

Hilton 2020

Legal Political

Committee Overview

This committee will be run Harvard Style, meaning that resolutions should only be written during the conference itself. It is suggested that each delegate write at least one position paper, which is the minimum requirement to win an award. However, we encourage delegates to write position papers on as many topics as possible to ensure that delegates are able to participate in all debates. **Electronic copies of position papers must be emailed to the chairs two days prior to the start of committee**

All delegates are expected to research ahead of time and come to committee with a basic understanding of every topic and their countries' policies. As the Legal Political Committee, we deal with issues primarily related to international law and justice. Even though some of our topics are specific to a region, similar issues exist worldwide. Finally, keep in mind that Model UN is not all about winning awards, so please don't make that your number one priority and enjoy the committee!

Committee Description

Violence Against Environmental Activists in Latin America

Forced Labor in Uzbekistan

Regulation of Money Laundering

Decriminalization of Domestic Violence in Russia

Chairs

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Hello delegates! My name is Jenny Li, and I'm a junior in Pittsford Mendon High School. This is my first time chairing and third year in Model UN. Aside from MUN, I participate in Science Olympiad and Math League in school. I also play violin and piano, practice Tae Kwon Do, and make art in my free time. We're very excited to meet you all, and feel free to contact us with any questions!

Hi delegates, my name is Isaac Gray and this is my first-time chairing, but I have been doing Model UN since freshman year. I am a Junior at Brighton High School where I run cross country, I also participate in many clubs such as Masterminds and DECA. Outside of school I play hockey and soccer and I am the captain of my Science Bowl Team. I can't wait to meet you all and have a great committee. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email us at any time.

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Violence Against Environmental Activists in Latin America



In recent years, violence against environmental defenders has spiked in Latin America. According to a 2019 Global Witness report, over two-thirds of global environmental defender murders occurred in Latin America. Specifically, Colombia was ranked the most dangerous country for environmental activists, with 64 killings. Countless other murders were reported in Brazil, Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala as well. However, these numbers are almost certainly an underestimate, as many other deaths go unrecorded.

As the global consumer demand for land and resources increases, extractive industries such as mining, farming, and others have been pressed into increasingly remote areas. Environmental defenders have been killed trying to stop illegal activities, business exchanges, or contract killings. In Latin America, justice systems and ineffective law enforcement do nothing to stop these businesses. As a result, only 10% of environmental defender murders lead to a conviction.

Many Latin American governments utilize their legal systems as ways to criminalize environmental defenders by labelling them as terrorists or enemies of the state or by implementing national laws. This legitimizes incidents against them and can ruin their reputations and decrease funding, preventing them from further activism. Furthermore, a disproportionate number of indigenous people make up the attacks against environmental defenders as businesses and government interests threaten their environment and ancestral land. Often, they are forced to leave their land because of pressure from global corporations. Thus, the failure of governments and businesses to act responsibly allows for crimes against environmental defenders.

In 2018, states in Latin America and the Caribbean passed the Escazú Accord, which ensures a safe space for environmental defenders to continue their activities without restrictions or threats. However, this is only the first step in reforming a pattern of disregard and conflict. The UN must further discuss how to best counter the spiral of violence against environmental defenders in Latin America.

What measures can be taken to prevent impunity from environmental crimes? How can other countries help take responsibility for products sourced from Latin America? How can we convince nations to implement laws and regulations without infringing on national sovereignty?

Sources:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/aug/05/environmental-activist-murders-double>

<https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/who-killing-latin-americas-environmentalists>

<https://news.mongabay.com/2019/08/latin-america-saw-most-murdered-environmental-defenders-in-2018/>

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Forced Labor in Uzbekistan



As one of the largest exporters of cotton worldwide, Uzbekistan utilizes a vast state-coordinated system of labor to accomplish this. Each year, they forcibly mobilize over a million citizens to produce cotton. Only after extensive foreign pressure did they begin to eliminate the use of forced child labor during cotton harvesting in 2014. The government has since made strong commitments in modernizing its cotton sector through privatization and other key reforms under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

Despite the previous attempt to eradicate forced labor in Uzbekistan's cotton sector, there are still many obstacles that remain. Though the state-mandated cotton quota was abolished in March, farmers are still forced to enter private contracts to produce a certain amount of cotton. According to a recent report by Uzbek Forum, the government continues to mobilize employees of public institutions and organizations to work, with the fear of job or benefit loss if they refuse. These people include employees of banks, local administrations, and government agencies.

Although the push for forced labor is not driven by the central government, they facilitate it on the local level. Furthermore, as farmers with labor shortages are not always able to employ laborers, they look to local authorities. As authorities are not likely to hold themselves accountable, the accountability system is not effective in prosecuting offenders or providing remedy to the laborers. Although the government has increased penalties for authorities using forced labor, they fail to conduct proper investigations that result in accountability for officials who direct forced labor.

