Cold War, the number of foreign interference from major nations decreased. Most significantly, the number of supported coups to overthrow regimes decreased as operations became more covert, such as the use of cyber warfare.

Internal Electoral Intervention

While the UN can have authority to a certain extent over foreign electoral interferences, countries facing internal electoral interferences are much harder for the UN to assist in. Most often, less economically developed, in-conflict, and post-conflict countries face the threat of internal manipulations over elections. The integrity of elections may be threatened from local militias and warlords, corrupt political parties, or screened candidates.

An example of local obstruction or interference of elections was recently in Somalia. On February 2017, the conflict-driven Somalia was able to elect Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo as the new President. Due to the dangerous territories, the vote had to be held in an airport at Mogadishu with a no-fly zone placed over the city with banned traffic. The country received assistance from the African Union and was able to request over 20,000 troops to prevent Al-Shabaab -- a militant Islamist group -- from attacking the venue. Moreover, the day before the election, it was reported that Al-Shabaab exchanged fire with African Union troops near the voting venue. Often times, by provoking violence near voting areas may influence voters to note vote in fear of their safety. With such internal interferences, the situation places a burden to maintain and build a stable democracy within the region. Due to the domestic agreements with regional groups, the Somali government was able to receive help from these internal issues.

However, when dealing with more complex issues, such as the relation between Hong Kong and China regarding elections, the UN becomes more limited in its power. The UN Charter prioritizes the respect of self-determination and national sovereignty, especially when involving the UN to intervene or mediate. In August 2014, China's top legislative committee ruled that voters must choose from a list of

two to three candidates from a nominating and screening committee. The 1984 agreement between China and Britain allowed China to receive Hong Kong, a British colony during the time. With a higher authority, China agreed to have Hong Kong governed with a "high degree" of autonomy, except in foreign and defence policies. Moreover, the majority of the representatives in the election committee were pro-Beijing. Many democratic activists in Hong Kong argued that the new nominating committee can screen out any running candidate who hold less favorable views with the Chinese government. Moreover, prominent pro-democracy groups, such as Occupy Central, has organized an unofficial referendum in June 2014. Due to the unofficial organization, the referendum had been heavily contested. However, due to the 1984 agreement between the two governments, the UN has no jurisdiction to intervene. The treaty placed Hong Kong as an administrative region of China. Therefore, the disagreements amongst the two are only domestic affairs and not under the jurisdiction of the UN. If Hong Kong does need any assistance, the UN would have to have China's approval in order to conduct any assistance. Under the UN Charter of Chapter 1, Article 2, part 7, China holds this jurisdiction over others territories such as Xinjiang and Tibet. These special politics does not only pertain to China but also in the Western Sahara, Palestine, Chechnya, and more.

Aside from a higher jurisdiction of authority that may complicate the power of the UN, sometimes the formulation of the country's constitution may complicate the process. The promotion of genuine elections may often intertwine with the definition of democracy. However, not all member states in the UN follow a democratic procedure in choosing a governmental leader. The constitution of the nation may result in an ambiguity or a loophole for opponents to undermine the integrity of the election. The most recent example is the election in Kenya. Prior to the election, the country's electoral commission printed an extra 1.2 million ballot paper, raising suspicion. Additionally, the commission leader of information and technology Christoper Msando was found tortured and murdered. In August 2017, opposition leader Raila Odinga claimed in an unofficial tally that he had won the presidential election. The vote-rigging allegations led to clashes between the police and Odinga's supporters. The claims specified that Odinga had confidential information of hackers altering the election's data. The dispute resulted in the electoral commissions to postpone the final tally announcement to August 15th. However, the event had already stirred unrest and a lack of trust amongst the political process. Additionally, Kenya's attempt in achieving long-term stability was severed even more. The dispute was left in the hands of Kenya's judicial system, but with Uhuru Kenyatta as both the incumbent and the claimed frontrunner in the election, there is still distrust amongst the people. This demonstrates the difficulty of the UN to intervene since incumbent Kenyatta would have the ultimate authority to approve or request the EAD's service despite Odinga's claims.

UN Electoral Assistance Division

After its development after 1940s, the UN established the UN Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD) to assist in numerous decolonization processes. Their operations include supervising and observing plebiscites, referendums, and elections. The UNEAD has assisted in Timor-Leste, South Africa, Mozambique, Cambodia, and El Salvador during the 1990s. More than 100 countries have requested for electoral assistance since 1991. The General Assembly officially endorsed the opinion that Electoral Assistance should be designated as a policy the UN should follow. Requests for technical support, assessments, observations, or supervisions can be provided by countries.

Most assistance originates from a Member State request, but it may also come from the request of the General Assembly or Security Council. Sometimes, election assistance may also merged with peacekeeping missions. Despite any of these requests, ultimately the UNEAD must also receive approval of the relevant member state. Moreover, the UNEAD must receive the request from an official governmental branch that officiates in agreements with the UN. This is to ensure that all necessary assistance is legally binding, and that requests from a political party, civil society, and other groups would not be considered by the UN. Usually an official request must be provided at least 4 months before the Election Day and the UN will conduct an evaluation. Any other aspects of the assistance may call other NGOs, IGOs, or governmental partners to provide resources. Before providing assistance to the requested nation, the UNEAD provides a detailed report called the needs assessment mission (NAM) on whether the UN should provide support or not.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Russia

The US intelligence officials declared that Russian hackers have made numerous attempts during the 2016 US elections to get into numerous governmental branches. Security experts believed Kremlin-supported groups were involved in the operations, such as the FSB spy agency or the Russian military intelligence. Moreover, reports of Russian cyber-espionage activities have been reported by German officials. Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic party were reported to be targeted by a Russian hacking group and another major attack last year on the parliament in Berlin. Similar to the US, the hack involved phishing emails requesting for personal information tracing back to an account called un.org, seemingly from the United Nations. Despite these claims, Vladimir Putin has yet to be personally

accused of instructing the act since assessments only showed that Russia's senior-most officials could have authorized these cyberattacks. Moreover the official position of the intelligence community may only speculate the repercussions of such an attack, but cannot conclude whether the attacks managed to actually change the vote tally in favor of any candidate. This official position from the US and Germany is thus why no direct charges or UN condemnations were put forth.

United States of America

More recently, the 2016 US presidential election has been speculated to be under foreign interference. During the Obama administration, numerous sanctions have been placed upon Russia. Currently, the US House of Representatives has passed a bill renewing and expanding the sanctions since Russia's annexation of Crimea. Robert Mueller is currently leading the special counsel investigating the current allegations after Jeff Sessions, the Attorney General of the United States, recused himself from the investigation. Moreover, Sessions, along with other White House officials, has been accused of meddling with Russian ambassadors prior to the election. President Trump has also issued a statement that the accusations of his campaign team meddling with Russian officials a "hoax".

China

China has been accused by numerous civilians in Hong Kong of intervening in election affairs. In August 2014, China's top legislative committee declared that voters would only be able elect candidates from a ballot of two or three candidates. Such actions were criticized as a method for the Chinese government to screen and vet favorable candidates. The issue sparked the Umbrella Movement. However, the UN faces difficulty in intervening over such disputes since Hong Kong is officially a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. The authority of the UN Charter would not lie under this jurisdiction because the UNEAD is authorized only when a member state requests for assistance. However, if Hong Kong is considered to be under China, the authority would only be considered as an internal dispute for China and not be a breach in foreign interference. The complexity between administrative regions and other special politics restricts the UN from assisting.

