

# **Victoria Shanghai Academy Model United Nations XI**

Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)

Topic: The Disarmament of Militant Non-State Actors in the Middle East

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## What is DISEC?

The Disarmament and International security committee was the first committee of the United Nations, and its main purpose is to resolve international security and demilitarization issues throughout the world, as the name suggests. Delegates will be presented with a topic concerning current world issues regarding threats to peace internationally, disarmament and management of illegal weapons and seeks solutions to these important issues. Delegates should work together as different countries (Delegations) to resolve conflicts and issues across the globe. (Kimberly) This year, delegates are presented with the Disarmament of Militant Non-State Actors in the Middle East, concerning terrorist and militant groups such as the Taliban and armed resistance groups.

## Introduction

Many non-state armed actors are still at large 20 Years after 9/11. Despite not having statehood, they have sufficient power to influence international relations and have a major influence in geographical and political areas, especially in the Middle East. Terrorist groups, insurgents and militia groups have become a part of society in many Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, Lebanon and Syria. The balance of power between governments and the Non-State armed actors have shifted dramatically due to the lack of organization in countries, leading to violent geopolitical conflicts, as many Non-State armed actors have the military capability to challenge state authority, and most Non-State actors have the ability to impose threatening consequences violently. (Darwich) Therefore, it is crucial that the member nations work together to disarm Militant Non-State actors.

Since then, various insurgent, terrorist, and militia groups have become a major feature of countries such as Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Libya. Currently, many Non-State actors are armed and ready and play a major role in almost every recent humanitarian and political crisis that we have faced over the past few decades. (Darwich) Currently, these Violent Non-State actors are a threat and a challenge to face, especially for weaker countries in the middle east.

Due to this nuisance, many economical and political crises have ended in disaster, especially due to the armaments that threaten countries, and the worst thing is that they live in society-Drug cartels, gangs are all responsible for killings and the dark underworld that lies beneath us. Therefore, it is essential that the complete disarmament of these groups is complete.

## Key terms

**Non State Actor:** Any organisation that is not a state. In the context of this committee, the term refers to terrorist organisations and armed political groups. (Clapham)

**Disarmament:** “the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programmes.” (IAWG 27)



**Demobilization:** The controlled discharge of individuals from militaries and non-state actor organisations. (IAWG 27)

**Reinsertion:** The short-term process of assisting former combatants during demobilisation by providing them with food, clothing, shelter, medical access, vocational education e.t.c. The process can last for up to a year. (IAWG 27)

**Reintegration:** The social and economic process in which former combatants fully re-enter civil society as civilians and are gain a stable income and livelihood. This process occurs at the local level and takes place over years, and often requires external assistance to fully complete. (IAWG 27)

## History

The rise of non-state actors in the Middle East first began with the humiliating defeat of the Arabs against the Israelis in the Six-Day War of 1967 (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Palestine Liberation Organization”). The Palestinians, disgruntled, flocked to the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the PLO gradually became the representative of the Palestinians. Militant voices within the PLO grew, and starting from the late 1960s the PLO began waging guerrilla warfare on the Israelis. The PLO gradually shifted from a policy of warfare to terrorism, inspired by the terrorism during the Algerian War of Liberation and 1947-49 Palestinian War (Zume). They began using high profile attacks such as plane hijackings and bombings against the Israelis and Westerners.

During the early 1970s, Maronite Christian militias such as the Phalange in Lebanon began confronting the PLO, which was at the time based there. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Palestine Liberation Organization”, Zume, Kingston, “Lebanon: Extremism and Terrorism”) This resulted in a series of escalations, leading to the Lebanese Civil War. During this period of chaos, the Iranians developed and trained the Islamic Jihad Organisation (IJO), which conducted a series of bombings against US bases in Lebanon. (“Lebanon: Extremism and Terrorism”) The IJO eventually was replaced by Hezbollah, which pledged allegiance to Iran. After the Taif Agreement and the return of democratic elections, Hezbollah has consistently been represented in the Lebanese government.

