



SOCIAL,  
CULTURAL, AND  
HUMANITARIAN  
COMMITTEE  
TOPIC BULLETIN

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# Academy Model United Nations

- THE TWENTIETH ANNUAL CONFERENCE -

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM), the third General Assembly of the United Nations. You will be tasked with addressing a broad range of topics surrounding social, humanitarian and human rights issues from around the world.

Greetings, my name is Jun-Davinci Choi and I will be one of your chairs for this committee. I am a senior at the Bergen County Academies in the Academy of Business and Finance. Beginning Model UN in freshman year, I have attended numerous conferences including YMUN (Yale), WAMUNC (George Washington University), PMUNC (Princeton), SHUMUN (Seton Hall), and AMUN. In recent years, I have focused more of my attentions on running and managing MUN conferences, serving as Director of Operations in JAMUN III (BCA's conference for middle school students), chairing JCC Game of Thrones at Monroe Woodbury Model UN, and chairing (and running the backroom for) AMUN's first ever historical crisis committee.

I look forward to meeting you this coming conference and anxiously await the innovative ways in which this committee will confront relevant global issues!

Sincerely, Jun-Davinci Choi  
juncho19@bergen.org

Hello Delegates,

My name is Lucas and I am currently a rising junior in the Academy of Business and Finance at Bergen County Academies. Coming into high school, I was never involved with Model UN, but was immediately drawn in to the idea of dealing with current and relevant global conflict in a diplomatic manner, working with other delegates who share the same passions and interests as I do. As a result, throughout my freshman and sophomore year, I participated in over five college conferences, winning Outstanding Delegate at PMUNC and Honorable Mention at YMUN, and participating in various other college conferences. Furthermore, I was fortunate enough to be selected as a member of the Secretariat for the Junior Academy Model UN conference held at Bergen County Academies, arranging and putting the pieces together for a successful junior conference. Outside of Model UN, I spend majority of my time on the tennis court, whether it be on the school varsity team or for a ranking in the state.

As this year's chair for SOCHUM, we wanted to look deeper into the immense impact that media has on our world today. Likewise, there is often conflict in areas of the world in defining the rights of protesters and what is deemed as trespassing the law, or lack thereof. We are looking forward to these topics being debated and hope to see diplomatic discussions for the ultimate goal of reaching resolutions. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to email me at the email below. Good luck!

Lucas Kim, Chair, SOCHUM  
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## **Topic A: Rights of Protestors**

### **Introduction:**

The right to protest and assemble with fellow citizens is critical to a functioning democracy. A democratic society can only exist when it allows for the freedom of expression, including criticism against existing institutions. While the right to protest is not explicitly stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted by the United Nations in 1948), the UDHR, as well numerous other international treaties, affirms the right to free speech (Article 19) and the rights to assembly and association (Article 20).

However, the right to protest is subject to violation by law enforcement officials who impede free expression of protesters through police crackdown on demonstrations, resulting in mass arrests, illegal use of force, and curfews. Furthermore, protesters have been curtailed through the



designation of “free-speech zones” and the gathering of information on innocents through surveillance, citing their association or proximity to protests.

At present, the discussion of the right of protesters is becoming increasingly relevant as nations preserving the right to free speech and the rights to assembly and association are beginning to limit these basic human rights on the grounds of offensiveness and “safe” speech. These limitations undermine core values outlined in the UDHR and undermine democratic values.

## Topic History:

Protest has been a powerful weapon of change throughout history. Whether in the form of peaceful protests or violent uprisings, people disgruntled by existing political, social, and economic institutions have taken advantage of their right to protest,

leading to major developments in human rights and provided the foundation for modern ideals.

### **King John and the Magna Carta**

An early example demonstrating the power of protest is the rebellion of the barons against King John in 1215. The English barons were discontented with King John for his failures as the King of England, having lost Normandy to France, placing heavy taxes on the nobility, and quarrelling with the church, which led to his excommunication by Pope Innocent III. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, called upon the English barons to demand a charter of liberties from the king, resulting in a rebellion against the King. Outnumbered, King John was forced to surrender and signed the Magna Carta. While prior monarchs had signed such charters granting concessions to their nobles, none were as instrumental as the Magna Carta, which restricted the absolute power of the monarch, outlining rights and privileges of



the English barons, the freedom of the church, and proclaimed laws of the land that the king was subject to (e.g. habeas corpus and trial by jury). The barons protected their right to protest through the use of military force. In doing so, they were able to affect change in the English monarchical system and paved the way for Parliament and the rule of constitutional law.