UN Electoral Assistance Division (EAD)

The UNEAD provides assistance based on the specific needs of the requesting Member State nations. Asides from assisting in peaceful transitions, the organization has also help in activities of small scale technical support. The division of the UN does not often act alone and often cooperates with the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and many more. Governmental and non-governmental

partners have also funded and supported the UNEAD with resources such as election information, news broadcasting, and election guides. Most prominent requests occurred in Cambodia in 1992-1993 and Timor-Leste in 2001-2002. Occasionally the UNEAD would make up the electoral administrative itself and usually under a transnational setting.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
June 26th, 1945	The UN Charter was established right after with the UN to develop a standard of procedures and international law to maintain global peace.
October 24th, 1970	The Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States was established by the 3rd General Assembly, the new doctrine provided a more authoritative and thorough position on improving the integrity of elections in states.
December 17th, 1991	The UN Electoral Assistance Division was established to assist developing nations on electoral observation, surveillance, and protection.
December 7th, 2012	The Ghana presidential and parliamentary election had a coalition of observers trained and deployed with around 4000 people.
August, 2014	The Chinese government introduced reforms to elections in Hong Kong by having a screening committee for running candidates.
January 6th, 2017	US intelligence officials indicate reports of Russian hackers tampering with the 2016 Presidential elections, leading to an ongoing investigation on the extent of the hacking.
February, 2017	The Somali presidential election was monitored by African Union troops to maintain the safety and stability of voting polls. Exchanges of fire between the police and Al-Shabaab began the day before to intimidate voters.
August 10th, 2017	Kenya faces tension between the police and Odinga's supporters when arsonists attacked populated local markets.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States, 24 October 1970 **(A/RES/2625)**

- Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections, 17 December 1991**(A/RES/46/137)**
- Strengthening the Role of the United Nations in Enhancing Periodic and Genuine Elections and the Promotion of Democratization, 19 December 2011 **(A/RES/66/163)**
- UN Charter, 26 June 1945
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The UN established the EAD to further emphasize the importance of genuine election especially after the Cold War. Additionally, the agenda of promoting periodic and genuine elections has been on the UN's agenda since 1991. However, in respect to national sovereignty, in order to request upon EAD, the nation in question still has the ultimate decision to accept or refuse assistance. Without the authority to thoroughly assist or assess the conditions of elections, the EAD would not serve much use within the situation. In fact, the EAD has been increasing its role to technical assistance, rather than with electoral observation over the years. This may possibly correlate to the use to electrical equipment at voting booths as well as from the increase of cyber technology.

With the increased use in cyber warfare and speculation of hacking interferences, most nations conduct their own investigations rather than receiving outside help. The refusal in assistance may stem from refusing to turnover classified information or in fear that of the meddling of another foreign force. Nations facing an invisible foreign threat are often reluctant to show any fault or defects to their own political system. Moreover, in the US's case during the 2016 Presidential Election, there were only reports of Russian hackers tampering. There has been no direct evidence that is led to believe that Russian President Vladimir Putin directly ordered the execution. Furthermore, most cyber tactics are detected, but the extent of how much of the election was swayed often goes into dispute. Without any solutions or current legal consequence to this new form of cyber warfare, the situation remains only under domestic jurisdiction. The UN's extensive guidelines from the IFES Election guide is also another possible way for future governments to follow upon condoned practices. Additionally, the EAD has branched and partnered with peacekeepers, UN Volunteers, the UNDP, and the Office Of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to further ingrain the maintenance of fair elections.

Possible Solutions

Regarding external interferences, international observations are highly encouraged. Regional coalitions may provide such services, as shown in Somalia with the African Union. While cyber security heightens, nations should also be prevent building more tension amongst nations. Currently, the UN needs a much clearer outline and agenda regarding rules for internal or external interferences with elections. The new influence of social media and other cyber technology provides an unprecedented issue. Studies suggest that electoral management boards of each nation are the best indicators of the integrity of elections. Moreover, most successful elections are run autonomously and independently from any governmental branches. If international observers are available, their presence often reduces fraud and increases domestic confidence. Additionally, the international observers may allow elections to be considered more legitimate. Most often, long term observers work months ahead to avoid political intimidation or vote buying.

Another aspect to consider is the promotion of a free media. The increase of a free media would correlate to having more honest institution as more citizens become informed and aware. Such oversight is essential to having a fair election and prevents other internal tampering with election results. Moreover, a study showed that by broadcasting political debates, citizens are more likely to vote based on policy rather than interfered with corrupt officials or bodies. The International Service for Electoral News (ISEN) may serve as a guideline that aimed to distribute information on elections around the world through subscription services. The increased political knowledge places more oversight of political institutions and pressure electoral boards to remain free and fair. Regional blocs may provide assistance to internal disputes. A good example would be the Economic Community of West African States assisting the Gambian President when the previous incumbent refused to leave office after losing the 2016 election. The regional bloc placed a commitment to remove him by force if necessary was previously within the doctrines of the bloc if such events do occur.

Asides from connecting with the above organizations, the UN has collaborated with numerous electoral resources to connect several tools for developing nations. Although these organizations worked with the UN, other governmental branches may be highly encouraged to reach out to the other groups if requesting UN assistance faces difficulty in qualifying for certain conditions and assessments. The ACE Electoral Knowledge Network was able to provide divisions in South Africa, Mexico, and Canada, while opening up 10 Regional Electoral Resource Centers. Moreover, the network has cooperated with numerous governments to establish online services to increase awareness. The UN may also take up projects, such as the BRIDGE Project in 2002. The project became one of the most fundamental and comprehensive professional development course regarding election administrations. The project not only

intended to reach out to the electors, but also to donor communities, political parties, the media, and electoral observers.

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Appendix

I.   Elections in Post-Conflict Countries – Lessons Learned from Liberia, Sierra Leone, DR Congo,
     and Kosovo: http://www.zif-berlin.org/fileadmin/uploads/analyse/dokumente/veroeffentlichungen/
     ZIF_Report_Elections_in_Post-Conflict_Countries_2009.pdf

Forum: General Assembly Third Committee

Issue: Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation

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Introduction

War is the lack of peace, yet peace is not the lack of war; such a conclusion should push our world to not only focus on stopping conflicts, but also to work towards a peace where there is understanding and cooperation in addition to a lack of war. In a globalising world, interaction between people of rich cultural and religious backgrounds is bound to happen. This interaction, however, can bring both troubles and benefits. As a reoccurance throughout history, the problems of stereotypes, misunderstandings, and even violence occurring due to an intolerant mindset have been affecting those who fall victim to this.This lack of understanding of religions and cultures is one of the major roots of extremism. That is why it is imperative for individuals to become more aware, emphathetic, and open-minded to diverse cultures and religions. It also places a very large importance in promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue which has the ability to facilitate this change from war to peace.

Once tolerance and acceptance is taught among individuals, interreligious and intercultural dialogue can be used to supply solutions. Education will allow us to understand that despite all religious and cultural differences, many people still hold the same moral values and can act upon that. Wars caused by a mutual misunderstanding could have been stopped or prevented and the problem where people are attacked due to certain aspects that may seem different could be avoided. Dialogue between a diverse group of people will facilitate peace and coherence along with the way forward to the economic development of a nation that encompasses diverse groups.

Currently, there is a considerable amount of action taking place to promote this much needed dialogue. This support can be seen in the many organisations that choose to create programmes and educate the youth on peace. Nations are also taking action by funding what these Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) choose to do and by passing many of the resolutions that the General Assembly (GA) has put forth. More can be done, however, as interreligious and intercultural dialogue remain a major priority in this globalising world.

Definition of Key Terms

Peace

Peace encompasses a lack of war or violence, but not only is it that, it also is the state of tranquillity, the freedom from oppressive thoughts or emotions, and harmony. Therefore if there is no conflict, that does not mean things are at peace. Many of the ideas that define peace all come from the effects of interreligious and intercultural dialogue as defined below.

Interreligious dialogue

Individuals of different religions or faiths positively interacting, respecting and understanding one another where they can cooperate and have the freedom to practice what they choose freely together. It aims to create understanding that will prevent tensions and conflict, break down stereotypes and suspicion of others, and foster good relations between people. Interfaith and interreligious dialogue can be used interchangeably. The opposite of interreligious is intrareligious.

Intercultural dialogue

Similar to interreligious dialogue, intercultural dialogue is also the positive and respectful interaction between individuals and groups who do not share the same cultural background. Intercultural dialogue aims to encourage equality and a deeper understanding of different perspectives.

Extremism

Defined by the Merriam Webster dictionary to be the "advocacy of extreme measures or views". These views can be built upon the misunderstanding of the diverse set of religions and cultures as well as the stereotypes that surround them. Advocating and expressing such extreme measures are more than likely to cause harm or at the very least, offend many others and the cycle of extremism comes back full cycle.

