2017-2018
Model Arab League

BACKGROUND GUIDE
Council on Political Affairs

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Honorable Delegates,

It is with immense pleasure that I welcome you to the 2017-2018 Model Arab League and the Council on Political Affairs. My name is Carissa Crabtree and it is an honor to serve as your chair for both the Southeast Regional and National Model Arab League Conferences. I am a recent graduate of Georgia State University with a degree in Political Science and Middle Eastern Studies. This is my third year in the Model Arab League program and I am so excited to see all the work you put into making a great committee. In my three years with Model Arab League I have had the opportunity to participate in eight conferences, including the UIR International Conference in Rabat, Morocco. Every conference is a unique opportunity to grow as a delegate, a student, and a member of the international community. I look forward to seeing you take full advantage of these opportunities in our time together.

The Council on Political Affairs has widespread jurisdiction and the potential to create real change to existing problems in the Arab World. While preparing for conference you need to consider the role your country plays in the Arab League, its individual interests, and its goals for the region as a whole. To do this you will need to remain dedicated in your research, exploring each topic thoroughly and coming to committee with concrete ideas.

I look forward to seeing you in committee, where I hope together with your fellow delegates we can create creative solutions to the current issues facing the Middle East. I expect lively and challenging debate, that at the end of conference we can all be proud to have contributed to.

Good luck and I'll see you at conference!

Best,

Carissa Crabtree

Council on Political Affairs

Topic I: Formulating strategies to empower youth movements and increasing political engagement from younger generations.

I. Introduction

A.   General Background

Young people have always had a revolutionary role in the political sphere. The United Nations Youth says that young people "can be a creative force, a dynamic source of innovations, and they have undoubtedly, throughout history, participated, contributed, and even catalyzed important changes in political systems, power-sharing dynamics and economic opportunities."[1] Young people have an understanding of new technology, an inherent sense of rebellion, and a desire for constant change. In a report for the 'Young People in Politics" survey, the International IDEA think tank commented that, "young adults can be seen as having distinctive political interests, more inclined to change than older generations, more idealistic in their goals and less loyal to established traditions."[2]

In many parts of the world, their opinions and views on political matters are put aside and unheard. This leads to the formation of their own groups, which can grow quickly in size and power. Some youth movements have changed the world; some have been destroyed by fearful governments. However, what they all have in common is a desire to be involved in the political process and to have a say in the policies that shape their lives.

B.   History in the Arab World

It can be argued that no region is feeling the impact of youth movements more than the Arab world. Six years ago, uprising spread across the Middle East. From Morocco to Iraq, young people used the power of social media and one another to push for their own political agenda. Over half a decade later the region is still unsettled. Some conflicts were resolved, some erupted into civil war, and some are still constantly evolving. Ufiem Ogbonnaya concluded in his report on the causes of the Arab Spring that government corruption, unemployment, extreme poverty, and various other factors all created a "dissatisfied youth" within the MENA region.[3] Overwhelmingly, young people were on the front lines of every protest across the region as the uprisings continued.

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[1] United Nations Youth. "Youth, Political Participation and Decision Making." http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-political-participation.pdf.

[2] International IDEA. "Young People in Politics Survey". http://archive.idea.int/df/99df/daniela-int3.html

[3] Ogbonnaya, Ufiem Maurice. "Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya: A Comparative Analysis of Causes and Determinants." Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations 12, no. 3 (Fall2013 2013): 4. Advanced Placement Source, EBSCOhost.

Lack of economic opportunity paired with the technology to communicate across national borders created the largest youth led push for political change the world had ever seen, and it's still affecting member states today. Some states cracked down on the youth, suppressing their speech and movements and not allowing them to continue their influence. Others accepted the change, and worked with protestors to allow for new policy. No matter what your individual state chose to do, you were directly affected by the lack of participation these young people felt before the Arab Spring, and the movements they lead in the years after.

C.   Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring and in order to move forward in a positive direction, the League should work towards empowering youth movements in ways that involve youth in the political sphere of the state. Youth activism is still high in the region, and member states should evaluate how youth inclusion can be instrumental in the political, economic, and social realms of their country. When discussing solutions to this problem, this council should keep in mind that although the youth movements are high in numbers, it does not mean their ideals and agendas are universal. It is imperative that this body form solutions that are adaptable in nature and increase political engagement from younger generations from all social, political, and ideological backgrounds.