### **Boston Tea Party**

A major event preceding the American Revolutionary War (which gained America its independence), this protest took place in objection to the Tea Act of May 10, 1773, which undermined tea sellers in America. American colonists, who considered themselves as Englishmen, believed that the act violated their rights to “no taxation without representation,” a rallying cry of the British colonies. Protesters stormed ships sent by the East India Company in Boston Harbor and destroyed the shipments of tea, provoking a retaliatory

reaction from the Britain. This led to further resistance by colonists and culminated in the American Revolution.

### **French Revolution**

While the French Revolution may have begun simply as a result of deep-seated resentment towards the lavish French monarchy and opposition towards unfavorable economic policies, it established universal ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity (“liberté, égalité, fraternité”) that would lead to revolutions in other parts of Europe and, later, in South America. The French monarchy was overthrown, and the feudal system was challenged through the revolution, and the ideals of democracy and freedom were established. These ideals would spread across the western hemisphere.

### **Suffragette Movement**

In the late 19th and 20th centuries, women around the world fought for the right to vote. Often demonized by the press as



anarchists and terrorists, suffragettes resorted to protests, chaining themselves to railings, smashing windows, setting fire to empty buildings, and attempting to storm parliament. In many cases, suffragettes were attacked and sexually assaulted by the police. In Britain, imprisoned suffragettes who went on hunger strikes were force fed. However, these women paved the way to greater rights for women, eventually winning women the right to vote. Today, suffragettes are often portrayed as heroes and lauded for their bravery.

### **Civil Rights Movement**

Racial discrimination against African Americans persisted after the US Civil War led to their emancipation from slavery. Deprivation of basic civil rights and segregation laws disadvantaged African Americans in numerous facets of society, including work, housing, and politics. The Civil Rights

Movement flourished in the mid-1900s, and civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., A. Philip Randolph, and Bayard Rustin continue to inspire younger generations of protesters.

### **Call for Democracy**

The power of protests can be seen in democratic movements throughout the 20th century. The People's Power revolution in the Philippines ousted the dictator, Ferdinand Marcos. Furthermore, popular uprisings in Eastern European regimes under the authority of the Society Union resulted in the end of communist rule in the region. Similar protests can be observed today through the Arab Spring Revolutions, which have targeted several authoritarian regimes in the Arab Spring region.

### **Current Situation:**

In numerous protests around the world, governments have used brute force to quell dissent. In



many of these countries, the freedom of expression is not guaranteed, which allows governments to violate the rights of protesters. Surprisingly, unprovoked violence towards protesters or attempts to quell protests can also be seen in democratic nations where rights to free speech, assembly, and association are protected. Furthermore, freedom of expression in democratic nations is being increasingly curtailed through limitations of free speech, citing reasons such as offensiveness or “safe” speech.

### **Peaceful protests in Iraq against austerity measures**

Government employees in the autonomous Kurdistan Region in northern Iraq protested against austerity measures and salary delays. Ceasing of payments to the Kurdish government by the central government in Baghdad (which had paid for the salaries of government employees prior to 2014) caused by disputes with

Baghdad and the war against ISIS, has resulted in a severe deficit.

As a result, the government has struggled to pay the salaries of many civil servants. In 2016, austerity measures were put in place, and public salaries were severely cut. Government corruption led to further discontent within the region. This led to demonstrations by teachers, doctors, and other civil workers against austerity measures and salary delays. However, many protesters were subject to physical and verbal attacks by Kurdistan security forces, who used violence to disperse peaceful protests.

### **Police violence against journalists covering protests in Russia**

Numerous protests broke out in Russia against Vladimir Putin’s inauguration for another presidential term. Over 1,500 demonstrators were arrested. Journalists covering the protest



were also detained by officials, even after they identified themselves as media personnel. Furthermore, paramilitary forces and members of the National Liberation Movement physically attacked journalists while Russian authorities looked on.

