



JJMUNC II

SOCHUM

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Freedom of the Media in Developing Countries

Topic Introduction:

Freedom of the media, both traditional and social media, is an issue that has faced countries globally. Some countries believe that regulating traditional media content and what is able to be broadcasted to the public online and offline, helps reduce conflict and ensure stability and safety. Other countries, on the other hand, see freedom of expression through the media as a fundamental human right. However, developing countries face unique challenges in striking a balance with respect to media freedom. Importantly, developing countries tend to have greater ownership and control of traditional media than developed countries, making the impact of their stance on media freedom felt more immediately and directly by journalists. Developed nations also have a very big influence on undeveloped ones, making them crucial in our committee and a huge factor in forming an effective resolution. This creates conflict between nations in deciding whether or not developing countries should consider freedom of the media as a guaranteed human right, or as a limited privilege. Some developing countries stress the potential of media freedom to divide their nation and to undermine political institutions. Others see this range of opinion as strengthening political institutions and empowering both journalists as well as citizens. As SOCHUM, we must find appropriate

resolutions to this issue that will benefit the citizens of developing countries, without infringing on national sovereignty.

Topic History in Different Regions:

AMERICAS: A 2014 UNESCO report on public media found significant challenges facing both governments and citizens of the Latin American and Caribbean regions. The report cited, first of all, the “lack of independent regulators”, as well as the need for “updating of regulatory frameworks”. The report also noted the continuing vulnerability of journalists in the region. “In several countries”, it reports, “the violence related to drug trafficking, organized crime and corruption is creating a particularly hazardous environment for them”. At the same time, the report praises advances in the region in information access, and also access to the internet. Among North American countries, Mexico faces the highest degree of government corruption. The high amount of organized crime and corruption among police officers, make it difficult for journalists to be protected under law. Countries such as the U.S. have a population that is rich in diversity under a democratic constitution. Reporters Without Borders states that, “In the United States, 9/11 spawned a major conflict between the imperatives of national security and the principles of the constitution’s First Amendment”. These regulations, in place to help ensure the security of the nation and its people, can pose similar threats to media freedom.

EUROPE: According to the European charter, in a democratic society free press is essential to “uphold and protect it”. The charter also states that journalists must be protected and given the right to “gather and disseminate information and opinions”. The European Union is looking to strengthen freedom of the media in Europe, and its Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (EU) states that all are given the freedom to inform and be informed. Most countries in northern and western Europe have a long tradition of media independence and strength. In countries in central Europe, including also Russia, freedom of expression is relatively new and has developed unevenly. The majority of the European countries are highly developed, however their attitude towards freedom of the press in developing countries can have a critical bearing on which countries they choose to admit to the EU. One of the stated criteria for EU membership is “stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities”.

ASIA: In Asia, countries such as China frequently use censorship to limit the amount of freedoms their citizens are given to the media. Some leaders do this in order to avoid being embarrassed or exposed for corruption. Many journalists are jailed due to the content they publish on traditional or social media, that is viewed as risky or threatening to their nation. According to Reporters Without Borders, even in more democratic nations, such as Papua New Guinea, “journalists were fined for ‘criticizing’ their prime minister”. Some Asian democracies have other policies that limit

use of media. Reporters Without Borders, for instance, also notes, “ In northern India’s Kashmir region and in Indonesia’s West Papua province, the work of journalists is handicapped by draconian news control policies. In Kashmir, the authorities impose curfews and often block the internet and mobile phone networks”. Although in Asia there are many countries such as China and North Korea with little to no media freedom, other democratic countries are steadily gaining these freedoms.

MIDDLE EAST: Most Middle Eastern countries are developing and are very dangerous for reporters. For example, In Syria, Jihadi groups add another obstacle for freedom of the media by abducting and harming journalists in the region. In some of these countries, the media is used as a source of propaganda for politicians, and in others, such as Jordan, the restrictions on media tightened when hundreds of news websites were blocked and according to Reporters Without Borders, the access to these websites was blocked under a “new media law that drastically restricts freedom of information”. The ongoing armed conflict in this region negatively affects the safety of journalists in these nations and makes their media less independent. The many non-state groups that flood the region make for an unsafe environment for the journalists at risk of being targeted with abduction and violence.