Background Information

As said by the previous United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, "at a time when prejudice and hatred are all too common, when extremists seek new recruits through incitement and identity-based appeal, when politicians use divisiveness as a strategy to win elections – dialogue can be an antidote". Intercultural and interfaith dialogue is clearly a major part of keeping peace and security

within this globilising world where people of so many different backgrounds move around and interact with each other. Dialogue between cultures and religions open the mind to new experiences or allow people to connect; not only that, it is a foundation where a sense of peace, community, and understanding can be built upon and is promoted.

Yet, dialogue, understanding, and cooperation is and has always been hard to attain. Even in everyday life there is still a struggle to work towards accepting differences and keeping an open-mind. Though this setback can be disheartening, to look past this and into what dialogue and cooperation can bring to those who managed to participate and gain from it will surely convince others to do same. In contrast to that, looking at what has happened because we have failed to understand will propel our drive to achieve interreligious and intercultural dialogue the same as the consequences of failing to do so have been drastic.

The need for dialogue

As the issue at hand is the promotion of itnerreligous and intercultural dialogue, it must be understood why this needs to be promoted and specifically what could and has come out of engaging in this behaviour of understanding and cooperation. The benefits of interreligious and intercultural dialogue is wide reaching and spans across a range of aspects that include political, economical, and social benefits.

Conflict prevention

Peace is at the mercy of ignorance, the lack of respect, and misunderstandings. As dialogue is focused on understanding and cooperation, it is a powerful strategy to reconcile groups of people fighting in a conflict. Understanding people outside of their cultures and religions has been proven time and time again for groups to reconcile after much conflict. There are too many wars currently being fought that is a result of the lack of understanding religiously and culturally. As a result, nations are very keen to promote dialogue as not only does it improve the relations of the people but between governments and nations themselves. For example, the conflict between Shi'ite and Sunnis that include extremists groups such as ISIS who are Sunni and the Syrian President who is an Alawite or Shi'ite.

Ignorance to knowledge

Like mentioned before, there are often many stereotypes and misunderstandings that occur as different people from diverse backgrounds interact. It is easy to make conclusions on a whole religion or culture based on a small group of them, thereby creating the misunderstandings we know today. However, the reason to promote dialogue especially in this sense is to remove these misunderstandings so that the misconceptions that may have formed unintentionally can be

turned into knowledge which can educate other people. Sometimes, instead of a closed-mind, the misunderstandings also come from the fact that people might perceive that asking certain questions about a religion or culture will offend the other person thereby continuing their misconceptions. Promoting dialogue and understanding has and will change this and inform. As shown after the Septermber 11 attack in 2001 by those who were Muslim and associated with the extremist Islam group, Al-Qaeda, many other religions now perceive Islam as a violent and extreme religion, labelling all Muslims as terrorists (History). As people do not try to understand what Islam really entails, there has been conflicts between religions, especially Christianity with Islam.

Connecting people and ideas

Dialogue, especially interreligious dialogue, will create bridges between the ideas of different individuals in religion and culture. For example, many religions practiced today have a common theme that there is a higher power overlooking man or the fact that many believe in an event that will occur after death whether that be being reborn or living in an afterlife. As dialogue connects people, this similarity can be recognised and hopefully accepted which can be beneficial to creating peace between groups. Quoting a report by Yoshiaki Iisaka, "peace is not a negative and static state of not-war, but a positive, dynamic concept of living together in harmony and fellowship". Socially, this breaks stereotypes and prejudices about groups that we may not know well about and find ways to connect with similarities in both religion and culture.

Difficulties in understanding and cooperation

The setbacks to dialogue are straightforward and can be solved easily; however, the difficulties still remain as something that holds us back from all the benefits that cooperation and understanding has to offer. Holding us back from the benefits and creating conflicts that will further damage nations and individuals, there are always reasons why people can not connect to one another and understand another's point of view.

Speaking not talking

The difference between speaking and talking is usually defined through who is actively communicating. Speaking refers to a one-sided conversation while talking refers to a discussion between two or more people. People often try to promote themselves and be the ones speaking instead of hearing others and their opinions. This is natural since we all want are opnions to be heard, however, speaking is only half of dialogue and listening to understand is the other even more important half. This again is the open-minded part and leaning towards interfaith, it should not be used to convert people. In the end, the objective of dialogue is not to impose ideas on

others but to listen to ideas and discuss your own that will lead to a better understanding of others and the individual's culture and religion.

Language

Being a rather simple setback, one thing that is often a difficulty in dialogue between cultures and religions is that there simply is no translation for what the person is hoping to say. 'Lost in translation', as they say, fully applies here because certain words in certain languages cannot be translated in a way that captures the same feeling in the original language.

Unwillingness to change

Finally, one of the biggest setbacks and difficulties for dialogue in general, is that individuals do not want to change and this could simply be because they are stuck in tradition or have not seen the benefits of understanding different cultures that this is occurring. It could simply be individuals deciding to turn a blind eye towards things they do not understand and choose to not understand. This seems to be the biggest problem not only in interreligious and intercultural dialogue, but in many of the current problems our world is facing today. The refugee crisis throughout Europe in 2016 had sparked a difficulty in understanding one another through dialogue. Due to the differing religions and cultures of those seeking asylum and the residents of the country, there would often be conflicts such as when 600 women were sexually assaulted by men who were mostly asylum-seekers and illegal immigrants (Neuding). This was inferred to be the result of a culture-clash and measures such as educating these young men about gender equality, has already been going underway.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United Nations Education, Scientific and Social Organisation (UNESCO)

UNESCO is one of the many UN organisations that have been putting much of its resources into the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue. With it's culture of peace and non-violence acting as a framework for approaches and methods to enhance education, science, and society, UNESCO is working towards better interreligious and intercultural dialogue by improving education to achieve intercultural skills that include emphathy, solidarity, and hospitality, empowering women and children by ensuring their human rights, using the media to promote peace, non-violence, tolerance and intercultural dialogue, and encouraging heritage and creativity for richer interactions.

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)

The UNAOC is an initiative estabhilshed in 2005 by the former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan that is composed of a group of experts that work towards a peaceful and inclusive world through respect and understanding of people from different backgrounds in culture and in religion. The UNAOC has contributed much to the promotion of intercultural and interfaith dialogue. An annual global is held by the UNAOC that supports dialogue between different groups of people. The fifth Alliance of Civilzations global forum held in Vienna on the 27 and 28 of February 2013 in particular hosted over 1,200 people from over 100 countries. Within the theme of the forum, promotion of responsible leadership in dialogue and diversity, discussion was about the promotion and protection of the right to religious freedom, the media and their contribution to shaping democracy and public opinions, and the global economy and how it changes. Similar to the means that UNESCO is taking, the UNAOC also brings education on peace to the youth. The UNAOC has set up two summer schools in 2012 that focused on the discussion of religion and politics, conflict prevention and resolution, dialogue, and the media where about 135 youths from 69 different countries had attended. These summer schools were funded by Brazil, Malta, the Gulbenkian Foundation, the Abdul Aziz Al-babtain Foundation and two other private companies.

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID)

KAICIID is an intergovernmental organisation that was founded by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Republic of Austria, and the Kingdom of Spain. It's Board of Directors consists of representatives from all around the world and the organization has an aim to "promote the use of dialogue globally to prevent and resolve conflict to enhance understanding and cooperation". The organisation has helped by creating a programme for refugees in Europe, fighting against violence caused by religion, and promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue within specific countries such as Austria.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
December 10th 1948	United Nations General Assembly adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Paris, France
June 25th, 1993	World Conference on Human Rights adopted the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action that further elaborates on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
2005	Formation of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

2001-2010	International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World
2010	International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures
2013-2022	International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (IDRC)

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

As shown by the numerous reports and resolutions written by the United Nations, the topic of interreligious and intercultural dialogue is of high importance and is a topic discussed heatedly both in the past and present:

- Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, 25 November 1981 **(A/RES/36/55)**
- UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2 November 2001
- Global agenda for dialogue among civilizations, 21 November 2001 **(A/RES/56/6)**
- Promotion of interreligious dialogue and cooperation for peace, 3 November 2005 **(A/RES/60/10)**
- High-level dialogues on interreligious and intercultural understanding and cooperation for peace, 13 June 2007 **(A/RES/61/269)**
- Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace, 26 March 2013 **(A/RES/67/104)**
- United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, 31 July 2015 **(A/RES/69/312)**

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Many of the previous attempts that work to solving this issue have been mentioned previously in the "Major Countries and Organisations Involved" section. However there are also numerous other attempts that have not been addressed. These attempts have brought awareness to the issues at hand but have as there are still acts of extremism that act upon the lack of intercultural and interreligious dialogue and understanding.

