

THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL



**Agenda: Ensuring the Enforcement of
the UDHR by the ratified nations with
respect to Feminism**

Letter from the Director

Dear Delegates,

It is with great excitement that I welcome you to the United Nations Human Rights Council at the Sarala Birla Model United Nations Conference 2018.

I am Anjali Agarwal and I am absolutely thrilled to be serving as your Chairperson for the same. I am currently a Grade XII student at Inventure Academy. Model UN is an incredibly large and important part of my life as I have been participating in MUN conferences since my first year of high school, and have staffed and competed at conferences of both the high school and collegiate level.

Model UN conferences aren't just about improving people's public speaking skills, teaching them about debate and diplomacy. They bring people together to talk about pertinent global issues. These conferences show the world that regardless of age, everyone has creative solutions in mind that can be implemented and they serve as a sort of confirmation that the future is in good hands.

Whether you are new to the MUN circuit or you're experienced, you will certainly take back much more than what you came with.

You'll be tasked with the job of identifying and defining what constitutes gender-based discrimination

and delivering actionable plans for addressing the perpetration of the same. Alongside this issue the body will work towards expanding existing legislation regarding human rights violations and comprehensively address the combatting of this issue.

I strongly encourage you to read through this background guide thoroughly, as it will serve as good base of knowledge regarding these topics for you to continue researching from. Beyond knowing the general facts and history of these topics, I suggest you do further research into currently enacted legislation, the policy of your positions, and current events and update which may further influence the debate of these topics in committee. (Please note that plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated.)

Although this is an inter-house conference, standing by your own foreign policy is imperative.

Do read this document carefully and feel free to reach out to me if you have any queries!

Once again, it is my pleasure to serve as your Chairperson and I look forward to seeing you all in November.

Best,
Anjali Agarwal
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The History and Mandate of the United Nations Human Rights Council

The OHCHR was founded as a platform for implementing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document which outlines a basic set of “civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all human beings should enjoy.” As an underbody of the OHCHR, the UNHRC, currently lead by Mr. Vojislav Šuc of Slovenia, relies on them for support in discharging their duties and implementing their decisions. The UNHRC is also a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, and was founded in 2006 to replace the previous UN Commission on Human Rights, making it one of the most recently founded bodies under the oversight of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The 47 seats of the council are elected by the UN General Assembly in three-year terms with regard to the state’s contribution to promote the protection of human rights, and distributed amongst the UN’s 13 regional groups to facilitate a more equal representation. The GA reserves the right to suspend the rights and privileges of any member it decides has committed gross and continuing violations of human rights.

Upon replacing the UN Commission on Human Rights, the UNHRC assumed the mandates and responsibilities previous entrusted to the commission: to promote

respect for the protection of human rights, address violations of human rights, promote effective coordination of human rights in the UN, promote education of human rights, and serve as a forum for discussing rights infractions. Along with the expanded mandate to: make recommendations to the General Assembly for further developing human rights law and undertaking a Universal Periodic Review of each UN member state's fulfillment of its human rights obligations and commitments.

Beyond just addressing member states' human rights issues, the UNHRC Advisory Committee leads campaigns to address thematic issues such as the rights of racial and ethnic minorities, LGBT rights, Women's rights, religious freedom, freedom of expression, and the freedom of association and assembly. Along with the advisor committee, the Universal Periodic Review Work Group is another subsidiary body of the UNHRC which works to complete review of all 193 UN member countries human rights situations every four-and-a-half years. The body works through a mandate of 'Special Procedures' to conduct such investigations in which it enlists the help of independent regional experts to observe and advise on human rights issues in individual nations, or on thematic issues.



Despite its seats being elected by the General Assembly, much controversy still stands around the membership of the UNHRC, as many current and previous member nations have been accused of having minimal respect for human rights themselves. Recent allegations have been made by the United States and the UN Secretary Generals Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-Moon that the body disproportionately focuses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These accusations are further evidenced by the body's condemnation of Israel in 78 resolutions since its founding in 2006, more condemning Israel than the world combined. Despite its questionable membership and focus, the UNHRC has proved invaluable in identifying and addressing cases of human rights violations across the world.

Every year, the HRC conducts a Universal Periodic Review to assess how well the member states are fulfilling their human rights obligations. For example- India, time and again has been condemned by the UPR,

NGOs as well as other nations for not recognizing marital rape as an offence.

One of the main documents of the UN is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was proclaimed by the UNGA in Paris, on 10/10/1948. It is the GA Resolution 217A and is available in more than five hundred languages. It contains 30 Articles and sets a global standard for human rights, which member nations are encouraged and expected to fulfill.

Preview

Although there are several articles in the UDHR pertaining to Feminism, these articles are not being enforced. Several nations are looking past them and societies haven't been restructured for decades. It is up to you, delegates, to come together and see to it that nations do as much as they possibly can within their powers to bridge the gender disparity and aid other nations in doing the same.

Feminism

“Feminist: a person who believes in the social, political and economic equality of the sexes.”- *Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*

There lies a very common and saddening misconception about the meaning of feminism. People often mistake a feminist as a person who wants women to have a higher social status than men.

