

# United Nations Human Rights Council

The United Nations Human Rights Council represents the world's commitment to the empowerment of all people, and the promotion and protection of human rights. This international body's main goals are to enhance equality, fight discrimination, strengthen the rule of law, implement widespread democracy and protect human rights, especially in times of conflict.

UNHRC is run Harvard Style, which means that delegates are not allowed to have pre-written resolutions. Draft resolutions and bulleted lists are also not allowed; any delegate found to be in possession of these will be ineligible to win an award. To be considered for an award, delegates must write four position papers; it is highly recommended that all four topics are researched thoroughly anyways to best enjoy committee proceedings. It is also recommended to be familiar with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Please remember that Model United Nations is not a competition, and focus should be on diplomacy, not awards. Make sure to research thoroughly to enjoy committee proceedings. Position papers will only be accepted on the first day of committee and must be printed or emailed to either of the chairs before the second day of committee. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask. Good luck and remember to have fun!

## Chairs

### Carly Raspante

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Hello, delegates! My name is Carly Raspante and I am excited to be chairing again! I am the Vice President of Penfield High School's Model UN club. As a senior, I have been involved in Model UN for three years. Outside of MUN, I participate in various school clubs, such as Chemistry Club and Science Olympiad, train and ride horses, and volunteer at several local organizations. Feel free to email me with any questions or send me position papers before the second day of committee. I look forward to seeing all of you in committee!

### Seamus Hogan

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My name is Seamus Hogan, and this will be my first time chairing. I am a junior at Geneva High School, and I am Vice President of our Model UN Club. At Geneva High, I participate in Ski Club, Hip-Hop Club, and the Service Learning Program. I am student liaison to the Geneva Reads board of directors, and I am on the Geneva City Transportation Committee. Feel free to contact me anytime with any and all questions, I am very excited to see you all in committee!

## Forced Eviction of Slum Dwellers in India

As India's metropolitan centers have increasingly become targets for commercial development, conflict between contractors and local slum dwellers has reached a fervor. Reports of violent forced evictions and mass displacement of impoverished peoples command the attention of international human rights organizations.

In densely populated cities such as Mumbai and Delhi, sizeable percentages of residents live in slums, or highly concentrated and decrepit urban housing. New commercial development projects in urban areas are often required by the government to provide alternative housing for the urban peoples they displace; however, many of these mandates include caveats meant to disqualify large segments of the urban population, thus leaving innumerable people homeless and desperate. For example, in preparation for the 2010 Commonwealth Games, NGOs estimate upwards of 200,000 Delhiites were forcibly evicted from their homes in order to clear space for parks and fountains.

This is a common narrative in India -- forced evictions are often justified as a public service, although they scarcely provide protection for socioeconomically disadvantaged and vulnerable peoples, especially women and children. The consequences of forced eviction are evident -- homelessness, extreme poverty, and immediate threats to public health -- and can seldom be justified from a human rights standpoint. However, powerful business interests stand in the way of progress in this area, and the Indian government has acted largely in direct contradiction to their written law.

*How can the human rights of India's urban population be upheld in the face of powerful opposition? What can be done to provide slum dwellers with adequate housing and humane living conditions? When does a nation state have the right to evict and displace its citizens? How can the United Nations combat forced evictions worldwide?*

### Allianz: India's Urban Migration Crisis

[https://www.allianz.com/en/about\\_us/open-knowledge/topics/demography/articles/111018-indias-urban-migration-crisis.html/](https://www.allianz.com/en/about_us/open-knowledge/topics/demography/articles/111018-indias-urban-migration-crisis.html/)

### The Guardian: Battle over Mumbai's Slums

<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/mar/11/mumbai-slums-developers-profits-residents>

### United Nations: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

# Guantanamo Bay

As of April 2016, the Guantanamo Bay detention camp in Cuba houses 80 detainees, some of whom have been imprisoned for over a decade due to indefinite detention without trial. International organizations have therefore begun to pressure the United States to release or charge its detainees at Guantanamo. Though this issue has become increasingly prevalent, little progress has been possible due to the Human Rights Council's lack of access to current prisoners.

Human rights abuses perpetrated by the United States in the Guantanamo Bay detention facility have recently gained attention due to the extreme interrogation tactics. The United States has gotten away with the harsh treatment of detainees because of the government's request to hold inmates without the application of US or international law. Furthermore, the cruel treatment of the prisoners completely undermines the United States' internal values and authority to find solutions for international human rights violations.

Ill-treatment of detainees includes "prolonged isolation, extended interrogations, hooding during transportation, and using individual phobias to induce stress". Aside from the inhumane treatment, prisoners have also been deprived of certain needs, such as "food, drinkable water, sunlight, and fresh air." The decline in mental and physical health of Guantanamo Bay detainees has led to numerous suicide attempts and hunger strikes.

In November 2015, the Obama administration was preparing a plan to move prisoners at Guantanamo to the United States. An updated version of the National Defense Authorization Act was passed in Congress, which reinforced the ban on torture, and stated that ill-treatment will not be the policy of the United States. However, this was soon vetoed by Obama. Since then, a small team of the Department of Defense has been dispatched to find suitable prisons to relocate Guantanamo inmates.