United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)

This United Nations' programme promotes dialogue among cultures on environment-related issues. Some courses of action that the UNEP has taken is holding youth conferences such as that of the TUnza International Youth Conference that hosted about 300 people from 75 countries and talked about environmental and societal issues, allowing dialogue among them, using their World Environment

Day to focus on encouraging traditions and customs of indigenous communities regarding food preservation as a means of reducing waste, and in general, aiding various groups of indigenous people to show the importance of intercultural dialogue as the people has to adapt and change to the environment's needs.

United Nations Education, Scientific and Social Organisation (UNESCO)

Along with the many solutions UNESCO has provided, they have also focused on aiding member states in intercultural dialogue and using the culture of peace and non-violence to improve the state of education, science, and society. Aiding nations such as Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Guatemala, UNESCO has combatted violence and intolerance within schools with open school programmes. In Egypt, UNESCO promotes democracy and fights against gender-based violence. There is also the creation of citizenship and youth-led human rights clubs that UNESCO did in Tunisia.

International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures/International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures

Both the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures that occurred in 2010 and the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures were proclaimed by the UN General Assembly and is being led by UNESCO. These events aim to promote cultural diversity, its benefits, and its importance. These two events have a predecensor of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World and builds upon ideas from that. There are many organisations and groups supporting this, from intergovernmental organisation to non-governmental organisations, religious leaders, and many more. As said by UNESCO themselves, "the 'rapprochement of cultures' implies that international security and social inclusion cannot be attained sustainably without a commitment to such principles as human dignity, conviviality and solidarity".

Possible Solutions

Mentioned before, there are few, effective solutions to dialogue and yet these difficulties somehow hold us back very far from achieving the aims of interreligious and intercultural dialogue. There are many solutions that governments and organisations can take in to promote and ensure that dialogue, understanding, and cooperation is achieved within a community. Organisations like UNAOC has already done so by bringing awareness to the importance of dialogue and understanding online. Using the platform, Twitter to allow people to converse, UNAOC has used the hashtag "#Represent Yourself" in 2012 to educate others by providing a platform for conversation to counter efforts of extremists and also to bring attention to the killing of the US Ambassador (UNAOC's Report 27).

Elaborating further on educating, programmes such as the summer school held by UNAOC will drastically improve the promotion of dialogue as the youths are educated on the importance and benefits of promoting it. Therefore, nations and organisations should also focus on making sure that education on such dialogue is given to the youth. In general, simply increasing the education of dialogue in schools would greatly help in the understanding of why it needs to be promoted. Along with education programmes, a wider scale of programmes of any type is also feasible as instead of specifically targeting youths and their education, these programmes can educate the people in general and make sure there is a space for dialogue between religions and cultures can occur.

Finally, another initiative that branches off from giving a space for dialogue to happen, nations and organisations could hold and fund events where there is a safe time and place that people can ask questions and discuss ideas that allow for understanding and cooperation. This could be between governments as a way of cooperation, groups in conflict as a way for reconciliation, or for the people who live in a diversifying world and where understanding and an open-mind is much needed.

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Appendix or Appendices

I. What is Interreligious Dialogue? http://www.coistine.ie/what-is-interreligious-dialogue

II. Intercultural Dialogue Crucial in Preventing, Resolving Conflicts, Secretary-General Tells Security Council Thematic Debate http://www.un.org/press/en/2010/sc9936.doc.htm

III. The Significance of Interreligious Dialogue for World Peace https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/nfile/3212

IV. 9/11 Attacks http://www.history.com/topics/9-11-attacks

Forum:	General Assembly Third Committee
Issue:	Preventing violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity
Student Officer:	Jane Chea
Position:	Chair Third Committee

Introduction

Seeing as gender identity and sexual orientation has become an issue that requires conversation yet is so controversial to discuss, little has been done to try and solve a problem so prominent in our society that has caused physical and psychological harm to so many and even in some cases, death, simply due to its sensitivities to religion and culture. Even so, a topic such as this must be addressed as many suffer under the discrimination and hate crimes from those who look at them as someone very different from others. Those who suffer from violence and discrimination, even outside of their gender identity and sexual orientation can be victims of killings, torture, mutilations, rapes, bullying, harassments, and so on.

However, the violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is finally now a topic that is looked upon in a newer and more serious light that does not disregard the sensitivities nor the controversy. With organisations set up specifically design to counter and combat these acts as well as the raising of awareness and the implementation of laws, the prominent problem of violence and discrimination to individuals due to their sexual orientation and gender identity is receiving the attention it deserves. In the more recent years, there have been a lot of actions taken to prevent this violence and mistreatment with the history-changing appointment of an Independent Expert on the prevention of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity because of the passing of a Human Rights Council resolution. This Independent Expert is a large step into ensuring that the people of today will not suffer from violence and discrimination due to a differing sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Sexual orientation and gender identity and the violence that happen due to it not being the only factors to be accounted for and things like history, culture, religion, and political sensitivities are all things to be wary of. Stereotypes and misconceptions are also a large part of a way to combat and prevent discrimination through the way of destigmatization. Overall, there has not been too much action for this

particular topic by the United Nations but currently they are working at full speed towards solving this issue.

Definition of Key Terms

LGBTQ+

An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, Trans, queer/questioning.

Gender vs. Sex

Gender and sex are actually not words that can be used interchangeably. Gender refers to what someone identifies with as opposed to sex which refers to biological differences including those of chromosomes, hormones, and sex organs.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is defined to essentially be about who you are attracted to, romantically, emotionally, or sexually and can be referred to the external dimension. Sexual orientation should not be confused with gender identity and some include lesbian, gay, bisexual, straight, and asexual, among many more.

Gender Identity

Gender identity, in comparison to sexual orientation, is not about attraction but rather a person's identification and what they see themselves as and want others to see them as, in contrast can be referred to as the internal dimension. Therefore some gender identities would include transgender, a person whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth, cisgender, a person who identifies as the same gender as they were assigned at birth, including a few others.

Destigmatization

A stigma is a disgraceful idea or way of thinking that is associated with someone or something, therefore the act of destigmatization would be to remove the negative thinking from the associated. The importance of destigmatizing gender identity and sexual orientation that may be different is a key step into preventing the violence and discrimination against people who have so.

Background Information

To understand how to prevent and combat the violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and what previous means have been attempted, one must understand exactly what people who are attacked and discriminated upon have faced and the hurdles that are already in place for them. Violence and discrimination will happen due to numerous reasons such as that of misunderstanding or that it does not align with the aggressor's beliefs or culture, therefore understanding what is already happening is the key to knowing how to prevent it.

Violence

Since 2011, over 100 people have been killed in attacks with the main reason being their sexual orientation and gender identity. Numerous acts of violence towards people who do not necessarily fit into the norms of sexual orientation and gender identity are the outcomes of the lack of understanding and the willingness to understand. These acts of violence can include physical violence like murder, beatings, kidnapping, rape, and sexual assault, but can also be psychological through threats to wellbeing and freedom. However, can it be possible to see just how many people are suffering through this on a daily basis? Facts and statistics revealing data of violence whether out in the open or domestic, may be underplayed and many more people than we perceive could be going through the violence outlined.

