

Victoria Shanghai Academy Model United Nations XI

Human Rights Council

Topic: The Issue of Human Rights in Conflicts against Armed Non-State Actors

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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - VSAMUN XI

A Message from the Chairs

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Human Rights Council of VSAMUNXI! We are Leila Zak and Nicolas Wong, both Y10 students from Victoria Shanghai Academy, and we are beyond honored to be serving as your chairs for this committee.

We are so excited for the fruitful debate we are confident that all delegates, whether new or experienced, will facilitate through their skills in diplomacy, public speaking, research, and resolution-writing. This conference will not only give you the chance to demonstrate these skills, but will also aid immensely in their development. As your chairs, we hope that you acknowledge and take full advantage of this opportunity by observing, engaging, and contributing fully toward debate during committee sessions, and by undergoing an appropriate extent of preparation in advance.

In order to ensure this, we expect that all delegates conduct thorough research (this chair report is a great place to start), submit a **1–2 page position paper** outlining their country's stance on the topic, and prepare a **1 minute opening speech** prior to the first committee session.

We would also like to remind delegates that the topic dealt with in this committee is as serious as it is contemporarily relevant. As such, it should be treated with the utmost of respect and certainly the gravitas it deserves during debate. Neither a country's stance, nor a delegate's personal opinion, should take away from this. The mission of the Human Rights Council is to protect and promote the human rights that every individual is entitled to, regardless of gender, orientation, or ethnic, cultural, and religious background, and we encourage delegates to keep this in mind as they prepare for, participate in, and reflect on debate within this committee and conference.

Should you have any questions at all, feel free to email us at ps20143219@student.vsa.edu.hk (Leila), and/or ps20123024@student.vsa.edu.hk (Nicolas).

Yours sincerely,

Leila Zak and Nicolas Wong



Introduction to the UNHRC

The United Nations Human Rights Council, established in 2006, is an intergovernmental United Nations body made up of 47 member states which are elected by the General Assembly to serve three year terms at a time. In their election, equitable geographical distribution is considered alongside the contributions of individual states to both the domestic and international safeguarding of human rights.

The mission of the HRC is to protect, promote, and—more importantly, to ensure—the human rights that every human on this planet is equally entitled to. The council is responsible for the investigation of allegations of human rights violations in individual UN Member States, as well as the addressing of thematic and systematic breaches of human rights around the globe—e.g. LGBT rights and the rights of ethnic minorities, whether such violations are isolated to a specific region, or are addressed as a whole on a global scale.



Background Information

Violent non-state actors (VNSAs) are defined as individuals or groups that act in a manner that is either wholly or partly independent of the governments of the state(s) wherein they function. They rely generally on the use of violence, threat, and corresponding instigation of fear to achieve their goals. This overlaps with and largely constitutes violent extremism, otherwise known as—in broader terms—“terrorism.”

The history of modern terrorism traces back to the 1790s, where the term was first used in reference to the actions of the revolutionaries who instigated the Reign of Terror. This was a period of the French Revolution during which the revolutionary government ordered thousands of mass public executions and arbitrary arrests—25,000 being executed in summary executions without trial and another 16,594 by guillotine. These actions of radical and arbitrary nature were carried out against any person suspected of disloyalty toward the revolution, and furthermore to command compliance with the revolution and the destruction of the French monarchy, hence the aforementioned instigation of fear as a component of VNSA ideology.

The term “terrorism” regained publicity in the 1970s as a result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Basque conflict in Spain, the Troubles of Northern Ireland, and again in the 2000s following the September 11th attacks in the United States, where four airplanes were hijacked by 19 militants affiliated with the Sunni Islamic extremist group, al-Qaeda, in a series of planned suicide-attacks that ultimately caused 2,753 civilian deaths—1,106 of them having yet to be identified.

This instance of violent extremism would go on to launch the Global War against Terrorism, or the War on Terror, a military campaign declared by the United States following these attacks. The “enemy” and corresponding target of this conflict, as defined by George W. Bush, the President of the US at the time, is a “radical network of terrorists and every government that supports them,” referring primarily to al-Qaeda and the states to which they were associated.

On the 7th of October, 2001, “Operation Enduring Freedom” was enacted, where President Bush’s announcement marked the commencement of a decade-spanning war against Afghanistan, whereby he ordered airstrikes that sought to target and thereafter destroy both al-Qaeda and the Taliban. This involved



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the capturing of leading figures of the organizations—most notably that of al-Qaeda founder Osama Bin Laden, and the destruction of terrorist training camps and headquarters in the region.