After the Arab Spring, many nations facing change reversed their newfound positions that they were urged to maintain. The wave of inspiration subsided and the realities of change fell heavy on both governments and their citizens. Now in the years after, the League must create policy to protect member states from another sweeping revolution. It is the responsibility of this council to understand and address the needs of its citizens, young and old. A delicate conversation must take place on the demands the Arab Spring showed, balancing the sovereignty of each state with the collective security of the entire League. The League does not want to endure more youth uprisings, so this council should explore new ways member states can create healthy avenues for increasing political engagement among the youth.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What specific struggles currently face the young people in my country? What policies affect their political engagement?
- In what ways have youth movements affected my nation?
- What groups of people (women, religious minorities, and ethnic minorities) also need to engage more in the politics of my state? How are the youth affected?
- In what ways can you address the issues youth face in your nation, including ways to include them in discussion and solutions?

III.   Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- Why has the political engagement of youth been an issue in the past?
- How can the League as a whole empower youth in the political process in a way that all member states are comfortable with?
- How can the League encourage member states to hear the opinions of youth movements?
- What do member states define as 'youth movement' vs a rebellion?

IV.   Additional Resources

- "Youth and the Arab Spring"
  This article from the United States Institute of Peace demonstrates Arab Youth's ability to change the political sphere.

- UNDP Guide on Political Engagement for Youth
  The UNDP Collected a series of research backed tips and ideas for nations hoping to reengage their youth in the political sphere.

- "Tahir's Legacy: Opportunities and Hazards for the Future of Youth Movements in the Middle East"
  The Georgetown Journal of International Affairs offers a concise argument on the current issues facing Middle Eastern youth and the means they still have, to affect change.

- Washington Post's Youth Movement
  This handy tool quickly shows the age demographics of the nation and a quick recap of the situation each group of youth face.

- "The Arab Youth Movement"
  This hour-long podcast recorded with Juan Cole, gives an overview of his book on Millennial Arabs.

Topic II: Establishing a framework for resolving regional instability that incorporates, updates, or is otherwise not addressed by Articles V, VI, or VIII of the Charter of the League of Arab States.

I. Introduction

A.   General Background

The actions of your neighbors affect you. When a neighboring state becomes politically or militaristically unstable, it has lasting consequences that not only affect the state in question, but the entire region. Regional instability has the power to devastate a region's economy, political processes, and security. Economic repercussions can include a "disruption in trade flows, an increase in military expenses, in addition to impacting tourism and interstate travel."[1] Regional instability also leads to political decisions that would not have to be made otherwise. Perhaps most importantly, regional instability leads to increased security concerns and potential fractured alliances within a region.

While Articles V, VI, and VIII address the necessary process for member states to address aggressions by other member states, they do not address the consequences of the instability of one state on its neighboring state. They do not allow for intervention in states whose governments are no longer able to control violence or terrorism within their borders, allowing neighboring states to be affected by these actions. These articles only address respecting each states' sovereignty and consequences against states that invade and violate another sovereign state. It is important for the League to revisit these articles to create a framework that allows member states to prevent regional insecurity and protect citizens.

B.   History in the Arab World

The Arab world has seen its share of regional instability, and it continues to struggle with maintaining a politically stable and safe region. Today, instability is a major threat to states such as Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Libya and Egypt. As a result, neighboring countries are at risk. The source of destabilization is different in every case, yet Arab states are prone to certain factors that create an environment for destabilization. Lack of economic development, lasting repercussions of colonialism, foreign interference, and the threat of terrorism are all factors that lead to regional instability within the Middle East[2].

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[1] Hak, Chua B., and Alberto Ades. "Regional Instability and Economic Growth: Thy Neighbors Curse." *Economic Growth Center Discussion Paper* 704 (May 1993). http://www.econ.yale.edu/growth_pdf/cdp704.pdf.

[2] Mabro, Robert. "The Political Instability of the Middle East and Its Impact on Oil Production and Trade." *Energy Studies Review* 4, no. 1 (1992). https://energystudiesreview.ca/esr/article/viewFile/259/573.

In the last ten years, the amount of instability in the region has affected every nation within the League. The revolutions of the Arab Spring, the rise of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, conflicts in Sudan, Libya, and Yemen, and continued political upheaval in states such as Egypt showcase that regional stability is needed now more than ever. No nation is exempt from either direct instability or consequences from the instability of a neighboring state. Recognizing the rise in instability, the League needs to find solutions to ways in which to prevent and resolve it throughout the region.

Articles V, VI, and VIII of the charter deal with disputes between member states. The Arab League Charter lacks certain provisions for collective security that you would see in other international organizations such as the United Nations. The Charter was signed March 22nd of 1945, and the original articles have not been amended since. Article V calls for member states to apply to the League for settlement of disputes between them that do not include issues of sovereignty. Within this article, the League plays the role of mediator in any disputes. Article VI handles action by the League when a member state has already committed an act of aggression against another member state. Article VIII reminds the council that sovereignty is to be respected, and no member state shall infringe sovereignty in order to change the form of government for another member state.