The lack and inaccuracy of data

A differing gender identity and sexual orientation from what people might believe is the normal has led to the numerous amounts of violence in the extremities. When available, we can see the extreme measures people take against people who may seem different. In countries that publish annual reports on homophobic violence – which is not very many – it can truly be seen how alarmingly high rates of homicidal violence actually is. For example, Brazil's government posted that in 2012, 310 murders were fuelled by homophobia or transphobia. If countries do post annual reports, some numbers may also be inaccurate as victims often choose to not report what violence and discrimination they fall victim to as there is fear of being targeted even more. In 2012, a survey by Stonewall in Great Britain found that one in six LGBT surveyors experienced hate crime or the likes in the past three years while 75 per cent chose not to reported their experience to the police. Therefore, reports and statistics given by the countries may be shrouded with inaccuracy.

Those who target

Seeing as sexual orientation and gender identity often opposes many religious beliefs and cultures, they often are the victims of many extremists taking pride in the beliefs of their religion or with their ideals in general. A gay man was beaten and killed in Chile by neo-Nazis who

burned him with cigarettes and carved swastikas on him (Human Rights Council, "Discrimination", 8). There were also reports of men who were presumed to be gay being raped and tortured in the Syrian Arab Republic. It is very clear that there are many people who are targeted simply due to their sexual orientation and gender identity and it is hard to instil understanding into those who have stubbornly tried to go against it. However it must be done to combat hate crimes and violence in general as the Universal Declaration of Human rights states that everyone is entitled to their human rights regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, culture. Overcoming this conflict of religion and culture vs. sexual orientation and gender identity is a difficult portion of this issue and must be addressed thoroughly.

Discrimination

Much like the violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity, there is an undeniable discrimination towards people based on these conceptions that we may have about who they are based on one aspect of them. Denying them simple rights such as healthcare, expression, education, and employment because they are seen as different is the discrimination that LGBTQ+ people have to face. It has been proven that due to this, many are forced into poverty filled with food insecurity and little to no economic opportunity. Discrimination not only comes from the people around them, but governments, the workplace, and hospitals.

Discriminatory laws

There are many, many countries that choose to penalize those based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, whether this is based on culture and/or religion is specific to every country. In fact, there are at least 76 member nations who criminalize people who have consensual, adult same-sex relationship and many penalize those who cross-dress. There are many different punishments that ensue such as lashings, life imprisonment, and the death penalty in places that include Iran, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, just to a name a few. This penalization often breaches the international human right laws as it violates the rights to life, privacy, and non-discrimination. If the family abuses the individuals based on their sexual orientation through rape, sending them to "hospitals", disowning them, and physical assaulting them, the victims do not usually choose to report this behaviour in a country where a differing sexual orientation and gender identity is accepted as it exposes their sexual orientation or gender identity and shames them further.

Inhumane practices

As mentioned before, there are a handful of families that believe that a child with differing sexual orientation and gender identity is considered "sick", thereby choosing to send them to hospitals to possibly have them "cured". Hospitals like this are unethical and many result to torture that may

include sexual abuse but many countries such as Beijing, China in 2014, illegalize these clinics for unethical and unscientific behaviour. Along with such hospitals, many children going to school face bullying and abuse as a result of being seen as different. About 80 per cent of children attending school said they heard and/or saw bad things happening to their schoolmates based on their sexual orientation and gender identity (Human Rights Council, "Discrimination" 15). This is demoralizing for the victim and have and will force them to skip or drop out of school, eventually leading to isolation, depression, or in extreme cases, suicide.

Effects from these laws and practices

Due to these laws and inhumane practices, many individuals suffer greatly when their sexuality or gender identity appears to be different. In healthcare, the laws cause these individuals to suffer due to the declined quality of their health services. Many also do not have or are denied the specific needs that they might require such as those who have a differing gender identity. With employment, many suffer from discrimination in the workplace as well since there are often no laws to protect individuals who are judged by their sexual orientation or gender identity and are looking for a job. If there are laws, many governments do not implement them very well, leading to a continued refusal to hire or promote people because they may seem different. Along with these few examples, there are numerous other discriminatory acts that affect these individuals going from restricting their freedom of expression, association, and assembly to being able to acquire housing. Regarding housing, in the United States, 40 per cent of homeless (homeless due to negligence from parents, as mentioned earlier) youth identify as LGBTQ+ from 354 homeless support agencies (Human Rights Council "Discrimination", 16).

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

The OHCHR has been a main contributor to achieving progress to protect people from violence and discrimination that occur due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. Containing many bodies within the office, they support human rights of all through bodies that include the Human Rights Council which prevents abuses, inequity, and discrimination, Special Procedures, which reports, advises, and monitors human rights situations, along with many more. All of these bodies play a role in ensuring that all are entitled to human rights. The OHCHR often gives speeches and statements such as those it gave to Indonesia and Russia in 2017, which persuaded and brought to light issues regarding human rights and sexual orientation and gender identity. Their organisation, the UN Free & Equal work to educate people to combat homophobia and transphobia through events and social media.

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

The HRW works to ensure people, regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation, are entitled to their rights and does so by documenting violence of torture, killing, executions, unjustified arrests, domestic violence, and discrimination in health, jobs, and housing. They do so by advocate for laws and policies in countries to protect their rights. They monitor human rights conditions with researchers in around 80 countries around the world and will speak with advocates, journalists, experts, and government officials to release their data in reports and news articles. Partnering with local human rights groups, giving detailed recommendations to a wide range of people such as governments, groups, corporations to reform, and exposing those who abuse human rights to stop the violation of human rights.

Family Equality Council

Combatting the many familial problems mentioned, the Family Equality Council seeks to change attitudes and ensure that families are loved including those with LGBTQ+ members. They aid LGBTQ+ parents who are looking to adopt, start a family, and can socialize with people who understand and accept them. Ensuring schools, hospitals, governmental agencies all treat these families with as much respect as they would with others and that their children do have to face bullying. The Family Equality Council gives talks, distributes books, and brings attention to the need to change our perception of what makes up a family.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
December 10th, 1948	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted that affirms the rights of all human beings regardless of sex, opinion, race, birth, and so forth.
1985	France goes against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment and services, being the first country to do so.
June 17th 2011	A/HRC/RES/17/19, adopter by the Human Rights Council was the first United Nations resolution that focused on sexual orientation and gender identity with twenty-three votes for, nineteen against, and three abstentions.
March 7th 2012	The Rights Council resolution adopted above prompted a panel discussion within the committee on the violence and discrimination against individuals

based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. Being the United Nation's body's first formal debate, the discussion was held to create further consensus among member nations.

June 30th 2016

The passing of the United Nations Human Rights Council resolution (mentioned below) that called for the appointment of an expert who tasked to assess current international human rights laws, raise awareness of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, among many other duties.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

The importance of individuals maintaining human rights regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity have been on a rise within the United Nations. Though previously there have been very little documents that focused on the idea of sexual orientation and gender identity itself, in the recent years, the UN has taken action. Passing a resolution with an independent expert on the issue, the UN is bringing the matter forward and doing its best to work towards the prevention of violence and discrimination, especially of those based on sexual orientation and gender identity:

- Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, 14 July 2011 **(A/HRC/RES/17/19)**
- Discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, 17 November 2011 **(A/HRC/19/41)**
- Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, 26 September 2014 **(A/HRC/RES/27/32)**
- Discrimination and violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, 4 May 2015 **(A/HRC/29/23)**
- Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, 30 June 2016 **(A/HRC/RES/32/2)**
- Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, 19 April 2017 **(A/HRC/35/36)**

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

There has been a lot of momentum forward regarding attempts to resolve this issue, though the issue still stands as something we have to address. Firstly, as mentioned before, the Independent Expert appointed in 2016 has contributed a vast amount to improving the current situation of this issue. Vitit Muntarbhorn, often holds talks with nations and advises certain ones regarding how to prevent violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Along with the appointment of an

Independent Expert, nations have already taken their own course into combatting violence and discrimination as best they can. In 2011, 14 member nations adopted or strengthened their anti-discrimination and hate crimes laws while three states abolished criminal sanctions for homosexuality. In the same year, twelve nations introduced marriage or civil unions (civil unions have similar benefits with marriage) for same-sex couples and ten have introduced reforms allowing transgender individuals to obtain legal recognition of their gender identity. This proves that nation can and will address the situation of violence and discrimination to individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity even without the appointment of an Independent Expert yet many choose not to due to the controversial nature. Informing and educating the people has also been focused on as public information campaigns that addressed societal prejudice are supported by nations such as Brazil who help a campaign with the slogan "Brazil without Homophobia". The media has also played a role in ensuring that LGBTQ+ characters are shown in a positive light as it is proven that representation over the media has a greatly positive impact on kids who may be confused or ashamed of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Organisations such as the OHCHR has also been committed to avocation the decriminalization of LGBTQ+ persons and ensuring their human rights along with a variety of other activities.

