



# Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee Topic Guide

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# Junior Academy Model United Nations

- THE FIFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE -

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Hello Delegates,

Welcome to the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM). My name is Michelle and I am currently a sophomore in the Academy for Medical Science Technology at BCA. Before high school, I had no MUN experience but I was intrigued and excited about the idea of addressing global issues in a diplomatic setting. As a result, I joined the BCA MUN club my freshman year, but I became more active my sophomore year. Outside of MUN, I enjoy writing for the school newspaper, playing tennis, and volunteering with kids who have mental or physical disabilities.

In this conference, I am hoping to see a lot of participation and enthusiasm from the delegates. Moreover, I am anticipating a lot of productive debate about human rights violations as well as creative solutions to combat religious persecution in your resolutions. Feel free to email me if you have any questions.

Once again, I am excited to meet all of you and see all of your innovative solutions.

Good luck!

Michelle Kim  
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Hello delegates!

Welcome to JMUN 2019! My name is Laetitia Park and I am so excited to be one of your Co Chairs for SOCHUM. I am a sophomore here at Bergen County Academies in the Academy for Culinary Arts and Hospitality Administration, and became interested in Model UN when I joined the club at the end of my freshman year. Little did I know how invested I would become in representing a country on global issues I had no previous knowledge in. Attending conferences has easily become the highlight of my sophomore year. Besides MUN, I enjoy baking, traveling abroad, and volunteering at various school events. I am looking forward to the lively debate and creative solutions that will stem from our topic, religious persecution, which still exists as a pressing issue internationally to this day. If you have any questions regarding the background guide, the scope of the committee, or what to expect during the conference, feel free to reach out to me at any time. I can't wait to see you all in committee!

Best,

Laetitia Park  
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## Topic A:

# Religious Persecution

## Introduction:

The Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee, or SOCHUM, is one of the main General Assembly committees. It is also known as GA3. All 193 member states are a part of SOCHUM, which is essentially a forum for the UN Member States to debate social, humanitarian, and cultural issues. SOCHUM often works closely with other UN bodies in order to effectively combat its mandated issues. This body of the UN works to promote and protect human rights, which include the right to religious freedom.

Religious persecution entails the discrimination and violence against those who are members of a religious minority due to their religious affiliation. Actions that fall under religious persecution are intended to divest political rights and force these minorities to assimilate, leave, or live as a second-class citizen. Examples of persecution include the confiscation or destruction of property, the incitement to hate, arrest, imprisonment, beatings, torture, murder and execution.



In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was issued by the UN in 1948, outlines the UN's position with regards to religious freedom. The UDHR affirms the right to religious freedom in Article 2 and Article 18. In 1982, the United Nations General Assembly passed the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, which include provisions for the “right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief” and the listed specific rights.

Currently, there are many countries that are being investigated for alleged violations of freedom of religion or belief. Although religious freedom is internationally recognized as a human right, not all governments may respect that right for a multitude of reasons. Certain governments may not want individuals to practice a certain religion due to the fear that it might threaten national security, or governments themselves may enforce and want their citizens to practice a certain religion. The violation of religious freedom

through religious persecution can ultimately lead to insecurity and violence on the global stage.

## Topic History:

Practices and instances of persecution against religious minorities can be traced as far back as the Antiquity. Throughout history, religious persecution has often been disguised as “religious cleansings”, which consist of expulsion or deportation of these religious groups for the view of homogenizing the states’ populations or affirming the majority’s domination.

### **Middle Ages**

The first Assyrian ruler to demand resettlement as a state policy was Tiglath-Pileser III. This persecution consisted of carrying off or exterminating minority groups living on conquered lands. The Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans continued this policy for the purpose of maintaining slavery. Later, during the 14th and 15th centuries, persecution such as massacres and expulsions generally targeted Jews. Similarly, Spain conducted the same violations against its Muslim minority by expelling all the converted Muslims



in the early 17th century. In France, the Edict of Nantes was revoked in 1685, which meant that the Protestant minority was denied the freedom of worship in a violent manner, resulting in many to flee abroad.

### **Adana Massacre**

The twentieth century saw a massive increase in violent religious persecution, especially pertaining to Christians. In the Adana Massacre of 1909, the Armenian Christians were targeted by the Ottoman Muslims. Approximately 20,000 to 30,000 Armenians were massacred as result of the secular Young Turk government coming into power. The Armenian Christians were hopeful for more equality after the coup against the Ottoman leader Sultan Abdul Hamid II. However, nationalism and a misconstrued perception of the Armenians as a separatist, European-controlled entity all eventually led to the religious persecution of the Armenian Christians.