C.   Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

In order to fully address the issues currently plaguing the Arab world in regards to regional instability, this council must address the fundamental gaps in the Arab League Charter. Delegates need to understand their nation's history with charter reform and their own willingness to amend the document. Solutions for security and economic crises need an outlined framework for how to deal with these issues as they arise. This will hopefully alleviate future catastrophes in the region. The ability to agree on these solutions will begin with the fundamentals of the Charter and the basis of collective security within the League.

III. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How has my country been affected internally/externally by instability?
- What steps has the League taken in the past to address regional instability? How have they worked?
- What exactly do articles V, VI, and VIII say about collective security? What do they not say?
- What is your country willing to do to protect or defend other member states?

III.   Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What are the parameters for the League to define regional instability?

- Is there anything more that can be added to the charter to address current issues in regional instability?
- What kind of framework can be created to peacefully resolve disputes within member states?
- Is charter reform a necessary step in enacting this framework?

IV.   Additional Resources

- "The Charter of the League of Arab States"
  The original charter provided by Avalon at Yale.

- "The [New-Old] Crises and Instability in the Middle East and North Africa"
  The CSIS lays out here the fundamental issues facing the Middle East, including history and current crisis to give a comprehensive look at the instability in the region.

- "The Underlying Causes of Stability and Instability in the MENA Region"
  The CSIS gives survey data and analytics on what causes the Arab world to destabilize and what factors contribute to its stability.

- "Confronting Terrorism and Instability in the Middle East"
  This Huffington Post article addresses the concerns of terrorism and foreign interference on MENA stability.

Topic III: Assessing the state of separatist movements and political minorities within the League, and prescribing solutions to disunity.

I.   **Introduction**

    A.   **General Background**

The desire to be heard and cared for by their leaders is centuries old. Many separatists groups feel they are not cared for and listened to in the state which they live, so they seek autonomy and sovereignty in a state of their own. For the Arab region, the most prominent of these separatist movements to find sovereignty is that of the 60-year struggle of Palestine. There are however many other separatist movements throughout the Arab world. Each seeks greater autonomy from the state in which they currently reside or are occupied by.

Self-determination, political involvement and security are all standards for states and individuals. The issue occurs when a group feels that these standards are not being met, and the only solution is secession. The MENA region is not alone in dealing with this problem; Europe and Africa all deal with the political realities of secession. Political minorities are particularly susceptible to the idea of secession. Without proper representation, their needs can go unmet, and the idea of their own state seems like the only answer.

    B.   **History in the Arab World**

Breaking off from a state to form a new one is a radical political agenda, but one that is not unprecedented in the region. After long civil wars, both Sudan and Morocco were able to peacefully create the autonomous regions of the Western Sahara and South Sudan. While both are still contentious, they have managed to maintain peace between the two regions. Other states including Yemen, Somalia, Iraq, and Syria still face the violence of separatist movements.

In 2011, Sudan voted in referendum to break into two nations, creating South Sudan. Decades of civil war and the loss of millions of lives lead to this drastic decision. Many see the secession movement in Sudan as a result of decades of neglect from the central Sudanese government of those in Sudan's periphery.[1] In addition, the ramifications of clashing ethnic and religious groups and the excessive concentration of jobs, wealth, and public services in the "Arab triangle" also led to this break. The lack of representation and the 22 year long war caused a need for separation and a Peace Agreement. Similarly in 1991, the UN brokered a truce between Morocco and Western Sahara with a promise of a referendum. The referendum for Western Sahara's independence has yet to be agreed upon, but the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic

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[1] Natsios, Andrew S., and Michael Abramowitz. "Sudan's Secession Crisis." Foreign Affairs. January 10, 2011. Accessed September 1, 2017. http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/east-africa/2011-01-01/sudans-secession-crisis.

declared by the Polisario Front is recognized by many governments and is a full member of the African Union[1]. While not all separatist movements lead to an autonomous succession, all options may be explored in order to protect the citizens of each of the League's member states from violence.