In Iran, during the 1970s, unrest was rampant as the shah prevented legitimate opposition and prices skyrocketed. (Zume, Afary) Religious Marxist organisations such as Mojāhedīn-e Khalq and Fedā’īyān-e Khalq began using violent and subversive acts to protest the shah’s rule. The organisations remained antagonistic to the new government after the 1979 revolution. Other terrorist organizations assassinated top government officials.

Meanwhile, in Turkey, left-wing radicals under Abdullah Öcalan formed the Kurdistan Workers’ Party in 1978, which waged a guerrilla war in southeast Turkey in the name of Kurdish self-determination. Öcalan went to Syria to form relationships with Palestinian non-state actors in 1979. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK)”)



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During the late 1980s and 1990s, leftist and secular terrorist organisations gradually lost ground or made amends with the states they were fighting (Zume). The PLO gradually softened, accepting Israel's right to exist in 1988. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Palestine Liberation Organization", " Hamas") In 1993, the PLO and Israel signed the Oslo Accords, in which Israel would retreat to its pre-1967 borders and the PLO and Israel agreed to collaborate in setting up a Palestinian government. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "two-state solution") The PPK also became more moderate, calling for autonomy instead of full independence. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)") After Öcalan's imprisonment in 1999, the PPK was sharply curtailed. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)", McHugh)

Various more fundamentalist organisations came to fill the gap. In 1987, during the intifada (uprising against Israel), various members of the Muslim Brotherhood and religious ex-PLO members formed Hamas. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, " Hamas") Acting against other Palestinian organisations at the time, it gained the ire of many secular-leaning Palestinians. Al-Qaeda was also formed in the late 1980s by Osama Bin Laden to fight Soviet Troops. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "al-Qaeda") In 1996 it was allowed to operate freely under Taliban rule.

In one of the deadliest terrorist acts to date, al-Qaeda hijacked 4 planes, killing almost 3,000 (Bergen). This pushed terrorism in the Middle East into the international spotlight. Al-Qaeda, unlike many other groups, operated on an international scale. Because of the deadly attack, the United States asked the Taliban government to extradite all al-Qaeda members (Witte). The Taliban rebuffed the demands, and the US chose to retaliate by invading Afghanistan, embroiling it in a 20-year long war which resulted in the Taliban remaining in control.

Various non-state actors have been involved in Syria from the beginning of the Syrian Civil War. From 2012, the Syrian government began getting aid from Hezbollah, and in late 2012 Hezbollah began sending its own soldiers to fight on behalf of Assad, sending 15,000 men in total as of 2015. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Syrian Civil War", The Economist) Al-Qaeda also became involved in the Syrian Civil War in 2013 via its affiliate the Al-Nursa front. As secular rebel forces diminished in power, more hardline Islamist groups began leading the Syrian rebellion force. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant")

In April 2013, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, announced his intention to unite with the Nursah Front and renamed his organisation the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant") The Nursah Front rejected the request for unification, but Baghdadi decided to invade Syria and fight the Nursah Front. ISIL captured Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, in June 2014. That same month, ISIL declared itself as the caliphate, with Baghdadi as the caliph (i.e. one of the successors to Prophet Mohammad), and began referring to itself as the "Islamic State". (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant", "Caliph")



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In September 2014, the United States launched an alliance with the Kurds living in the area, as well as various Gulf State nations, to slow and defeat al-Qaeda's advance. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant") From 2015 onwards, the group began losing ground, and by March 2019, the final Syrian village under ISIS control, Al-Bāghūz, finally fell to US-Kurdish forces, and Baghdadi himself committed suicide in Idlib, Syria.

### **Key states and non-state actors:**

#### **Hezbollah:**

Hezbollah is a Shi'ite political party and militant non-state actor based in Lebanon. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Hezbollah") Its main enemies are Israel and the United States, and it has been linked to a wide variety of suicide attacks since the 1980s. (Counter Extremism Project, "Hezbollah") Hezbollah has yet to accept a ceasefire or peace proposal from Israel.

