

Hilton 2022 Chair Letter

UN Women - United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Committee Overview

Effects of Overturning Roe v. Wade in the United States
Sexual Violence Against Women in the Ukrainian War
Forced Sterilization of Minority Women
Discrimination Against Women in Syria

Committee Description:

This committee will be run Harvard style, meaning that resolutions cannot be written until the committee is in session. As such, any delegate found to be using pre-written clauses will be disqualified from committee awards, and their resolution(s) will not be accepted. Delegates must write at least one position paper to be considered for an award, although we encourage participants to write as many quality papers as possible. Position papers must be emailed to both chairs before the start of committee.

The focus of UN Women is to promote gender equality and empower women around the world without infringing upon national sovereignty. Delegates should be well informed on their country's policies on the topics and should stick to them throughout the conference. Remember to have some fun with this; Model UN is about more than just awards!

ABOUT US:

Maureen Zhang

Hello delegates! My name is Maureen Zhang, and I'm a junior at Pittsford Sutherland High School. This is my third year of Model UN and my second time chairing. Outside of MUN, I enjoy writing for the school newspaper, playing the violin, and serving on my school's Executive Council. Please feel free to reach out to either Lina or I with any questions. I'm looking forward to a wonderful conference with everyone!

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Lina Yang

Hi everyone! I'm Lina Yang, a junior at Pittsford Sutherland High School. This is my first time chairing and my third year of Model UN. I'm the treasurer of my school's Executive Student Council and a co-vice-president of Science Olympiad, alongside Maureen! I like watching baking videos and playing the flute. I can't wait to meet you all and see what our committee accomplishes!

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Topic #1: Effects of Overturning Roe v. Wade in the United States

Roe v. Wade was a landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973, which ruled that the U.S. Constitution protected a pregnant woman's liberty to abortion. However, in June 2022, the 50-year precedent was overturned. As a result, several state legislatures passed restrictions on abortion and imposed punishments for having an abortion.

Some states have defined the start of pregnancy as the moment of fertilization, encompassing not only fetuses but also embryos and even fertilized eggs. This degree of protection has created a legal quagmire with potentially terrifying ramifications. Criminalizing abortion has opened the door for women to be charged with murder or manslaughter for miscarriages over which they have no control.

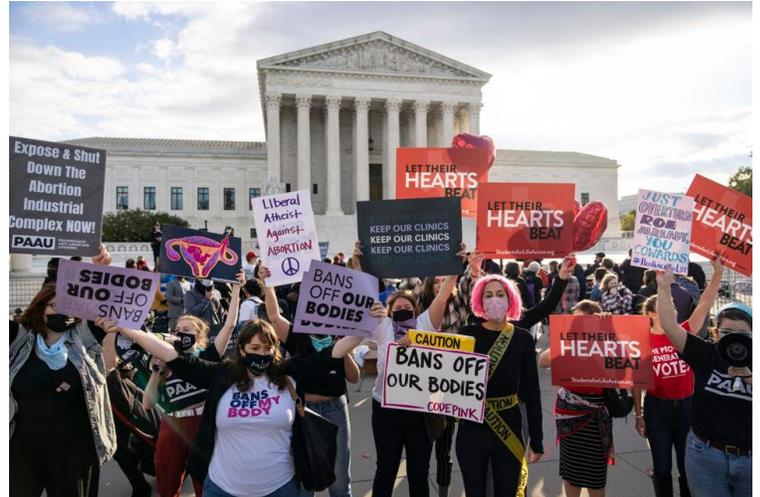
Contrarily, some claim that banning abortions is beneficial for women. They believe that abortions undermine the beauty of motherhood and carry the message that children are a hindrance to a woman's dreams and that life is not a blessing. They also assert that abortions allow men to get off consequence-free after having fathered a child and avoid the responsibilities of fatherhood. Some state that

Post-Roe policies could transform America into a country that does not cast judgment on women who become pregnant. Instead, one that embraces them with love and compassion.