AFRICA: Africa is a region that is filled with different military conflicts that make it difficult for journalists to perform their jobs effectively. Although the Geneva Conventions protect journalists in armed conflict under law, they still become targets during “information war”. Reporters Without Borders wrote, “Somalia’s Islamist militia Al-Shabaab, for example, has always targeted journalists as unwanted witnesses of its terrorist methods. With seven journalists killed in 2013, Somalia is Africa’s deadliest country for media personnel”. The chaos in these developing countries makes it difficult to protect and enforce laws against violence towards journalists, and their unstable governments makes them easily feel threatened. This limits the amount of freedom of the media in these countries, because journalists who provide content for media become targets for violence.

WHAT THE UNITED NATIONS HAS DONE:

In its Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations identifies freedom of expression as a fundamental human right. As stated in Article 49, “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” The U.N. has taken concrete steps to call attention to, and promote this right on several levels. UNESCO monitors governments with respect to media issues, but also provides advisory

services to them on media law and regulation. The U.N. also promotes this effort with its annual World Press Freedom Day observance. UNESCO has played a similar advisory role in promoting democracy and free expression with respect to the internet and social media.

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WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT

TOPIC INTRODUCTION:

As armed conflict becomes increasingly apparent in the world, the issue of the treatment of women in these conflict zones is becoming more prevalent in several countries across the globe. In the past, 90 percent of those who lost their lives during times of conflict were military personnel. However, now it is estimated that approximately 90 percent of war casualties are civilians and the majority of the civilians are women and children. Although entire communities suffer the repercussions of conflict, women and girls are especially vulnerable to this violence due to their status in society. Severe human rights violations are committed towards women like sexual violence, abductions, trauma, debilitation, murder, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and forced sterilization, limited access to education and

healthcare, marginalization from society, and economic troubles. Armed conflict is a gender-based problem where women experience different and disproportionate effects. Moral boundaries are crossed and several violations have occurred that deter women from living freely, enjoying their rights and cause damage to them, their families and their communities. The status of women is different in various countries which causes countries to have different views on how women should be treated in these conflict zones. Some countries believe that women hold an extremely low position in the social hierarchy leading them to believe that the treatment of women is not a colossal global concern. However other countries, especially developed countries, believe that women enjoy the same rights as men and should be treated in the same manner. This creates a conflict due to the opposing views of countries. Women are taken advantage of and face inhumane acts in conflict zones during war. As SOCHUM, it is our duty to identify the root of this issue and create solutions to this ubiquitous issue by coming together and working as one.

TOPIC HISTORY IN DIFFERENT REGIONS:

AMERICAS: Diverse countries in this region have been faced with challenges for women in times of armed conflict in their respective countries. Colombia's history is stained by large-scale violence

against women during bloody drug and guerrilla wars. Similar to the Islamic State, the FARC guerrillas took over large areas of land and imposed their own laws on the people of the land. They had complete control of girls and women. The government and right-wing paramilitary forces horrified and brutalized communities, especially women and girls. UN report say guerrilla groups forcibly recruited women through kidnapping and rape, or luring young women and holding them captive against their own will. Amnesty International expressed their concern that the sexual and reproductive rights of women are controlled and “women and girls are exploited as sexual slaves”. Kidnapping and extreme violence is perpetrated against women in the Pacific port of Buenaventura as a war strategy.

Similarly, Mexico is involved in poor treatment of women. Although it is not an official conflict zone, Mexico is full of gang violence, drug trafficking, dangerous weapons, and is full of corrupt authority figures and security forces. The mistreatment of Mexican women is so prevalent that it is labelled “femicide.” Hundreds of women are abducted, raped, tortured and murdered and their bodies are dumped into the desert. State authorities are accused of taking women from their homes and abusing them, especially indigenous women and community workers. This harsh treatment needs immediate reform to ensure the safety of the people of this region.

EUROPE: A couple countries in the European have encountered issues with the treatment of women in their conflict zones. The conflict in eastern Ukraine between pro-Russian separatists and Ukrainian

forces had no reports of systematic kidnapping of women but a UN human rights report said that “the breakdown of law and order in the conflict zone has resulted in killings, abductions, torture, ill-treatment, sexual violence, forced labor, ransom demands and extortion of money by the armed groups.” Captured people who are suspected of pro-Ukrainian sympathies face death threats, cutting with knives and sexual assaults. The government’s efforts to rein in separatists have featured disappearances of people who are suspected of separatism or terrorism. Both sides are accused of sexualized violence. Women who were abducted during this conflict were slashed with knives, beaten, and raped. They suffered complete mistreatment and experienced human rights violations. The security of the people of this region needs to be ensured.