### **Police violence against protesters at the City University New York (CUNY)**

In 2013, the NYPD arrested several protesters (including 4 students) who took part in a peaceful demonstration against the appointment of former CIA chief General David Petraeus at the City University of New York. CUNY students participating in the protest were physically attacked by NYPD officers, undermining their rights to protest.

## **Country Policy:**

### **United States of America**

Freedom of speech and expression, as well as the right to

assembly, is protected from government restriction in the United States by the First Amendment and recognized by both state and federal laws. However, numerous states have been introducing legislation to dissuade people from protesting. This comes during a time of many protests, including the Black Lives Matter movement, Native American movement, and Women's Marches. However, no fewer than 19 states have passed bills with the intent of criminalizing peaceful protests. These state bills criminalize protesters for obstructing traffic, allowing law enforcement officials to clear people unlawfully obstructing vehicular traffic, with one bill proposing prison terms of up to 7 years for the violation. Some bills exempt drivers from liability should they hit a protester. In some states, individuals may be held liable for the public cost of ending "unlawful assemblies." These bills threaten rights to free speech, assembly, and association.



Similar attempts to curtail rights to free speech, assembly, and association have been made in other democratic nations, including Spain and Australia.

### **Russian Federation**

Officially, the Constitution of the Russian Federation guarantees freedom of thought and speech. However, individual freedom has been compromised by Russian authorities for the sake of social cohesion. Government control of the media, propaganda campaigns to vilify opponents, crackdowns on independent news outlets, and arbitrary detentions of peaceful protesters demonstrate ways by which the government has violated the rights of its citizens.

Other nations that either reject or limit liberal democratic institutions, such as China and Cuba, curtail rights to free speech and preclude protests.

## Questions to Consider:

Why is it important for governments to ensure the right to protest and remain tolerant of criticism in democratic societies?

How should governments address civil disobedience?

How can a democratic nation protect the right to protest?

How does the current political environment influence the way governments address protesters? Consider the impacts on the rights to free speech, assembly, and association.



## **Topic B: Artificial Intelligence Regulation**

### **Introduction:**

According to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression... [including the] freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”. From this document, it becomes evident that this freedom should be a universal right for all individuals. However, as one can see when put into action on the global stage, these rights are suppressed in certain regions, primarily due to “censorship, restrictive press legislation, and harassment of journalists, bloggers and others who voice their opinions, as well as crackdowns on religious minorities and other suppression of religious freedom” (Freedom House). With media in today’s world, censorship from government bodies and laws and regulations put in place has become a pressing issue for member states striving towards a democratic government. In the 21st



century, access to information provides citizens with free exchange of ideas, which is ultimately crucial in the formation of public opinion. The concept of media freedom often “includes the existence and implementation of freedom of information and transparency laws, and the absence of disproportionate r e s t r i c t i o n s for speech...” (UNESCO). Within many states, citizens have a lack of news sources, providing them with little information regarding voting and their political and economic environment. Journalists in these states are forced to take precautionary measures before publishing articles regarding the government or political events that take occur in order to maintain their own safety and well-being. Furthermore, in various countries, perspectives opposing the country’s government have been silenced and muted, in hopes to maintain positive light on their government. This manipulation, or complete omission, of information deprives the public with valuable ideas and viewpoints that fuel democracies. Media can be especially valuable in circumstances where the political

status is not stable, giving citizens more of an incentive to rely on the Internet and outside sources. For example, the Arab Spring was a series of uprisings in 2011, and these were especially fueled by online media and Facebook posts, sparking nationwide and region-wide protests. Worldwide, censorship of the media remains to be a challenge, despite the rise in the privatization of censorship and private sector censorship.

Yet, in order to discuss the censorship in today’s media and the freedom of expression we must also consider the protection of individuals’ rights to privacy in today’s digital age. Media censorship must come hand-in-hand with concerns raised over the right to privacy. The protection of privacy can be seen in regard to the press and journalists, whose confidentiality is upheld. As defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy,



family, or correspondence, or to unlawful attacks on his honor and reputation” (UDHR). The UN Human Rights Council expands on this definition, stating that “The presumption that individuals should have an area of autonomous development, interaction and liberty, a “private sphere” with or without interaction with others, free from State intervention and from excessive unsolicited intervention by other uninvited individuals. The right to privacy is also the ability of individuals to determine who holds information about them and how is that information used” (UNHCR). Although privacy has been defined as a human right, certain states undermine this right in order to suppress free expression in hopes to maintain a status on the global stage. Similarly, in hopes to maintain national security, there has been debate on the extent to which privacy to citizens should be granted, which has led to expansive surveillance and the collection of excessive personal