Hezbollah has strong affiliations with the Iranian and Syrian governments. (Counter Extremism Project, "Hezbollah") The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IGRC), the main section of Iran's army, supplies up to \$700 million a year, as well as weapons, supplies, rockets and fighters. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IGRC)", Counter Extremism Project, "Hezbollah", Karam) Hezbollah has used its military strength to help prop up the Syrian government in the Syrian civil war.

Hezbollah also funds itself through criminal activities overseas, especially when funding from Iran is tight. (Levitt) It has been involved in cocaine trafficking, money laundering, usage of counterfeit money, and intellectual property. (Levitt, Counter Extremism Project, "Hezbollah") Hezbollah publicly denies this and claims that its funding is entirely from Iran. (Eafizadeh)

Though Hezbollah was meant to be disarmed along with other Lebanese militias after the signing of the Ta'if agreement, the exact opposite has happened. ("Taif accords") Hezbollah is instead one of the strongest non-state actors in the world, boasting 100,000 trained fighters, thanks to Iranian supplies. (AP) It has an arsenal of about 130,000 rockets, which it used most notably in the 2006 Hezbollah-Israel war, where it fired 4,000 rockets into Israeli territory (Human Rights Watch, Shaikh and Williams) The rockets were acquired from Russia, Iran and Syria. Overall, its military strength is comparable to that of a middle power in Europe and is stronger than Lebanon's military. (Blanford and Saab, Dettmer)

Unlike most other violent non-state actors, Hezbollah is heavily involved in welfare and political affairs. (Counter Extremism Project, "Hezbollah") Hezbollah currently holds 2 positions out of 24 in the current Lebanese cabinet and 13 seats in the Lebanese parliament. (Azar, Haddad) It also operates various educational, healthcare facilities, and charities across south Lebanon as an alternative to state resources. (Counter Extremism Project, "Hezbollah") Hezbollah also has strong connections with local NGOs and uses NGOs as disguises for its military activities and as front organisations. (Counter Extremism Project, "Hezbollah in Lebanon")



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One of the challenges to demilitarising Hezbollah is its public support. Because of its social programs, it has the support of many Lebanese living in the country. As of 2014, 86% of Lebanese Shi'ite Muslims had a favourable opinion of Hezbollah, compared to just 13% with an unfavourable opinion. (Pew Research Center) In Lebanon overall, Hezbollah had a 41% approval rating. In 2014, 62.6% of Maronite Christians in Lebanon felt that they were protected by Hezbollah from ISIS. (teleSUR)

### **PKK:**

The Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, is a Kurdish independence movement whose goal is for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)") Run by Abdullah Öcalan, the PKK is a supporter of democratic autonomy, an ideology espoused by libertarian socialist Murray Bookchin, though in reality, it has established one-party rule via the YPG. (Leezenberg)

The PKK earns about \$50 million a year by taxing smugglers and merchants. (Counter Extremism Project, "Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)") It has also made money by selling illicit drugs, which has brought it into conflict against rival non-state actor Hezbollah.

The PKK has been responsible for the deaths of around 30,000 Turkish security force members and civilians. (Counter Extremism Project, "Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)") It has used tactics such as assassinations, car bombs, and abductions.

The Yekitiyên Parastina Gel (YPG) is a Syrian-based Kurdish movement which is aligned with the PKK, and is the dominant force in the (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)", Lezenberg, Casagrande) It has been instrumental in assisting US efforts to defeat ISIS in Syria, but it has also established one party rule over north Syria. (Lezenberg, Casagrande) Turkey and some locals call the YPG terrorists, claiming that they have contributed to ethnic cleansing in the area. (Casagrande)

The PKK has been embroiled in peace talks with Turkey for some time, but a substantial ceasefire agreement has not yet come. Most recently, Öcalan signed a peace treaty with the Turkish government on the behalf of the PKK in 2013, rejecting "armed resistance" for "democratic struggle". (Krajeski) However, in 2015, two members of the Turkish police force were attacked. (IPAnews) Suspicion immediately went to the PKK, and Turkish leader Tayyip Erdogan ended the ceasefire between Turkey and the PKK.

