

STUDY GUIDE



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MUN

SLRMUN 24



**UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

SLRMUN'24 Study Guide - United Nations Human Rights Council

Mandate

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) was established to promote and protect human rights around the world. Its mandate is outlined in the resolution that created it, which is the General Assembly Resolution 60/251 adopted on March 15, 2006. The Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and international human rights laws and treaties established those rights. The main objectives and functions of the UNHRC, as outlined in the resolution, include:

UN Human Rights is mandated by:

1. Promoting universal respect and human rights for all
2. Addressing human rights violations and preventing human rights abuses
3. Recommending the bodies of the UN system to improve the promotion and protection of all human rights.
4. Working actively to remove the obstacles to the realization of human rights and to prevent the continuation of human rights violations.
5. Engage in dialogue with governments in order to secure respect for all human rights.
6. Conducting Universal Periodic Reviews (UPR) which involves a comprehensive examination of the human rights situation in each country.

Agenda Introduction

"Safeguarding Journalists and humanitarian workers in conflict zones: Upholding safety and rights in accordance with International Humanitarian Law"

Journalists are essential for the people around the world to know what happens in global affairs. They also play an important role in conflicts bringing us live feed and news about the situation as to whether it's escalating and de-escalating and the casualties and developments. Humanitarian Workers on the other hand in most cases are the only salvation for civilians caught in war zones, as those workers are the task force that take care of injured and displaced people rather than the government. However this also has a dangerous side as the Journalists and Humanitarian workers would be putting themselves in the crossfire potentially risking their lives. Not to mention some Nations specifically target Journalists to

prevent them from disclosing their war crimes that might be unfavorable to them and their propaganda campaigns for the war effort. Humanitarian workers are also killed mainly due to crossfire or if a party feels they are biased to their enemy.

Due to above reasons The UN also added directives and clauses for the protection of Journalists and Humanitarian workers in the Geneva Convention for their safeguarding. However So far It has been limited to those documentations and many Journalists and Humanitarian workers have perished in conflict zones and their deaths, just forgotten over time along with other casualties with little justice done for their commitments. This committee plans to address this situation and how Journalists and Humanitarian workers can be protected in conflict zones with new measures if necessary.

Agenda Background

Last year (2023) has been a year full of various conflicts and has seen violence more than the 5 years before last. From the middle East, the conflict between Israel and Palestine has intensified and in Eastern Europe Russia - Ukraine war continues. The Syrian Civil war and War in South Sudan also continued throughout the last year. While Civilian lives in regions of conflict have been severely affected, the most concerning issue was the targeting of Journalists and Humanitarian Workers.

For the year 2023, 38 Journalists and 142 Humanitarian workers have been killed according to a UNESCO press statement. More than 50% of these deaths are related to middle eastern conflicts surrounding Syria and the Levant. The most concerning part being these autocracies are happening when one or more parties in the conflict are party to Geneva Conventions and members of UNHRC. Regardless on paper, many nations have continued to disregard the safety of Journalists and Humanitarian Workers and classifying them as "Unfortunate Casualties of War" and disregarding them despite them being potential violations of Humanitarian Law. This directly questions the practical applicability of Geneva Conventions and ICRC and the effectiveness of the UN as a whole as they have failed to mitigate and provide a sense of Security for all Journalists and Humanitarian workers in the affected regions. This was highly emphasized in the Russian Invasion of Ukraine and Israel Palestine Conflicts where nations continued brutal assault and bombardment with general disregard for the safety of Journalists and Humanitarian workers. Even with necessary evidence backing up for these misdeeds, the UN has failed to enforce the ICRC and Regulations on the relevant parties and failed to take action against those nations giving them a Green light for those unlawful actions.

It is vital that this should not be allowed to go on; the current situation only discourages people from becoming Humanitarian workers or Journalists from working in Conflict zones out of fear of their lives. Both professions are critical in such areas as Humanitarian workers provide the necessities and Healthcare for civilians trapped in warzones and Journalists provide coverage of the situation in such regions. Those people risk their lives in regions expecting the UN and the International Law to protect them but it has not been effective and shows major flaws that should be addressed immediately. Which is why the UNHRC must discuss the situation at hand and recommend necessary actions to be implemented immediately.

Past UN actions

The United Nations has adopted several resolutions that specifically address the need to protect the rights of journalists, and humanitarian workers and ensure their active participation in humanitarian responses. Here are some notable UN resolutions on this topic. However, it should be noted that the debate from the delegates can go beyond the provided resolutions as they are given as a starting point for the research.

01. UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity (2012):

The UN, particularly UNESCO, launched the Plan of Action to address the increasing threats faced by journalists. It focuses on raising awareness, building capacity, and fostering a safer environment for media and humanitarian workers.. The plan encourages member states to implement measures to counter impunity for attacks against journalists.