A challenge for anti-abortion legislatures is the growing use of abortion pills, which allows women to manage their abortions in a two-pill regimen without the help of a physician that would be prosecuted under an abortion ban. Because pregnancies that end in a natural miscarriage are often indistinguishable from those terminated with a pill, women's private data and the information they share with their medical staff may be weaponized by prosecutors. Even if the woman is not criminally liable, she may still be dragged through the law enforcement process as part of prosecutors' efforts to investigate whether her pregnancy was illegally terminated.

Honor killings are a clear violation of women's human rights and countries are bound to protect women from such violations. The UN should work to find solutions that would prevent such brutality against women for having an abortion.

How could the UN protect women's rights regarding abortion without infringing on national sovereignty? What can be implemented to prevent unsafe abortions? How could UN Women ensure that abortion trial prosecutors don't invade a woman's privacy or increase distrust of law enforcement?



Supreme Court Overturns Roe v. Wade; States Can Ban Abortion

<https://apnews.com/article/abortion-supreme-court-decision-854f60302f21c2c35129e58cf8d8a7b0>

Roe v. Wade: What is US Supreme Court Ruling on Abortion?

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-54513499>

Overturning of Roe v. Wade Abortion Law a 'Huge Blow to Women's Human Rights' Warns Bachelet

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/06/1121312>

Topic #2: Sexual Violence Against Women in the Ukrainian War

The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine was a significant escalation in the Russo-Ukrainian War that began in 2014, with horrific repercussions for the rights of Ukrainian women. The Executive Director of the United Nations gender agency warned the Security Council that the mounting reports of sexual violence in Ukraine are raising “all the red flags” about a potential protection crisis. As of early June, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has recorded 124 accounts of sexual atrocities from the Ukraine warzone.

Furthermore, La Strada Ukraine has received calls reporting group sexual assaults and cases where family members are coerced into watching acts of sexual violence. These survivors of sexual violence and the estimated 265,000 pregnant Ukrainian women present at the start of the invasion also fail to receive adequate healthcare, due to damage to medical facilities and a lack of medical personnel in warzones. The stigma around sexual crimes in Ukraine prevents women from speaking out, especially in rural areas.



In an effort to protect victims of sexual violence in warzones such as Ukraine, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, recently signed the Framework of Cooperation on the Prevention and Response to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in May 2022. This framework strengthens accountability and rule of law for acts of sexual violence and addresses conflict-related sexual trafficking. However, Ukrainian officials still have a long road to justice for victims of sexual violence. For example, the first trial of a Russian soldier accused of rape did not occur until June 2022, despite hearing from victims as early as March 2022.

Moreover, the Russian invasion of Ukraine led to Europe’s largest refugee crisis since World War II. It is especially concerning that 90% of those who have left Ukraine are women and children. These women are physically and psychologically weakened by the time they cross the border, and are highly vulnerable to trafficking and abuse. For those remaining in the warzone, Ukraine’s highly patriarchal culture results in women receiving little government support for gender violence and discrimination. Unfortunately, the absence of concrete data on sexual violence and the difficulties of intervening in war zones prevent Ukrainian women from receiving the support they urgently need.

How can the UN ensure that the Framework of Cooperation on the Prevention and Response to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence is fully implemented in Ukraine? What can the UN do to ensure that perpetrators of sexual violence are held accountable without infringing upon national sovereignty? Should the UN attempt to reform Ukraine’s patriarchal culture that creates a stigma around discussing sexual crimes?

Sexual Violence ‘Most Hidden Crime’ Being Committed Against Ukrainians, Civil Society Representative Tells Security Council

<https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14926.doc.htm>

Ukraine: Apparent War Crimes in Russia-Controlled Areas

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/03/ukraine-apparent-war-crimes-russia-controlled-areas>

New Report by UN Human Rights Shows the Shocking Toll of the War in Ukraine

<https://ukraine.un.org/188268-new-report-un-human-rights-shows-shocking-toll-war-ukraine>

Topic #3: Forced Sterilization of Minority Women

Coercive sterilization with the goal of artificially shaping the characteristics of the human species is a practice dating back to the 19th century. Forced sterilization was carried out and incentivized in many countries, including Germany, Japan, and the United States, in the 20th century. Even today, indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, such as the Roma people living in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia, are victims of coerced sterilization.