information. This digital age has expanded from the 1970s to now, a time period in which an increasing amount of advanced technology is being developed. In this period, new issues are being brought about regarding security and privacy with journalism, as there has been a rise in “user-generated content, which... has tested both media and intermediaries in their ethical decision-making about the legitimate limits on free expression” (UNESCO). The line between intense government surveillance for the sake of protection and civilian safety and intrusion of privacy in today’s digital age has become hard to define. Although given the human right to privacy, personal information through digital media has never been more easily accessible, which has led to breaches and other instances of personal privacy being invaded. Technology has developed immensely throughout the Digital Age, with about 80% of the United States having access to the Internet in their own homes



(Fernholz). As technology continues to develop and the governments' abilities to track information strengthen, the idea of privacy continues to be in question. As a delegate in this committee, a critical question to consider is the extent to which governments should be able to access personal information such that there is still personal privacy maintained.

## Topic History:

On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the U.N adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and within this document defines the right to freedom of opinion and expression as a human right. Since its inception in 1945, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, one of the UN Agencies, has made clear that they “[stand] up for freedom of expression, as a fundamental right and a key condition for democracy and development” . Universally, the

freedom of expression and access to media has long been a goal of the United Nations, allowing citizens across the globe to form their own opinions and gather information through the media. As the Digital Age is considered to span from the 1970s, the history of the topic is limited, however even with the World Wide Web being established in 1989, the field of technology was forever changed.

Despite being a pressing issue, legislation in regard to media censorship and privacy is limited. As stated by UNESCO, “despite the global recognition of the obligation to protect privacy, the content of this right has not been fully developed by international mechanisms for the protection of human rights. The lack of explicit articulation of this right has led to difficulties in its application and enforcement”. Nonetheless, the United Nations has still made efforts to establish legislation which regulated censorship of the media, as seen in the International Covenant on Civil and Political



Rights. This treaty was introduced in 1976 and continues to play a major role in this issue. Within the 53 articles of the treaty, the UNHCR highlights censorship in Article 19 and 20, which states:

- “1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.
2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice” (UNHCR).

Likewise, the European Convention on Human Rights is a treaty designed to protect the political freedom of each member state. The treaty follows a similar outline compared to the Covenant.

There have also been numerous conventions and conferences led by UNESCO on the freedom of expression on the internet. However, it becomes evident that due to discrepancies in government policy and restrictions, formal legislation is difficult to implement worldwide.

In regard to privacy, surveillance has long been a prominent issue in history. A major controversy with the privacy in the Digital Age can be seen with WikiLeaks and Edward Snowden. In 2013, Snowden released, without authority, classified surveillance information from the National Security Agency (NSA), revealing that the agency was collecting excessive amounts of data from citizens, as well as around the world from specific and important people. Through this, major attention was brought to the question of privacy and how much information can be considered within the boundaries of citizen safety. However, in the general



overview, there has been a limited amount of international action addressing the issue of privacy in today's age, similar to media censorship. In December 2013, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 68/167 regarding privacy, which called upon member states to understand the human right to privacy and not to allow any violation to this human right. In A/RES/69/166, legislated in 2014, the right to privacy in the digital age is expanded upon. However, a crucial issue with these documents and forms of legislation regarding both censorship and privacy is the discrepancies in the actual definition of each respective term.

## Current Situation:

Across the globe, the status of media censorship varies from region to region. The very subjective definition of media censorship allows government to “bend” the rules in order to suit

their own needs. In today's world, news and media has become more important than ever, as it serves the role of providing information despite bias from certain outlets. By making these outlets available to the public, there becomes a diversity of perspectives and views, which drives a successful democracy. However, despite the major role that media serves to the public, today's number of countries with free press is the lowest it has been in a decade, at a mere 14% of the world population (Manuli). As the press continues to grow and the public continues to rely more heavily on media, this results in more criticism and a growing body of journalists and news coverage that criticizes the actions of the government. The censorship of this media restricts free press and freedom of expression for individuals, yet because of the lack of legislation, minimal actions have been made. As a delegate, it will be your responsible to find solutions to this dilemma.