### **World War II**

During the Second World War, religious persecutions and discriminations reached their height with the Nazi campaigns

against the Jews. The aim of these campaigns was to completely annihilate the Jewish people. The Holocaust combined the elements of deportation, expulsion, population transfer, massacre, genocide, and other inhuman treatments. Approximately six million European Jews and 250,000 Gypsies were murdered.

### **Yugoslav Wars**

The wars that ravaged former Yugoslavia apart at the end of the 20th century (1991-2001) revolved around the widespread violations of human rights and humanitarian law against religious minorities, which included mass killings and murder, systematic rape, torture, and other crimes against humanity. The term “cleansing” was used to refer to the range of abuses committed in former Yugoslavia in order to achieve “purity.” During the spring of 1992, Muslim and Croat residents were wiped out in a Bosnian Serb to “purify” lands that had fallen under their control. In the summer of the same year, the Serbs set up prison camps to hold the Muslims and Croats for the purpose of committing atrocities repeatedly. Moreover, over 35,000 women and children were detained



in Serb-run “rape-camps” which destroyed the cultural and social ties of the victims and their religious communities. Especially for Muslim women, being subjected to such abuses symbolized disgrace and resulted in being shunned from the religious community.

### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

The DRC is still in the process of recovering from a conflict known as Africa’s first world war, which led to the loss of approximately five million lives from 1994 to 2003. However, even today, many eastern areas are still experiencing violence due the operations of various rebel groups. After the Rwandan genocide, more than two million Hutus have fled into the DR Congo, fearing persecution by the Tutsi-dominated government. Furthermore, the Muslim Defense International (MDI) has been operating in this region to exterminate the Christians. Kidnapping and murder are common ways that the MDI accomplishes this. Many young women and girls have also been abducted, raped, and have witness the brutal murder of male family members; this has resulted in

trauma that makes daily life for these victims a challenge.

## **Current Situation:**

Christianity, marked as the most persecuted religion in the world, has reached its highest point of persecution in modern history; with 1 in 3 Christians estimated to experience repression in Asia alone. North Korea and Iran have punished and threatened a combined 1.1 million Christians, and India alone has attacked 65 million Christians since 2014 without police interference. An Easter terror attack in Sri Lanka with a death toll of 300 people less than a month ago was conducted by an Islamic terrorist group, one of the main sources of Christian persecution. Countries with tight government control continue to rise as some of the most dangerous nations to practice Christianity, with North Korea, Iran, and Somalia appearing in the top ten for twenty five years straight. Individual governments have introduced their approach to combating religious persecution through organizations such as Hungary Helps and the National Association of Evangelicals. While



the persecution of Christianity is expected to rise, seven of the ten countries where the oppression is the most prominent appears to be in Muslim-majority countries. Countries such as Indonesia, having the largest percentage of Muslim population in the world, also have a 1 in 10 Christian population, but the clash between these religions allows the more dominant religion to shut down Christian churches and even sentence worshippers to prison. To aid victims affected by the discrimination, various organizations have formed to donate Bibles and provide financial support to women and children in especially hostile regions. Open Doors, one of the largest Christian organizations aimed to restore Christian communities, has been operating in sixty different countries to educate, donate, and petition for Christians living under anti-Christian authoritarian governments or as a religious minority. Denmark introduced its own Office of the Special Representative for Freedom of Religions or Beliefs, promoting the assistance of human rights NGOs and reports on violations of

religious beliefs. However, without the adoption of a strict international policy addressing all nations on religious liberty, the international community remains divided in terms of the definition of human rights regarding religion. Countries are unable to strengthen international cooperation due to the influx of anti-Christian terrorist groups into Asia and the continuation of persecution in the Middle East.

## Country Policy:

### **United States of America**

The Trump Administration has promised to designate the issue of religious persecution as a pressing issue to be addressed in its foreign agenda. Those promises became tangible when the administration proposed to redirect their UN contributions to provide aid for religious groups persecuted by Daesh in countries such as Iraq. The administration has also reviewed the Department of State's "Countries of Particular Concern" which refer to countries that "engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom." Subsequently,



the Department of State has redesignated countries such as Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan as Countries of Particular Concern. The Department of State has also created its Special Watch List for countries that engage in or tolerate violations of religious freedom that do not yet meet the requirements for Countries of Particular Concern. Pakistan has been placed on this list for its strict blasphemy laws.