Further progress on reform efforts such as these is also being delayed by the lack of civil freedoms. Reform efforts to grant civic freedoms, such as the freedom to form NGOs and independent trade unions, have also fallen behind. As of now, the government has only allowed one independent human rights NGO to obtain registration. However, as NGOs, unions, and civic advocates play a significant role in promoting transparency and accountability, there is a great need to guarantee basic civic freedoms to promote transparency.

How can the Uzbek government establish a fair recruitment system independent from the government? What steps can be taken to incentivise international brands and investors to create employment opportunities? How can the government strengthen their accountability system and ensure transparency?

Sources:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/25/forced-labor-persists-uzbekistans-cotton-fields>

<https://www.uzbekforum.org/uzbekistan-fair-recruitment-effective-accountability-needed-to-end-forced-labor-as-independent-labor-monitors-harassed-arbitrarily-detained/>

<https://freedomcollaborative.org/newsletter-archive/unfinished-work-in-the-fight->

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Regulation of Money Laundering



Money laundering is the process of making “dirty” money, or money obtained through illegal activities such as organized crime, look like it was made legally by running it through one or many shell companies to “clean” it. Shell companies are companies that only exist on paper, and money launderers use them to make it seem like the money was made legitimately through that company.

Money laundering has a massive impact on the global economy, with between 800 billion and 2 trillion dollars a year being laundered, causing countries in desperate need of that money to lose out. Though the UN has taken steps to try to curb money laundering, such as the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, these measures have not been as successful as they were intended to be.

The main barrier to reducing money laundering is that money laundering regulations vary wildly from country to country. This allows for the creation of money laundering havens, such as Cyprus and Kenya. Money laundering havens are countries that have low tax rates and offer anonymity to the people filing their taxes, making it much less likely for criminals to be caught.

Another barrier in decreasing money laundering is that the definition of money laundering has been expanded to the point where many non-money laundering crimes are now considered money laundering. This makes it substantially more difficult for organizations to combat money laundering; instead, they need to combat all crimes contained under its definition. If the international community ever wishes to put a stop to money laundering, they need to make discussing its regulation a top priority.

How can the UN effectively create uniform money laundering regulations among different nations that don't infringe on national sovereignty? How can the UN stop the creation and use of money laundering havens? In what ways can the UN help to change the definition of money laundering to make it easier to regulate specifically?

Sources:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/23/world/15-countries-named-as-potential-money-laundering-havens.html#:~:text=The%20listed%20countries%20and%20territories,the%20Philippines%2C%20Russia%2C%20St.>

<http://www.ft.lk/columns/Money-is-laundered-through-financial-institutions-as-well-as-non-financial-institutions/4-703754>

<http://www.imolin.org/imolin/gpml.html>

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Decriminalization of Domestic Violence in Russia



In Russia it is estimated that 40,000 women are victims of domestic violence daily and roughly 12,000 women die a year, making it one of the worst places for domestic violence in the world . These totals are conservative as a lot of domestic abuse goes unreported, but even with these numbers, Russia's domestic violence rate is 37 times that of the United States and 20 times that of the United Kingdom .

Despite the fact that Russia's domestic violence rates are astronomical, Russia decriminalized domestic violence in 2017 unless there is "significant bodily harm" (requiring a hospital visit). This means beatings that leave bruises, or even cause bleeding, are not criminal as long as they don't happen more once a year.

This law also stops police from being obligated to investigate violence, even if there is a hospital visit, women must collect evidence themselves. Even if a woman's case reaches court, most of the time the punishment is only a fine which can be paid for using a couples joint bank account, resulting in the victim losing money and making their abuser more likely to harm the victim in the future.

This crisis has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has caused Russians to be put under lockdown, and according to the UN secretary general Antonio Guterres, because of the strict isolation caused by lockdowns, many women are facing violence "where they should feel safest: in their own homes." According to multiple non-profits, Russia is no exception, as domestic violence cases have gone up 250%, while according to law enforcement, domestic violence has decreased 9%. This means that while violence is increasing, law enforcement is attempting to downplay its significance. Thus, the UN must act in a timely manner to stop this crisis.

How can the UN come up with a solution that allows victims to report their abuse without fear of retribution from their partner? What measures can we take to prevent abuse from happening especially during COVID lockdowns? How can the UN protect the health and wellbeing of Russians without infringing on national sovereignty?

Sources:

<https://meduza.io/en/feature/2020/07/17/domestic-violence-surge>

<https://newhumanist.org.uk/articles/5326/what-happened-after-russia-decriminalised-domestic-abuse>

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2017/01/27/russian-parliament-decriminalizes-domestic-violence/97129912/>