*Should the Guantanamo Bay detention facility be closed? How can this prison be properly closed? If not, how can international or US law be applied to prevent ill-treatment of inmates? How can detainees be guaranteed a fair trial? What kind of procedures could be enacted to prevent ill-treatment of detainees at Guantanamo, in other US prisons, and in international facilities?*

## **Amnesty USA: Guantanamo and Illegal Detention**

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/security-and-human-rights/guantanamo>

## **LA Times: Human Rights Group Calls for Closing Guantanamo Bay Prison in Cuba**

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-gitmo-detainee-rights-20151110-story.html>

## **UN News Centre: UN Human Rights Chief Urges US to Close Guantanamo Detention Centre**

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44572#.V138TigrLIU>

## Palm Oil Crisis

Since 1990, palm oil consumption has quintupled, making palm oil the product of a multibillion dollar industry. Because of its versatility of use in thousands of products, palm oil is a valued commodity. However, due to its growth in popularity, attention has recently been drawn to the human rights violations associated with the industry. Because of the financial benefits, governments often offer inhabited lands to better their economy. When land is cleared in preparation for the development of a plantation, businesses within the palm oil industry commit acts of violence against indigenous people to remove them from the land.

Further violations arise in plantations, which disrupt the way of life of indigenous communities and force most indigenous people to become plantation workers. Children are also forced to work long hours collecting and carrying fruit, weeding fields, and working in dangerous workplaces while rarely receiving pay. Palm oil industries face little persuasion from consumers to alter the production system due to lack of publicity, allowing plantations to continue to rely on forced, unregulated labor.

Though these workers are already faced with unfair pay and abuse, their work contracts also require them to sign their rights away, such as not allowing laborers to leave the plantation without permission. To ensure workers don't return to the village, national identity cards, school certificates, and home deeds are confiscated. At night, plantation workers are locked into windowless camps, fed small portions of infested food, and deprived of fresh water.

*How can the palm oil industry be regulated to stop human rights violations without harming the consumer? What can be done to ensure that acts of violence are not inflicted upon the indigenous people? Should governments have the right to displace indigenous people?*

### **Bloomberg: Indonesia's Palm Oil Industry Rife with Human-Rights Abuses**

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-07-18/indonesias-palm-oil-industry-rife-with-human-rights-abuses>

### **Say No to Palm Oil: Impacts on People**

[http://www.saynotopalmoil.com/Whats\\_the\\_issue.php](http://www.saynotopalmoil.com/Whats_the_issue.php)

### **Vice: What's Being Done to Stop Palm Oil Plantations from Destroying Indonesian Rainforests**

<http://www.vice.com/read/whats-being-done-to-stop-palm-oil-plantations-from-destroying-indonesias-rainforests>

## Sex Violence in Syrian Civil War

Syrian government perpetrators have committed sexual violence attacks against men and women, especially towards hostages during raids and in detention facilities. Testimonies by sexual violence victims have recently caught the attention of the Human Rights Watch. Since the Syrian Civil War started, thousands of women have been abducted and raped, though the

statistics are likely higher due to unreported cases.

In addition to the initial impact of the sexual violence inflicted upon civilians in the Syrian civil war, many victims of rape continue to deal with this issue, such as bearing the children from the attack or developing mental health illnesses, such as PTSD, anxiety, and depression. Because many soldiers do not want their victims to be able to identify their offender, they are often shot. Although women are disproportionately abused, men also experience sexualized violence, including gang rape and shocks to the genitals.

Sexual violence in the Syrian conflict has spread outside of Syria, as this phenomenon has been observed in refugee camps in other countries. As a result, there has been a dramatic increase in child marriage, gender-based violence, commercial sex, physical confinement of women and children and polygamy, as well as a decrease in school attendance.

Media coverage of the Syrian Civil War has failed to focus on the mass rape that has been used for control, intimidation, and humiliation, and the atrocities are further suppressed when the victims die. Instead, mass media has focused on the two sides fighting and the refugees fleeing due to the fear of rape. Because of this, media is not aiding in finding a solution to the problem. Mass rapes have led to millions of traumatized survivors and witnesses. Over 85% of women under siege report being raped, causing the Syrian Civil War to be compared to the Bosnian War in the 1990s. After the Holocaust, Darfur, Bosnia and Rwanda, a protocol or solution should be created to ensure that after these traumatic events, history does not continue to repeat itself.

*How can victims be sought out when many are too ashamed and isolated to make their stories public? Should Syria's human rights crimes be sent to the court? What can be done to help victims, serve justice against the perpetrators, and prevent future mass rapes? How can victims of sexual violence and rape be helped and destigmatized?*

**The New Arab: Sexual Violence is 'Tactic of War' in Syria**

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2015/8/31/sexual-violence-is-tactic-of-war-in-iraq-syria>

**The Atlantic: Syria Has a Massive Rape Crisis**

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/04/syria-has-a-massive-rape-crisis/274583/>

**Sexual Violence in Conflict: Syrian Arab Republic**

<http://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/countries/syrian-arab-republic/>