ASIA: In Asia, countries such as Burma(Myanmar), North Korea, Syria and India face the issue of mistreatment of women in zones of conflict during times of war. Women have suffered enormous amounts of sexual violence in the country of Burma, which is riven by multi-ethnic, multi-religious divisions and a long history of colonialism and dictatorship. The military have often targeted the women to quell opposition movements and maintain its own power. Rapid investment in Burma’s resource-rich areas has brought a larger military presence and put women at a larger risk of abduction or attack. Abductions of women have been reported over the past decade. They have been

forced to go to labor camps, where they are raped and forced to conscription in the army. They eventually become sexual slaves. In Syria, more than 200 Assyrian Christians from villages were attacked by Islamic State militants and the majority of those Christians were women. Testimonies were heard by reporters and human rights groups of systematic large-scale abduction, beating, torture and gang rape by the forces of Bashar Assad. This was primarily used to punish female relatives of suspected regime opponents. It is estimated that more than 50,000 women have been raped in Assad's prisons since 2011. Women have reported being videotaped while tortured and raped, and the images were sent to their relatives. In North Korea, most of the activity that goes on is off the global radar so it is difficult to know the extent of kidnappings. However, some testimonies have expressed that women who are targeted by the regime and seized are forced into camps and raped regularly by guards or officials. Those who become pregnant are at risk for being murdered by the guards. Women in India are affected by conflicts due to their role in society. As the community becomes militarized, discrimination against women increases. Women are seen as the property of men and rape is commonly used as a weapon of war against women. Women are exposed to dangers of trafficking and sexual slavery. In India, trafficking is highest in the states of Punjab, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. In 2005 up to 6,000 cases of trafficking were officially registered in India, however the real number is significantly higher. These acts against women need to be prevented by finding

effective solutions.

MIDDLE EAST: In the Middle East, Iraq faces problems with women and armed conflict. A prevalent issue in the Middle East is the cultural and religious conflict that results in attempts to justify violence against women both within and between conflicting groups. In Iraq, the self-styled Islamic State makes its way across Syria and Iraq by murdering individuals to find a medieval-style caliphate that would make women permanent chattels of men. Some of the worst treatment was towards the 7,000 Yazidi girls and women that were kidnapped during an onslaught against Iraqi Kurdistan. They have published justifications for enslaving the women by saying that they are infidels, as members of a Kurdish-speaking religious minority that does not conform to their extreme form of Islam. The ones who manage to escape or are rescued give their horrific accounts of rape, torture, beating, drugging, forced marriage, and sexual slavery. Iraqi government troops prepare to launch an offensive against the Islamic State in Tikrit. While that is in preparation, the militants have kidnapped 26 female students to take as temporary wives. Women are being completely taken advantage of and mistreated.

AFRICA: Africa is a region that is made up of countries that are involved in war that make women vulnerable to gender-based violence. Boko Haram, a militant group in impoverished northeastern

Nigeria, is translated to “Western education is a sin”. It is an attempt to eradicate what it sees as colonial values. The punishment for those who go to school-especially girls and women- is mass kidnappings where almost no one returns. The kidnapping campaign has outraged and completely horrified parents whose daughters are at the risk of rape, trafficking and sexual slavery. The Democratic Republic of Congo is known as the rape capital of the world for savage sexual attacks by armed groups working for warlords, corrupt officials and hostile ethnic groups competing for its rich resources. Violence has also been transferred from the neighboring country of Rwanda. Mass rape has become commonplace. A majority of the sexual violence takes place in fields, forests and homes, where women are working or gathering food and water. Victims are abducted into sexual slavery or are held captive for years and sexually abused. In Libya, under the dictator Moammar Gadhafi, there was widespread violence against women by government forces. The dictator himself instigated kidnapping of school girls and young boys. The children were tortured and raped. Migrant workers that work in Libya, who were held in detention camps, were reportedly raped leading to destructive effects.

WHAT THE UNITED NATIONS HAS DONE:

The Platform for Action, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, identified the effects of armed conflict

on women as one of the 12 critical areas of concern requiring action by governments and the international community. It also stressed the need to promote the equal participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels. During its forty-second session in 1998, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women discussed the issue of women and armed conflict and proposed further action to be taken by member states and the international community to accelerate the implementation of the Platform's strategic objectives in this area, including the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all relevant policies and programs. The conclusions were measures to ensure gender sensitive justice, address the specific needs and concerns of women refugees and displaced persons and increase the participation of women in peacekeeping, peace-building, pre- and post-conflict decision-making and conflict prevention.

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