Possible Solutions

There are numerous ways of approaching this issue and any which way will be helpful in slowly countering the urgent matter of violence and discrimination due to sexuality and gender identity. The approach could be on a governmental level by encouraging governments to adhere to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and allowing freedom of expression with laws that do not discriminate those who are in same-sex relationships or due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Decriminalizing the idea of a different sexual orientation and gender identity that would be in the norm is a key step forward into solving this issue. However, this is not without difficulties as religion and culture stand as a firm barricade into doing so and becomes a question of conservative vs. liberal and the UN cannot step so far as to force any nation to adhere as that is a breach of sovereignty. For example, in Article 18 of the UDHR outlining religious freedom, the article clearly states that everyone is entitled to "manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance". As said before, religion and a differing sexual orientation and gender identity often contradicts therefore it is imperative to address such a problem. Following the conservative vs. liberal perspective, this becomes an argument on which should be prioritized over another or if there is a possible consensus and balance between the two.

Taking an approach towards educating the people themselves is also a major and prominent way to combat violence and discrimination because ignorance and stereotypes play a large part in why hate

crimes and violence towards these specific individuals occur. Destigmatizing the idea that LGBTQ+ people are different and are not at all similar to others has to be done to move forward as that it the always the big problem. Many people see these individuals as a human unlike themselves allowing them to detach themselves from the otherwise unethical acts they are committing. Proper education of everyone from the youths to the people in charge of companies will fight discrimination of LGBTQ+ people everywhere. It is not to say however, that educating people will completely reduce and combat the violence and discrimination faced as even if we know that certain people are not that different from us, we do subconsciously act as though they are. On the contrary, it certainly gives potential attackers a reason to reconsider what they might be thinking of doing and a means of understanding.

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Forum:	General Assembly Third Committee
Issue:	Human rights violations and abuses against Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar
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Introduction

Since 1784, the Myanmar's Rohingya Muslim population has repeatedly faced human rights violations. The so-called "clearance operations" today are one of the most relentless cases of such violations in the world. Crimes including rape, arson, murder, and torture have reportedly been committed by the Myanmar Army against the Rohingya people. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates 92,000 people—the majority of whom are identified as Rohingya Muslims—from the Northern Rakhine region alone have been displaced as of January 2017 due to such operations. To further exacerbate problems, Myanmar authorities have imposed restrictions that forestall humanitarian aid from reaching its targets, severely undermining the effectiveness of international aid. Undoubtedly, Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims is a minority group that has endured more persecution than virtually any other in recent times.

The presence of the Rohingya Muslim community can be traced back to at the 9th century, where the Islamic religion was introduced by Arabian traders. Yet they are still denied citizenship by the 1982 Burma Citizenship Law as an unrecognized ethnic group. Its members are seen illegal immigrants. As a result, most of the Muslim community in Myanmar is found to be stateless, thus leaving members extremely vulnerable to human rights violations. Moreover, with little to no documentation to prove who they are, finding citizenship or seeking refuge elsewhere also becomes significantly more difficult. Nevertheless, refugee numbers will only continue to rise as the Rohingya retreat from their homes in search of safety and away from persecution.

Sadly, despite the hardships that the Rohingya Muslims have endured in order to seek refuge, they often fail to find help. Many refugees are often turned back after finally reaching their destination. Countries that in the past accepted these refugees are now turning them back, arguably because the number of refugees continues to rise. Even those who aren't turned away often find themselves in arbitrary detention, without any legal status, and in devastating conditions.

Without the help of the international community, the Rohingya Muslims are bound to suffer further atrocities as they seek and find refuge outside of Myanmar, as well as persecution within their home country. The unfolding issue with persecution has repeatedly been labelled as genocide, undermining basic human rights and having a detrimental effect on countless global efforts such as the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Definition of Key Terms

Arakan

Former name for the Rakhine state

Bengali

Name used by the Myanmar government for the Rohingya, meaning illegal immigrant from Bengal

Persecution

"to treat (someone) cruelly or unfairly especially because of race or religious or political beliefs" (Merriam-Webster)

Rohingya

The Muslim community in Myanmar, almost all of whom live in the Rakhine State

Rakhine

Name for a state in Myanmar

Tatmadaw

Official name for the Myanmar Armed Forces

Background Information

History of Rohingya Muslims through the 8th century to the late 20th century

In the 8th century, the Rohingya community started to appear in the Arakan. Introduced by the Arabian traders in the following century, the Islamic religion gradually began growing in the region. Since then, many Muslims from neighboring Bengal have migrated to Arakan, particularly during the time of British rule (1826–1948). This would later land the Rohingya people with the name "Bengali," referring to the Rohingya as illegal migrants from Bengal, which is now divided between Bangladesh and India.

Sadly, despite the Rohingya Muslims' long history in Arakan—now known as the Rakhine region of Myanmar—they still remain an unrecognized ethnic group facing persecution.

The history of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar has been scarred with persecution countless times. In 1784, Arakan was invaded by neighboring Burma, becoming a Burmese province by 1785. Rohingyas were discriminated against and faced persecution, including restrictions on their freedom, much of their land being seized from them, and many more unjustly executed. Consequently, tens of thousands of Rohingyas escaped to Bengal to seek refuge. This continued until the British took over Burma, bringing with it peace and attracting many people from Bengal and other regions. However, that peace was not to last long.

In the midst of World War II, the Japanese invaded Burma and drove out the British forces. The Rohingya, who were in support of the Allies, were not treated kindly by the Japanese. Burmese nationalists, who felt that British rule benefitted the Rohingya too much, also despised them. Again, the Rohingyas were persecuted: massacred, tortured, raped, and murdered. Similar to what happened in past events, many of them fled into Bengal again. Eventually, in 1945, British forces drove the Japanese out of Burma, which then became an independent state. Tensions, however, still failed to die down.

The Rohingyas hoped for Arakan to become an autonomous region, forming the Mujahid Party in order to accomplish this. Along with them came an insurgent group named the Mujahids who would resist the government by force over the next few decades. Therefore, it was no surprise that after the successful military coup in 1962, General Ne Win employed an uncompromising policy towards the Rohingya. The following two decades were riddled with military campaigns against the Rohingya, the most renowned of which was called "Operation Nagamin," or "Operation Dragon King," in 1978, which was the first big push in the campaign. This act of ethnic cleansing sent many Rohingya Muslims to Bangladesh. However, they were quickly repatriated and continued to face persecution.

"Operation Nagamin" or "Operation Dragon King"

Conducted by the Tatmadaw (the Burmese military), the nature of the operation was to inspect the entire population and to separate it into either citizens or foreigners, and to take action against the foreigners deemed illegal immigrants. This was one of the most prominent campaigns ever to be posed against the Rohingya. It was a prime case of ethnic cleansing that drove the Rohingya to near annihilation. Naturally, they were always considered illegal immigrants. Consequences involved sexual violence, murder, arson, and arbitrary arrests. An estimated 200,000 Rohingya Muslims reportedly took refuge in neighboring Bangladesh as a result of this operation.

Sadly, the sheer number of refugees was overwhelming on Bangladesh, who quickly made a deal with Burma to deal with this issue. The deal, which was negotiated by the United Nations, resulted in the repatriation of Rohingya refugees, who faced further persecution back in Burma.

1982 and onwards

Around the time that Operation Nagamin took place, another two important events that would significantly affect the Rohingya even today also took place. The first one is the passing of the 1982 Citizenship Law, and the second is "Operation Pyi Thaya," or "Operation Clean and Beautiful Nation." The Citizenship Law, effective still today, effectively denies the Rohingya Muslims citizenship in Myanmar, making all Rohingya Muslims Myanmar stateless, and seen as "Bengali" despite their long history in the Arakan region. This law is a direct breach of multiple articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Operation Phi Thaya, which began in 1991, was the next big campaign. The goal was the same—to rid Myanmar of the Rohingya Muslims. Crimes reported included forced labour, sexual violence, torture, and arbitrary killings. Yet again, another estimated 250,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh, only to be repatriated in later years under a different agreement.