Many countries also struggle to find a balance between privacy and protection of the public. There is a clear lack in a concrete definition of an individual's right to privacy and this ambiguous definition allows governments to manipulate their own regulations to their own desires. For large corporations such as Facebook, Google, and YouTube, privacy has become a prominent issue in today's Digital Age, as there has never been more information stored in their databases. This allows cyber warfare and blue hat hackers to take advantage of this vulnerable storage of data. Data collection from private organizations should be carefully monitored in order to maintain the privacy of the user, yet the question of whether the same privacy rules apply to these companies has recently been in debate. For example, Google questioned their status as a private organization when they were asked by the European court

to remove any links that citizens deemed were trespassing their privacy. Google questioned whether their status as a search engine should have the same restrictions as public media, such as radios and televisions. Following this example of Google, in 2014, the company updated their policies, confirming that "Our automated systems analyze your content (including e-mails) to provide you personally relevant product features, such as customized search results, tailored advertising, and spam and malware detection. This analysis occurs as the content is sent, received, and when it is stored", meaning that most emails are likely to be scanned (Google). This further emphasizes the debate between the extent to which compromising one's privacy is worth one's safety.



# Country Policy:

## **Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK)**

Relative to the rest of the world, the Democratic Republic of Korea's censorship are amongst the worst, as they completely restrict any form of speaking rebellion against the government, much less any form of rebellion. Internet access has been made illegal, and to compensate for this, in 2000, the North Korean Government created what is known as Kwangmyong or the "walled garden", which translates to "Bright" in English. This national intranet service is private to the country and the content is restricted to "news propaganda, educational and reference materials, and scanned archives. Besides its limited state-hosted websites, Kwangmyong also has a search engine, news groups functionality, and even a messaging system similar to email" (Grothaus). Even with this, majority of the citizens do not

have access and as a result are unaware of anything that happens outside the North Korean Borders

## **People's Republic of China (PRC)**

Despite wielding the largest population in the world, the media in China is heavily censored by the Chinese Communist Party. This party places heavy restrictions on the use of media through many different methods, one of which being the "Great Firewall", or formally known as the Golden Shield Project. This firewall includes "bandwidth throttling, keyword filtering, and blocking access to certain websites. According to Reporters Without Borders, the firewall makes large-scale use of Deep Packet Inspection technology to block access based on keyword detection" (Xu & Albert). Furthermore, in addition to the Great Firewall, the Chinese government utilizes other methods to censor media, such as "induc[ing] journalists to censor themselves, including dismissals



and demotions, libel lawsuits, fines, arrests, and forced televised confessions (Xu & Albert). This manipulation filters any opinion or news that goes against the government or criticizes their actions. Additionally, any form of social media that the country deems is potentially dangerous, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, are blocked off from the public.

### **United States of America**

Within the constitution of the United States, the First Amendment grants the freedom of speech, and under this amendment is the freedom of the press. However, despite this freedom of press and media, there is a certain extent to which civilians can utilize this right.

In regard to privacy, there has been controversy with the status of government intervention in private corporations as well as the

tracking and storage of personal information.

As mentioned previously, Edward Snowden proved to the public that the NSA was working with the American government in pursuit of storing mass amounts of personal information, pushing the boundaries of personal privacy. This puts a large portion of society at risk of cyberattacks or cyber warfare.

### **European Union**

Within the European Union there are specific regulations and policies put into place that ensure or attempt to ensure the privacy of the public and personal data. The EU Data Protection Directive (Directive 95/46/EC) is “a regulation adopted by the European Union to protect the privacy and protection of all personal data collected for or about citizens of the EU, especially as it relates to processing, using or exchanging such data”, which was



implemented in 1998 and has been continuously updated in recent years (Rouse).

## Questions to Consider:

Should there be concrete definitions in legislation for the right to privacy and censorship?

To what extent does civilian privacy outweigh the safety of the public?

Is there a line between journalist expressing their opinions and the media inciting rebellion and aggression?

When, if ever, is censorship of the media appropriate in maintaining a country's structure?

Why is free press and media valuable to a country? What can they bring to the people?

What measures should be taken against a country or member state that violates these human rights?

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