### **ISIS:**

ISIS is an extreme jihadist Sunni militarist group. (Crooke) ISIS follows the doctrine of Salafism - that Muslims must emulate the life of the Prophet Mohammad - and Wahhabism - a new doctrine first introduced by Abd al-Wahhab which involved the derision of any form of honouring the dead as Christian idolatry, that all Muslims were to pledge their allegiance to the caliph or face capital punishment, and the legitimisation of the jihad. Due to ISIS's extreme ideology, it is enemies with virtually all state actors and non state actors involved in the Middle East. (Wikipedia Contributors, "ISIS")



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Despite ISIS losing virtually all of its territory in Iraq and Syria, it has declared wilayas (provinces) in Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Turkey, Central Africa, Mali, Niger, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, and the North Caucasus, and operates in those areas (Counter Extremism Project, “ISIS”). Most prominently, Boko Haram, a Nigerian terrorist group, and ISIS-K, an Afghanistan-based terrorist group responsible for the Kabul airport bombing in August 2021, are affiliated with ISIS. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant”, BBC News)

ISIS was notorious for its extreme brutality towards the people under its rule, committing various crimes against humanity, including massacres, beheadings, usage of child soldiers, torture, and mass sexual abuse. (Larson) The United States declared that ISIS was committing genocide against Yazidis, Shi’ite Muslims, and Christians. (Labott and Kopan) ISIS used terror as a tool for subjugating its populace, and used videos of beheadings as propaganda. (Larson, Mullen)

In February 2020, ISIS declared that it had launched a new phase of insurgencies, and that it would be focusing on attacking Israel. (AFP and TOI Staff)

### **Hamis:**

Hamis is a Palestinian Islamist liberation organisation currently occupying the Gaza Strip. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Hamis”)It is a clear opposer of the Isralien government with armed resistance, including suicide bombing and armed conflicts, which is currently suspended with a ceasefire. However, it is internationally recognized as a terrorist organization.

### **Al-Qaeda:**

Al-Qaeda is a Violent-Non state actor, and are classified as Isralien extremists. Most famously known for orchestrating the 9/11 attacks on the world trade center, which was organized by former leader Osama bin Laden. Al-Qaeda is an organization which hopes to unite the organizations listed above together to reform the Isralien Empire, and has a strong connection with the Taliban. (“Al Qaeda”)

### **Taliban:**

The Taliban (Referred to as the Islamic state of Afghanistan) is a militant group mainly in Afghanistan, and a conservative Islamic group. (NDTV) In Mid-2021, they seized power after the US backed government (and US troops) slowly started to trickle out of the country, after the 20-year conflict. They are currently controlling Afghanistan as their central government. The Taliban continues to allow al-Qaeda to freely operate within its borders. (Joscelyn)

### **Iran:**

Iran considers Hamis and Hezbollah not as terrorist organisations but as national liberation movements. (Malakoutikhah) Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamene also explicitly expressed support for Hezbollah. (bin Solomon)



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Iran's Quds force is a branch of the IGRC. (Austin) The Quds force is a subdivision of the IGRC and has ties with many terrorist organisations and militias in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine, which it uses to further its own goals and fight on Iran's behalf. Unlike a conventional military force, training militias is cheap and allows Iran to exert military influence over the entire Middle East. Because of its funding operations, the Quds Force has been designated a terrorist organisation by the US, Canada, Israel, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. (Wikipedia Contributors, "Quds Force") The IGRC itself has been designated as a terrorist organisation by the United States, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. (CIA, Reuters Staff)

Iran spends a significant amount of money in funding various militias. Every year, it spends up to USD\$700 million on Hezbollah, USD\$600 million on Iraqi Shi'ite militias, and USD\$50 million on Hamas. (Galestan, Karam, Levy)

### **Russia:**

Russia has been an avid user of Non-State actors in different global conflicts to achieve their goals. Although in public, Russia has banned many Violent Non-State actors, they have also secretly been having talks with different associations, including maintaining a diplomatic relationship. Therefore, Russia is openly opposed to these violent non-state actors, while maintaining their relationship with them.