1982 Burma Citizenship Law

In 1982, the Burmese government passed the Citizenship Law, which recognizes only those whose ancestors settled in Burma prior to 1823—in other words, prior to British rule, as citizens. Hence, the large number of Rohingya Muslims were automatically excluded from citizenship. Even for those who settled before British rule, providing evidence was difficult to impossible for most. Together, these excluded nearly the entire Rohingya Muslim population. Even when evidence was provided, other parts of the law prevented them from obtaining citizenship. For example, Section 44 requires one to be able to speak Burmese, the national language of Myanmar. Rohingya, of course, is not an officially recognized language in Myanmar, which thus makes denying many Rohingya Muslims citizenship easier. Moreover, the law specifies that one must "be of good character" and "be of sound mind" in order to qualify. Therefore, even with all the above conditions being met, the government could simply use an excuse such as "the person did not have good character" to deny citizenship. Worst of all, full citizenship can be obtained by only those who belong to one of Myanmar's 135 recognized ethnicities—the Rohingya, of course, are not included in that list. It's fair to assume that in the dozens of articles that make up this law, there are many more examples that could be used to effectively deny citizenship to Rohingya Muslims. Even some extra measures, such as not allowing foreigners who marry citizens to apply for citizenship, were put in place.

Due to Rohingya Muslims being seen more as illegal immigrants, they are not given access to the basic rights stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Clearly, the law is

already a breech to the right of nationality (Article 15 of the UDHR). In addition, the law restricts Rohingya Muslims' freedom of movement (Article 13 of the UDHR)—not only traveling abroad and out of the Rakhine state but also within the state itself. Permits from the government are required to move even between towns. Rohingyas are also not allowed to work in the public sector, and they face restrictions on marriage and reproduction, they have no access to health care, and they are often forced to do hard labor for many public works, breaking even more articles in the UDHR.

Statelessness is a serious problem. It restricts one's access to basic human rights. Stateless people lack documentation, and nations are less willing to accept stateless refugees, so they have a high chance of being turned back or detained. Statelessness makes it more difficult to access humanitarian and financial aid, thus making their lives as refugees much more demanding. Lastly, once they have found refuge abroad, stateless people are often not allowed to return to live in their "home" country again as they are not citizens. They also have restricted movement elsewhere due to lacking the proper documentation needed for traveling and migrating.

This citizenship law is effective still today, and it has a great negative impact on the lives of Rohingya Muslims. The law is clearly one of the main factors fueling the human rights violations against the minority group.

Rohingya Muslims and the Buddhist majority

It is important to realize the deeply rooted mistrust and dislike between Myanmar's Buddhist majority and the Rohingya minority, an issue that stems from the colonial period. Even the Buddhist monks in the nation—in particular, Ashin Wirathu—are involved. The monks as well as the local population are a key source of persecution towards the Rohingya. Wirathu, along with other Buddhist monks, continue to call for vigorous action against the Rohingyas. They instill within the people a fear of terrorism and Muslim power, constantly warning of the threat of jihad. As a result of such campaigns, the Buddhist majority population's disdain towards the Rohingya is ever-increasing. In 2012, when a young Buddhist woman was reportedly raped by a gang of Rohingya Muslims, it was no wonder that violence immediately erupted. Riots between the Buddhist majority in the Rakhine and the Rohingya spurred an ethnic cleansing campaign that left around 200 Rohingyas dead, displaced around 150,000 internally, and drove tens of thousands into neighboring Bangladesh. As a result of these clashes, incidences involving arson, sexual violence, and murder, including beheadings, stabbings, shootings, etc., were carried out by mobs from both communities. To make matters worse, rather than trying to resolve the conflict, the government persecuted the Rohingya even further, with reports of government forces opening fire, using live ammunition, on the Rohingya while the Buddhist mobs were destroying their

homes. This carried on for the next few months. State forces also exacerbated the conflicts, often taking part in acting out against the Rohingya. Many of the refugees who fled to Bangladesh due to this campaign still live there today.

Further proof of the disdain that the Buddhist majority population had for the Rohingya Muslims was shown in 2015. This time, with the new elections drawing near, the Buddhist majority population held protests against letting the Rohingya vote. As a result, the government revoked the Rohingya's "white cards," which didn't prove official citizenship but was the Rohingyas' last piece of formal identification. As a result, the Rohingya could not vote in the 2015 elections, which saw the first democratically elected government come to power in Myanmar.

Continued actions against the Rohingya Muslims

Recently, on October 9, 2016, a border guard post was attacked by a Rohingya militant group by the name of Harakah al-Yaqin. Nine soldiers were killed in the assault, and the army's retaliation was devastating. "Clearance operations" were immediately issued, resulting in the entire Rakhine being locked down, and access to all international organizations denied. Numerous refugees recounted scenes of sexual violence, arbitrary killings, arson, arbitrary arrest, torture, and other crimes committed by the Tatmadaw. Over 100 people were killed and an estimated 75,000 had escaped to Bangladesh. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of people were cut from humanitarian aid by to the Myanmar government. This example further demonstrates the government's goal of ridding the nation of Rohingyas. Such atrocities have been compared to genocide by multiple international organizations.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Myanmar

The Myanmar government is under heavy criticism from organizations and countries all over the world for their discriminatory behavior toward the Rohingya. The government's discrimination can be seen in how it refuses to use "Rohingya" to describe its Muslim community; instead, it insists on calling them "Bengali," implying that the Rohingya are illegal immigrants from Bengal. The government has constantly denied all accusations of wrongdoing and has prevented international organizations, journalists, news reporters, and the like from entering the Northern Rakhine region, where all the violence takes place. Likewise, humanitarian aid has also been restricted in various states where most of the conflict takes place, thus preventing the aid from reaching its targets. Tens of thousands of people who are displaced internally have no access to medical care or any other form of humanitarian aid. Myanmar has been urged countless times by the United Nations and other international organizations to

lift such restrictions and curb the violence and discriminatory laws. However, all such requests have been ignored by the Myanmar government.

An interesting aspect concerning Myanmar's government is that it has no real control over the Tatmadaw. In fact, the government cannot amend any of its constitution without the military's support; the military can even veto any decision made by the government. This simply adds to the problem, in that even if the government wanted to abide by requests made by the international community, it doesn't have the power to do so. After Myanmar's first democratic election, the National League for Democracy (NLD) came to power, becoming the country's first ever civilian-led government. Yet the country will still be controlled by the military from behind the shadows because the military is guaranteed 25% of the government's seats. In order to amend any part of the constitution, a majority vote greater than 75% is required. The Tatmadaw, being the organization responsible for human rights abuses against the Rohingya, is independent of the government. The same is true of the police and many other enforcement units, and matters concerning immigration are handled by the military as well. So even if the military abided and voted for amending the constitution, there is no guarantee that they would implement or enforce such changes. Likely, the rights abuses would continue and the government would remain powerless against it. Even considering that the military has emergency powers that allow it to take complete control over the nation, continued pressure on the government is necessary in hopes of any major change to the current situation.

Bangladesh

Historically, Bangladesh has been the country to take in the most Rohingya refugees. However, due to the large number of refugees—which places immense pressure on the government—as well as considerable security issues, Bangladesh has also stopped accepting them in recent decades. In order to dissuade refugees from entering its borders, Bangladesh has also committed various offenses such as halting food aid to the Rohingya refugees, leading to an estimated ten thousand-plus refugees starving to death during Operation Nagamin. Similar methods were used to deal with the refugees during Operation Pyi Thaya. Always, those refugees repatriated faced further persecution.

Ultimately, humanitarian assistance for Bangladesh is vital. Even if Bangladesh has closed its borders to the Rohingya refugees, many still make it into the country. Officially, only around 30,000 refugees have been registered in Bangladesh. However, it is estimated that nearly 400,000 more unregistered refugees reside in Bangladesh illegally. The conditions in the refugee camps in Bangladesh are said to be dire, with barely any resources. Camp residents are also not allowed many human rights, such as employment or marriage, as most of them are illegal immigrants. The fact that many refugees refuse to leave, or return after being repatriated (an experience from past events), continues to drive Bangladesh even deeper into poverty.

Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia

While all three of these countries have been heavily criticized for detaining and turning away refugees, it is without doubt that all three of them play a major role in hosting Rohingya refugees. According to the Guardian, "Among a dozen recently released refugees [from Malaysian refugee camps]... everyone saw at least one inmate die, mostly due to disease, but in some cases also due to physical abuse." The three countries have also been criticized for poor treatment of the Rohingya, and their refugee camps lack vital resources such as food, water, medical care, etc. Thailand, especially, has been criticized for its serious human trafficking issues involving the Rohingya.

Despite these issues, there are numerous positive changes happening. For example, the Malaysian government has recently started a project to allow the Rohingya refugees to get work in Malaysia. It's important to note, however, that this applies to only UNHCR cardholders and those who have passed health and security screenings—a small number compared to those Rohingya who are undocumented. Moreover, Thailand's government is also working with the European Union to provide more basic services such as improved healthcare and education to undocumented Rohingya refugees. Indonesia's government has also allowed refugees into the country, although it plans to do so on only a short-term basis.

Regardless of whether or not these countries have opened or closed their borders to the refugees, many still make it in. Similar to the case in Bangladesh, the refugees also burden the economies of these 3 countries. Thus, providing necssary assistance for these 3 countries will be vital too. This will make the countries more willing to open up their borders and improve the livelihoods of the Rohingya refugees.

European Union (EU) and the United States

Both the European Union and the United States have once placed sanctions on Myanmar in order to pressure it to revise its discriminatory laws against the Rohingya. Since then, however, after the rise of the National League for Democracy, both the United States and the European Union have lifted most sanctions.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
8th Century	Rohingya people first came to Arakan
9th Century	Arabian traders introduced the Islamic religion to those in Arakan
1784	Arakan was conquered by Burma; Rohingyas faced persecution under the new ruler and fled to Bengal.
1824	Britain conquered Burma, attracting many migrants into the region.
1942	Japan took over Burma in World War Two. Rohingyas were persecuted due to their support for the Allies.
1962	Successful military coup by General Ne Win, whose government discriminated against the Rohingyas.
1977	Operation Nagamin began. Rohingyas were persecuted and hundreds of thousands fled Myanmar.
1982	New citizenship law was introduced, which denied the Rohingya citizenship, rendering them stateless.
1991	Operation Phi Thaya began. Ethnic cleansing was conducted and hundreds of thousands fled their homes
2012	Riots broke out between the Buddhist majority and the Rohingya. Hundreds of Rohingya were killed, while tens of thousands fled Myanmar.
2015	Rohingyas' "White Cards" (their last piece of documentation to prove their identity) revoked, losing their right to vote.
2016	Clearance Operations were conducted, which persecuted Rohingya. Tens of thousands fled to Bangladesh.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Situation of human rights in Myanmar, 15 April 2014 (A/HRC/RES/25/26)
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, 23 March 2015 (A/HRC/28/72)
- Situation of human rights in Myanmar, 2 April 2015 (A/HRC/RES/28/23)

- Situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar, 22 July 2015 (A/HRC/RES/29/21)
- Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review - Myanmar, 12 December 2015 (A/HRC/31/13)
- Outcome of the universal periodic review: Myanmar, 6 April 2016 (A/HRC/DEC/31/112)
- Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 24 March 2016 – 31/24. Situation of human rights in Myanmar, 20 April 2016 (A/HRC/RES/31/24)
- Situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar – Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 29 June 2016 (A/HRC/32/18)
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, 29 June 2016 (A/71/361)
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, 1 March 2017 (A/HRC/ 34/67)
- Situation of human rights in Myanmar, 7 April 2017 (A/HRC/RES/34/22)

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Past solutions have mostly been passive, with countless governments and organizations condemning Myanmar and urging it to stop the prosecution in all forms. Through reports, the United Nations has also given many recommendations to Myanmar while raising awareness on its findings regarding the situation. However, most of these attempts proved ineffective as the Myanmar government simply choose not to act on them. The discriminatory Citizenship Laws have yet to be revised, and restrictions on humanitarian aid have yet to be lifted, and the UN's calls to investigate the situation have also be rejected as more restrictions are placed by the Myanmar government. Fortunately, raising awareness through reports has been rather effective. Interviews of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh recently revealed many of the atrocities conducted by the Tatmadaw and have earned the attention of the media. Undoubtedly, increased awareness will put further pressure on the Myanmar government and generate more support and aid from the international community.

On the other hand, more active solutions include the use of sanctions. In the past, both the United States and the European Union placed sanctions on Myanmar, but most have since been lifted. While the Myanmar government has never changed its stance on the Rohingya, the sanctions were nevertheless effective. The sanctions being in place provided incentives for the Myanmar government to stop the persecution and gave the international community more leverage. But since the sanctions were lifted, the Myanmar government has far from ceased human rights abuses. In fact, four more

discriminatory laws have been passed since the NLD came to power, restricting marriage, reproduction, and more.

Finally, while not a long-term solution, humanitarian aid provided to the Rohingya Muslims is essential. Without it, many more Rohingya Muslims will suffer from starvation, lack of health care, and other problems. However, the amount of humanitarian aid so far has been far from adequate. Most of the Rohingyas still live in hunger, and refugee camps are in dire conditions. The lack of aid towards them has also meant more pressure for governments hosting refugees, and hence more of them are being turned back.

Possible Solutions

First and foremost, humanitarian aid must be increased both for those displaced within Myanmar and the refugees in other countries such as Bangladesh. Although not a long-term solution, this will undoubtedly improve the livelihood of the Rohingya. Many camps still suffer from lack of health care, food, shelter, etc. Ensuring that the essentials are adequately supplied will be an important first step. Similarly, financial aid for those countries hosting the refugees would also positively lighten the burden. Moreover, to further lessen the Rohingya's suffering, countries should also open up their borders to the refugees, ensuring that they are systematically dealt with, and that proper resettlement programs are in place. In the past, numerous refugees died as a result of being turned away. Preventing this will be a top priority in the future.

The implementation of sanctions is also a considerable option. Putting sanctions into place gives the international community increased leverage over Myanmar, in a sense forcing it to stop the atrocious persecution against the Rohingyas. However, some in the international community argue against the effectiveness of sanctions, stating that they could weaken the democracy that has finally been established in Myanmar, and possibly further negatively affect the livelihood of Myanmar's people. Ultimately, despite any consequences, sanctions appear to be a promising step toward making positive changes in the Rohingya situation. It is an international solution that will most directly affect the Myanmar government and thus is worth considering.

Amending discriminatory laws such as the 1982 Citizenship Law, granting the international community access to providing humanitarian aid in Myanmar, and ending the Tatmadaw's atrocious actions towards the Rohingya are the major goals. These are lofty goals but necessary steps to take in order to see real, lasting change that no longer persecutes Rohingya Muslims. Even without formal sanctions in place, it is still important to continue calling upon Myanmar, to continue applying pressure on the government, to let it know that the international community stands unitedly opposed to its actions, and that there are real consequences for not acting upon the UN's calls (such as damaged international

relations). As well, continually working to raise awareness and relentless monitoring of the issue will help.

Finally, it is imperative to keep in mind the national sovereignty of Myanmar. While this makes solving problems significantly more difficult, respecting it is a key to the values of the United Nations. This means that we cannot simple force through humanitarian aid or conduct investigations— for example, through the use of drones—on the situation in the Rakhine without the consent of the Myanmar government. However, at what point is it no longer a national issue and becomes an international issue? When it is that international law overlaps with national sovereignty? When does the United Nations start having jurisdiction over the issue? Arguably, national sovereignty only pertains when the issue does not interfere with other countries. The issue of the Rohingya refugees have affected far more than just Myanmar. In that sense, the nations who are affect should have a right too look into the issue to. There is no certain answer to this. All these questions and ideas can, and should be discussed by delegates during the conference.

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