02. UN Security Council Resolution 1738 (2006):

This resolution specifically addresses the protection of journalists in armed conflicts. It condemns attacks against journalists and media personnel and emphasizes the responsibility of states to ensure their safety. The resolution calls for an end to impunity for crimes committed against journalists and humanitarian workers during armed conflicts.

03. UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity (2013-2016):

Building upon the earlier plan, UNESCO implemented a comprehensive program to improve the safety of journalists globally. The plan involved capacity-building, training, and awareness-raising initiatives in collaboration with various stakeholders.

04. UN General Assembly Resolution on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity (2013):

The General Assembly adopted a resolution expressing concern about the increasing threats to journalists and emphasizing the need to combat impunity for crimes against them. It calls on member states to ensure accountability and protection for journalists.

05. UNESCO's Journalists' Safety Indicators (2018):

UNESCO developed a set of indicators to assess the state of journalists' safety in different countries. The indicators cover areas such as legal protection, institutional frameworks, and the prevalence of impunity. This tool aims to help governments, media organizations, and civil society assess and improve the safety of journalists.

06. UN Action on the Killing of Journalists (2018):

The UN launched a global campaign against the killing of journalists, highlighting the risks they face and urging member states to take concrete steps to ensure their safety. The campaign emphasizes the importance of media freedom for democracy and sustainable development.

Treaties and Conventions

1. Geneva Conventions (1949) and Additional Protocols (1977):

- **Common Article 3:** This article applies to non-international armed conflicts and provides basic protections for all persons not taking part in hostilities, including journalists and humanitarian workers.

- **Additional Protocol I (1977):** Article 79 of Protocol I specifically addresses journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict. It emphasizes their right to protection as civilians and prohibits intentional attacks against them.

2. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):

Article 19: Protects the right to freedom of expression, which is relevant for journalists reporting on conflicts. States parties are obligated to ensure the safety of individuals exercising this right

3. International Humanitarian Law Customary Rules (ICRC, 2005):

Rule 34: Prohibits intentional attacks against civilians, including journalists and humanitarian workers.

Rule 35: Protects humanitarian workers, including journalists, engaged in medical duties.

4. Guidelines for the protection of Journalists in situations of conflicts and violence (UNESCO, 2006):

While not a treaty these guidelines provide practical recommendations to enhance the safety of journalists during conflict situations. They highlight the responsibilities of states and non - state actors to protect journalists.

5. Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa (2002) - African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights:

Principle VIII: Recognizes the rights and responsibilities of journalists during armed conflicts and emphasizes the duty of states to protect them.

Talking points

- **The Lack of respect nor protection for the humanitarian workers in warzones not just by unrecognized factions (Rebels, Separatists) but also by Governments of UN member nations who have ratified Conventions related to International Humanitarian Law.**
- **How some governments force censorship for propaganda purposes and eliminate journalists who are non compliant with their policies.**
- **The lack of enforcement of the International Humanitarian Law on Member Nations by UN Bodies.**
- **Need of Drawing a line of how Journalists should work within Conflict zones for their protection via a certain framework.**

Further Reference

[Journalist casualties in the Israel-Gaza war - Committee to Protect Journalists](#)

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/23/gaza-media-office-says-100-journalists-killed-since-israeli-attacks-began>

[Protection of Journalists | How does law protect in war? - Online casebook](#)

[Ukraine: Journalists targeted and in danger, warn top rights experts | UN News](#)

[Media Freedom Coalition statement on the safety of journalists and media workers in conflict.](#)

<https://guide-humanitarian-law.org/content/article/3/journalists/#:~:text=international%20armed%20conflict.-,Journalists%20engaged%20in%20professional%20missions%20in%20areas%20of%20armed%20conflict,their%20civilian%20status%20and%20character.>

Message from the Head Table

Dear esteemed delegates,

We would like to warmly welcome you all to the United Nations Human Rights Council committee in the Sri Lanka Rotaract Model United Nations organized by the University of Moratuwa.

We are thrilled to have the opportunity to lead your debates, and hereby we promise to conduct them in the most attractive and inclusive way possible. As chairs, we promise to facilitate a high level of debate and to ensure that all delegates have the opportunity to participate fully.

This Study Guide is a comprehensive summary of the topic and a good starting point for your research. However, Because of the high complexity of the topic, not all information was included in this BRIEF Study Guide; Therefore we strongly recommend a truly extensive research, to make sure you are on track for the whole time of the debates.

While we as chairs advise maintaining decorum and order within our committee, we also encourage delegates to have fun, socialize and enjoy their time at the conference. We advise you as delegates to utilize diplomacy to discuss and bring forth creative and feasible solutions.

We look forward to seeing you at the conference, wishing you all the best and happy researching!

Sincerely,

Ashan Sachintha and Hazmath Reeshma Faizal

(Head Table of UNHRC for SLRMUN'24)