### **USA:**

The United States has a list of 65 organizations which it considers as terrorist. This includes the PKK, Hamas, PLO, ISIS, Hezbollah, Houthis, and IRGC. (CIA) The United States works with other countries in order to "prevent, degrade, detect, and respond" to terrorism. (United States Department of State, "Countering Terrorism") The United States established the Bureau of Counterterrorism in response to terrorist threats.

The Bureau of Counterterrorism has established numerous counterterrorist programs, the most important being:

The Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program is the largest US provider of antiterrorist training, working with 90,000 security officers from 154 countries. (Bureau of Counterterrorism) It teaches a wide spectrum of counterterrorism skills via training courses, seminars, partnerships with countries, and equipment, and emphasises the importance of human rights.

The Countering the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) program collaborates with the Department of State and other US departments to identify terrorists, freeze their assets, and place sanctions on them. It also detects illicit terrorist funding, and helps states build the frameworks necessary to prevent terrorist financing.

The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) is a global forum consisting of 30 countries and the EU. It discusses long-term strategies for mitigating terrorism. It has raised \$200 million over 10 years to



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strengthen rule of law, and helped create a global anti-terrorist strategy. The GCTF works closely with the UN and is a mechanism for implementing the UN's Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) assists governments in West and North Africa to increase military and law enforcement counterterrorism capabilities, enhancing border security against terrorists, countering terrorist financing, and reducing sympathy for terrorism.

In September 10, 2014, in response to the threat of ISIS, the United States formed the Global Coalition to fight ISIS, a broad coalition of 83 countries from across the world. (United States Department of State, "About Us – The Global Coalition To Defeat ISIS", Office of the Spokesperson) The Global Coalition was able to kill Baghdadi in 2019, liberate the entire ISIS caliphate, and provide assistance to victims of ISIS. (Office of the Spokesperson)

### **Israel:**

Israel has been the main hot spot for violent non-state actors. It is the birthplace, as well as the "base" of many of these organizations, including Hamas, and the supportive (Israeli) Al-Qaeda. Israel has faced some complications with Non-State actors, but has openly stated that some of these non-state actors have "been a nuisance".

## **Guiding Questions**

- **How will you get non-state actors to agree to disarmament?** This can be achieved via monetary compensation or a compromise with their ideals. However, some non-state actors such as ISIS are not open to negotiations. Signing a ceasefire or peace deal can also lead to disgruntled members defecting to more hard-line organisations. (Taddonio)

- **How long will the disarmament process take?** Non-state actors may not necessarily accept a rapid demobilisation process, and there are logistical issues regarding the collection and destruction of firearms collected during the disarmament process. It is also important to ensure that the collection sites are secure.

- **How will peace be maintained during the disarmament process?** Many non-state actors are at war. Ceasefire deals are necessary for disarmament to proceed. Another issue is making sure that no fighting erupts during disarmament. Note that DISEC does *not* have the power to send peacekeepers into areas and can only request the Security Council to do so.

- **How will former combatants of non-state actors be reintegrated into society?** As non-state actors demobilise, former members of their military rings will return to civilian life. However, many lack the resources to sustain their livelihoods and are anti-social, ending up in a life of crime, violence, alcohol, drugs, or all of them. Reintegrating former combatants involves mental health professionals, vocational programs, stable jobs and financial assistance.



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- **If non-state actors do not disband, how will the UN ensure that they do not buy firearms after disarmament?** Delegates need to ensure that all firearms collected during disarmament are destroyed (Peters). Delegates must also ensure non-state actors do not acquire firearms from legal or illegal markets.

- **Who pays for the disarmament and reintegration processes?**

### **Conclusion (What should you do)?**

Delegates should write a resolution that can fulfill the main purpose of this committee - to disarm Militant Non-State actors. Delegates should form blocs to write solutions and clauses that are effective and realistic, such as investigations into the root causes of armament flow into the organizations and the disbandment of such groups.

### **Further research links**

<https://www.unddr.org/un-ddr/> - The UN's site for information on already existing DDR protocols.

<https://www.unddr.org/the-iddrs/> - The Integrated DDR Standard (IDDRS), a framework of how DDR works

<https://www.counterextremism.com/> - The Counter Extremism Project, a good resource for finding more about certain terror groups



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