The Taliban is particularly notorious for their continuing human rights violations, particularly those pertaining to the rights of women and girls.

Drug Trafficking in Mexico (The Mexican Drug War)

Over the past two decades, the Mexican government has been at an impasse with local drug cartels—organizations that import, distribute, and traffic narcotics across the border between Mexico and the United States.

These cartels and the escalating violence surrounding their repression have been responsible for the homicides of over 300,000 people in Mexico since 2006, when war was waged on them shortly after Felipe Calderón, the President of Mexico from 2006 to 2012, took office. Since then, the US has provided billions of dollars in efforts at counterterrorism—involving the modernization of forensic technology and attempts at reforming the Mexican judicial system.

The US has also sought to terminate the illicit flow of drugs into the country through heightening security forces along the US-Mexico border.

The origins of this conflict lie in the arrest of Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, the founder of the first drug cartel, the Guadalajara Cartel, in 1989. He was charged with the kidnapping and murder of an undercover DEA (United States Drug Enforcement Agency) agent.

Boko Haram

Boko Haram, meaning literally “Western education is forbidden,” is an Islamic sectarian movement and terrorist organization that aims to overthrow and replace Nigeria’s government and secular state with a pure Islamic government, citing that the “Westernization” of Nigerian society is responsible for “Nigeria’s culture of corruption”.



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Boko Haram has historically been known for committing gross human rights abuses, including massacres, the burning down of entire villages, attacks on churches and schools, abduction, torture, sexual slavery, and suicide bombings—with many of the perpetrators recruited being female and under 18, with the youngest being just 7 years old.

Key Terms

Human Rights

The privileges that all humans are entitled to, no matter their status, race or religion.

Non-State Actor

An individual or an organization that operates independently from any form of government. Non-State Actors range from NGOs to paramilitary or militia groups.

Terrorism

The act of violence in order to strike fear or intimidate civilians or states, fueled by extreme political, religious or ideological beliefs.

Insurgency

An insurgency is a violent, armed rebellion against authority by a group of people who refuse to accept their government's power.

Extremism

Extremism is a fanatical point of view held especially with regards to politics or religion.

The War on Terror

The War on Terror was a crackdown on radical groups in the Middle East, spearheaded by the United States of America.

Jihad

Jihad, translated from Arabic as “struggle”, is a name given to a form of Muslim religious counter to the enemies of Islam. In extreme cases, it means religious war.



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The Mexican Drug War

The Mexican Drug War was yet another movement against violent non-state actors led by the United States. This was aimed at stopping drug cartels that resided in Mexico from trafficking drugs through the southern borders of the United States.

Boko Haram

Guiding Questions for Research

1. Should religious/ethnic groups face persecution for the actions of radical groups associated with them?
2. At what point does fidelity border on extremism?
3. Is there a solution to terrorism? What are some measures that can be taken by the international community to minimize its impact and safeguard the human rights of those it affects?
4. What actions has your country taken to combat violent extremism? What does/would it envision for the future and encourage in terms of a response from the international community?
5. What are the implications on civilians from intervention from the international community (e.g. the presence of US troops in Afghanistan and their full withdrawal in 2021)
 - i.e. What social consequences arise from the War on Terror?
6. Can a full inventory of human rights coexist under VNSA rule (i.e. Taliban rule in Afghanistan)? Is there capacity for compromise?

Further Research

In order to further understand the topic at hand, as well as make preparations with regards to your country's stance, we strongly recommend that delegates consult official UN records in order to get a better comprehension of how the UN and individual member states (if applicable) have dealt with violent non-state actors.

Additional resources and recommended reading to explore before the conference:

<https://www.iemed.org/publication/alliances-with-violent-non-state-actors-in-middle-east-conflicts-between-theory-and-practice/>

<https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/war-on-terror-timeline>



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<https://www.freiheit.org/failed-war-terror>

<https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/taliban-afghanistan>

<https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/mexicos-long-war-drugs-crime-and-cartels>

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20211008-us-mexico-seek-to-revamp-fight-against-drug-cartels>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16176&LangID=E>

https://www.dni.gov/nctc/groups/boko_haram.html

<https://www.aucegypt.edu/news/stories/terrorism-vs-extremism-are-they-linked>

<https://www.iemed.org/publication/alliances-with-violent-non-state-actors-in-middle-east-conflicts-between-theory-and-practice/>