### **Countries on World Watch List**

The countries on the World Watch List have been placed on the list after careful monitoring on the part of Open Doors' research unit, World Watch Research (WWR). The top five countries on this list in 2019 are North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, and Pakistan. These countries are violating the UDHR and its statement on religious freedom through oppression, religious nationalism, and dictation that manifests itself through violent means and affects all aspects of life. This list specifically tracks the global persecution of Christians based on

the violence and pressure experienced. Nevertheless, the countries on this list not only persecute Christians but commit religious persecution due to the government or dictatorship in place. The government and culture of these countries, which are oftentimes developing nations, allow for such atrocities to occur.

### **Central and European Europe Bloc**

In general, many Central and Eastern Europeans are religious and are a member of religion. A new survey conducted by the Pew Research Center has found that religion has reasserted itself as "an important part of individual and national identity in many of the Central and Eastern European countries where communist regimes once repressed religious worship and promoted atheism." In the Russian Federation and Poland, many identify as Orthodox or Catholic, but the citizens in these countries associate more with the nation; nationalism is stronger than religion in these sentiments. Thus, the general sentiment in this global region is a tolerance of religion as an element of national belonging



even though these people are not highly observant.

### **Asia Bloc**

Many developing countries in Asia routinely violate the freedom of religion. According to a Maldivian diplomat at an event hosted by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand in Bangkok, "In general, human rights are regressing in Asia." The most famous case of ongoing religious persecution in Asia is occurring in the predominantly Buddhist Myanmar, in which thousands of Muslim Rohingya have been driven by the military into neighboring Bangladesh in what many foreign observers have been describing as large-scale ethnic cleansing. On the other hand, the developed countries in the Asian region have generally been obeying the UDHR and have governments that recognize such religious freedoms.

### **Middle East Bloc**

The growth of Islamic extremism originating from the Middle East can be attributed to the fundamentalists who are responding to the failing of secular nationalist governments. In Muslim-majority Pakistan, local Christian and Ahmadis, who belong

to a small Islamic sect, have been facing persistent religious discrimination as well as systematic social, political, and economic exclusion. It is also important to note that the small percentage of Christians living in this area have continued to significantly decreased due to religious persecution. Overall, the many geopolitical tensions, conflicts between the people and the government, and religious pressure ravage the Middle East.

## **Possible Solutions:**

In order to combat religious persecution in areas that violate the UDHR, religious tolerance should be eliminated through protective and collaborative means. The international community could work together to protect those whose rights are being violated. It is up to the delegates to find a way to unite the international community and work with governments accused of human rights violations, especially in religious freedom.

School education is an unignorable and significant factor in fighting against religious persecution as schools have the



power to educate the younger generation. Although school is a place of learning and development, it can also function as a place where authority is exercised. Schools can promote the freedom of religion and belief. However, it is up to the delegates to determine whether or not the international community should approach schools as a platform for promoting the freedom of religion and belief. In addition, delegates should consider whether or not certain governments would agree with this approach.

With the technology available today, delegates should consider the power of social media and digital news in relation to addressing and raising awareness around religious persecution. Creating a united front utilizing the media against religious persecution is the job of the international community to do for the victims of such atrocities.

Accurately documenting circumstances of religious persecution through the use of already appointed embassy human rights ambassadors. Delegates should consider ways to increase efficiency in the ambassador's role to report religious liberty violations, especially in higher risk countries.

Establishing a UN definition of religious persecution, religious liberty, etc., in efforts to easily identify violations made by countries. Delegates should view religious persecution from the perspective of various governments and consider incentives for government cooperation.

## Questions to Consider:

How can the security threats resulting from religious persecution be addressed?

How should the international community go about eliminating intolerance in nations with governments that have been accused of religious persecution among other human rights violations?

What can be done to ensure that religious freedom is recognized and respected by both governments and individuals?

How can individuals suffering from religious persecution be protected?



How should the international community aid the victims?

<https://books.google.com/books?id=U9nECgAAQBAJ&pg=PA26#v=onepage&q&f=false>

How does the right of conversion play a role in religious persecution?

<https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/explainer-the-united-nations-and-religious-liberty>

How can the displaced victims and refugees resulting from the violent conflicts of religious persecution be addressed and aided?

<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>  
<https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Myths-Behind-the-Age-of/137423>

Why do certain countries regard religious liberty as a privilege granted by the government rather than a human right?

<https://www.usmmm.org/research/the-center-for-advanced-holocaust-studies/programs-ethics-religion-the-holocaust/articles-and-resources/christian-persecution-of-jews-over-the-centuries>

How has religious persecution been justified in the past?

How can countries with tight government control end religious persecution without changing their form of government?

<http://www.icty.org/en/about/what-former-yugoslavia/conflicts>  
<https://www.armenian-genocide.org/adana.html>

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<https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2017/january/top-50-countries-christian-persecution-world-watch-list.html>

<https://www.cufi.org/learn/issues/christian-persecution/>