Hospitals carrying out forced sterilization often present women with consent forms for sterilization during labor and in severe pain, without informing women about the procedure, its permanency, or alternative options for contraception. Women are even misled into believing the consent forms are to authorize a cesarean section or emerge from a cesarean section to learn that they were involuntarily sterilized. In India, sterilization camps have been created to rush illiterate women through the sterilization process.



Other tactics of misinformation include using complex medical terminology or an unfamiliar language, misleading women into believing sterilization will be life-saving, or asking women to sign barely legible consent forms.

Victims of coercive sterilization seldom report these violations out of fear of retribution, shame, or lack of knowledge of medical ethics. In some countries, including Uzbekistan, women have been required to provide a “sterilization certificate” in order to work or receive healthcare. Especially in countries where coerced sterilization is condoned by the government and carried out in public hospitals, victims have no legal means of obtaining a remedy or compensation.

Coercive sterilization remains a widespread practice into the 21st century, but many countries that no longer have eugenics laws have failed to properly compensate victims. For instance, the Slovak government refuses to accept responsibility for forced sterilization practices, despite calls from the UN. In the United States, where more than half of the states had eugenics law in the 20th century, many victims have yet to receive apologies, compensation, or legal aid. To prevent further violations of the right to reproductive choice, the UN must take immediate action to protect women who are currently at-risk of being forcibly sterilized and encourage nations to provide reparations to women who have been sterilized against their will in the past.

What resources can the UN provide to protect women from coerced sterilization? What can be done to discourage nations from condoning forced sterilization without infringing upon national sovereignty? How can the UN incentivize countries to compensate victims of eugenics law?

Against Her Will

<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/62505651-2c58-4c12-a610-46499e645a2c/against-her-will-20111003.pdf>

Forced Sterilization of Women As Discrimination

<https://publichealthreviews.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40985-017-0060-9>

Eliminating Forced, Coercive and Otherwise Involuntary Sterilization

https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/201405_sterilization_en.pdf

Topic #4: Discrimination Against Women in Syria

After years of tension between government forces and civilian protests, Syria descended into a civil war in 2011. As the chaos worsened, various extremist jihadist organizations— like ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra — became involved. They exercised their control in northern Syria amidst a crumbling government. As a result, women had several restrictions that violated their human rights and limited their ability to carry out essential daily activities.

Such organizations applied their interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law, by enforcing restrictive policies. For example, travel limitations for women, requiring women and girls to wear headscarves and full-length robes, and threatening to punish those who do not comply. Regulations imposed on women have a far-reaching impact beyond daily activities, affecting their ability to obtain an education, provide for their families, and procure necessities crucial to survival.



Restrictions established by the Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS never applied solely to men and boys. While unjustified limitations on dress and freedom of movement for anyone violate their rights and should be rescinded, restrictions that apply to and affect women are disproportionately discriminatory. Because of limitations on movement and ability to work, women have become wholly dependent on male family members.

It is important to note that the restrictions imposed in Syria are often defended by organizations using religion. For example, the Islamic State (ISIS) rationalizes all of its actions by citing Islamic scripture and the precedent of Mohammed. The first caliph of the Islamic State, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, was a scholar of the Quran. He received a Ph.D. from Saddam University in Islamic studies and built a reputation for knowing the scripture. Moreover, over 75% of the Syrian population practices Islam, a large portion of which practice a stricter interpretation of the Quran due to occupation from extremist groups.

The situation for women and girls in Syria is worse than ever before as they face enormous challenges, including mounting risks to their health and safety. Ongoing hostilities, displacement, drought, an unrelenting pandemic, and economic collapse, are driving the ever-needing humanitarian aid in Syria. It is essential for the UN to step up efforts to ensure that women's rights are enforced, their lives are free from violence, and that women can participate in finding a sustainable path forward.

What can be done to reduce violence and restrictions on Syrian women without infringing upon national sovereignty? What could UN Women do to provide education and advocate for more opportunities for women? How can the UN enhance women's rights in Syria without overstepping religious and cultural boundaries?

Syria: Extremists Restricting Women's Rights

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/01/13/syria-extremists-restricting-womens-rights>

Why Has the Syrian War Lasted 11 years?

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35806229>

Isis Rebels Declare 'Islamic State' in Iraq and Syria

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28082962>