A feminist may be a man, woman or anybody from the LGBTIQ community who believes in the equality of men, women and everybody from the LGBTIQ community.

Saying that not everyone supports equality and that their ‘opinion’ must be respected is absolutely absurd. Invalidating someone’s gender, rights or sexuality and mistreating them for the same is oppression.

Feminism is about giving everyone the same opportunities, fighting for better conditions and treatment, regardless of whether they are transgender, people of colour, or minorities of any sort.

More than half the Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights specifically stress on equality. The member nations of the UNHRC are expected to ensure they abide by these articles as long as they do not go against their own policies.

Scandinavian countries are the closest to bridging the gender gap while the greatest gender disparities lie primarily in the Middle East, South Asia & Africa.

Vocabulary

Gender: Socially-constructed roles and responsibilities that societies consider appropriate for different sexes.

Gender-based violence: The general term used to capture violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with the unequal power relationship among the sexes.

Gender equality: Equal power & opportunities for the sexes.

Gender gap: Discrepancy between men & women in areas of health, education, strength, political empowerment & economic empowerment.

Women's empowerment: The fostering of a woman's sense of self-worth, her decision-making power, her access to opportunities and resources, her power & control over her own life in every aspect & her ability to affect change.

Human Rights Violations

The issues surrounding unemployment, underemployment, poverty, illiteracy and mortality rates due to gender bias have been in play for decades.

There's a difference between the way both the sexes are treated in the same scenarios, there's a difference between the expectations and standards that societies set for them from the minute they are born.

Due to expired mindsets and absurd beliefs, we still have an immense amount of brutality in every part of the globe. Women, young girls, even infants are getting raped. This is because we ourselves have created a place where women have less of a worth.

Though the world's population comprises more than 50% of women, they only own 1% of the world's wealth. Throughout the world, young girls and women are compelled to perform long hours of unpaid domestic work. In some regions, women still lack rights to own land or inherit property, obtain access to credit, earn income, or to move up in their workplace and remain free from discrimination.

At workplaces, there is always a *glass ceiling* that lies right above women at all times. Women and men are paid different amounts for the same job.

In remote regions, cultural, religious and social norms prevent them from either working, going to school or

university, going abroad to study or to work, applying for jobs and even having a say in who they want to marry (violation of *Article 16* of the *UDHR*).

Women's health and safety is another pertinent matter of discussion. HIV/AIDS and other STDs are becoming an increasingly impactful issue for women. This is a result of women having fewer opportunities for health education, unequal power in sexual partnerships or as a result of gender-based violence. Maternal health is also something that must be considered.

Girls are forced to marry and have children before they are ready; often well before the age of 18.

In many countries, women have limited or no access to prenatal and infant care and are therefore, more likely to experience complications during pregnancy and childbirth.



Exhibit A- Donald Trump;

Women are disallowed from having abortions because their societies tell them it is ‘immoral’. Hundreds of thousands of women around the globe have either had miscarriages or lost their own lives because despite

having serious medical issues and pregnancy issues, they were denied abort

The most common violation of feminism widely practiced around the world is due to stereotyping.

Many households raise their children to believe that men have more power, more freedom and can get anything they want. Several boys are brought up with this backward mindset and it reflects in their actions.

There are fourteen and fifteen-year old boys who commit heinous crimes without thinking twice. They harass girls and women, they catcall them, they invade their privacy and cross several lines.

They never take responsibility for their actions because they are unable to comprehend the fact that what they have done is wrong.

Most women do not come forward because of fear and those who are brave enough to, are shunned for doing so- because offenders often claim that they were 'provoked'.

Rape by definition cannot be asked for.

Every woman has experienced gender-based violence at least once in her lifetime.

Predators cannot blame attire or intoxication as an excuse for committing crimes- women in burkas, babies, infants and animals are also subjected to rape.

Impact of Pop Culture on Feminism

Pop culture has made an everlasting impact on feminism for decades. This has its own advantages but acts mainly as a huge disadvantage because through the most popular songs (especially RAP music), mainstream jokes, memes, sexist wife and girlfriend jokes, horror movies where only the 'virgin' survives girls considered 'impure' are killed first.

School dress codes are implemented because they believe girls' attire distracts boys when everyone must really be conditioned to respect others' choices.

Menstruation is perceived as a disadvantage and always resorted to as an easy excuse to blame girls for any attitude that isn't pleasant instead of taking real emotions into account.

Children are considered from very early ages, especially through nursery rhymes and common idioms. "Sugar, spice and everything nice."

At workplaces, until a few years ago African-American women were not allowed to maintain their natural, curly hair as it was deemed 'unprofessional'. They were made to either straighten their hair or wear wigs.

In the 1960s, because of an anti-feminist woman named *Phyllis Schlafly*, she prevented the US government from passing a law that ensured gender equality. She preached that all women must stay at home and remain

unemployed, that they only had one job- to take care of their families. Feminism was stereotyped to such an extent that they said it shouldn't be about choice.

Please refer to this link for further information on Phyllis Schlafly- <https://youtu.be/W4yaWFr7xsQ>

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