There are many other separatist movements present in the MENA region. The most notable is the Kurdish people who have persistently fought for their own state within the region for decades. Their desire comes from a strong nation-state mentality, and a unity based on race, culture and religion. The Kurds are a large community which span across, Syria, Iraq, Turkey and Iran. While each Kurdish community does not always agree with the other, they are unified by their desire to become one nation. Over the years the Kurds have fought in different ways in order to create a state of their own. Since 2013, they have fought in northern Syria and Iraq against ISIS to both protect their territory and in prospects of gaining a sovereign state.[2] This is just another example of a separatist movement in the region, and the Kurds are not the only minority that feels isolated by society.

C.   Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

The main goal of this topic should be three fold: identifying active separatist's movements in the region, assessing the causes of these movements, and addressing the movements in a positive way. Delegates should begin by identifying active separatist movements throughout the Arab World and determine the causes of these movements. They should then analyze and compare the past case studies of separatist movements in order to present and create clear resolutions to conflicts between separatist movements and the states they reside. Delegates should take into effect the strengths and weaknesses of each case study and use them as a guide for creating strong resolutions. This topic also includes political minorities that are not part of separatist movements; solutions should address concerns addressing political minorities as well.

In preparing for this topic, delegates should look at the major causes for secession, how they develop into conflicts, and ways to prevent them from occurring. This council should also identify how to create unity among the region for political minorities. Delegates should strategize ways to create unity between all parties. It is imperative this council views and analyzes the issue from both sides, deciding on a course of action to address the issue at multiple stages.

IV. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What causes separatists movements to occur?
- What specific issues does my country face that could create the idea for succession?
- What is the role of political minorities in my political system?

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[1] "Western Sahara profile." BBC News. April 04, 2017. Accessed September 11, 2017. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14115273.

[2] "Who are the Kurds?" BBC News. March 14, 2016. Accessed September 10, 2017.

- How can the League as a whole prevent separatist movements and urge member states to create systems of government that promote equality?

III.   Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What defines a separatist movement for the League?
- How can the League urge member states to effectively combat exclusion of political minorities?
- How does the Charter come into play when a separatist group becomes involved in a member state?
- What role does the League play in addressing separatist movements as they head towards conflict?

IV.   Additional Resources

CDSS Paper on the Role of Nation-States

In Pursuit of Sovereignty and Self Determination

"Who are the Kurds?"

Topic IV: Identifying states that promote laws or policies contributing to Islamophobia or anti-Arab sentiments, and providing support to Arab Diasporas in combatting these and other barriers

I.   Introduction

A.   General Background

Over the past few decades, hostility towards Arabs and Islam has been on the rise. This hostility has caused increased fear for Arabs around the world, as it has led to a rise in extremism from both sides. Ultimately, it has caused violence against Arabs both within and outside of the MENA region due to a fear of Islam.

CAIR, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, defines islamophobia as a "closed-minded prejudice against or hatred of Islam and Muslims."[1] The term has arisen in recent years to describe the phenomena of violence and hatred felt towards the Arab world and the Islamic religion. Since the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, Islam has been viewed with skepticism and hatred as perpetrating violence and death to the Western world. This perceived condoning of violence has actual violent consequences for Muslims. Attacks on individuals, families, and mosques are becoming more common. In 2015, in the United States alone, there were 257 "anti-Muslim" incidents, which represent a 67% increase from the year before.[2] With the growth of the Islamic State and a spread of terrorist activity across the world, many turn to blaming Islam for the violence. These ideas are supported through rhetoric and policy of many states, governments, and individuals.

B.   History in the Arab World

The rise of anti-Arab and anti-Islam sentiments has led to issues ranging from economic to security concerns. The lack of trust and buildup of fear hinders member states from developing economically through partnerships and tourism. For some states, these sentiments lead to violence and invasion. States are not the only ones who are hindered by islamophobia. Individuals who have left, or were forced to leave the region deal with discrimination and violence all over the world. The lack of respect for Islam and Arabs has led to discrimination against both sects throughout the western world and correlates to a rise in religious extremism in the MENA Region, including ISIS.[3] In addition, governments within the Middle East itself have contributed to these sentiments by allowing this rhetoric from western leaders to be accepted and allowing extremism to continue to thrive throughout MENA.

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[1] CAIR. "Combating Islamophobia - Islamophobia." Islamophobia is Closed-minded Prejudice Against or Hatred of Islam and Muslims. - Islamophobia. http://www.islamophobia.org/about.html.

[2] "Islamophobia." Http://www.apa.org.. http://www.apa.org/monitor/2017/04/islamophobia.aspx.

[3] Kundnani, Arun. "The west's Islamophobia is only helping the Islamic State." The Washington Post. March 23, 2016. Accessed September 12, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/03/23/the-wests-islamophobia-is-only-helping-the-islamic-state/?utm_term=.74fca70b106f

C.   Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

The solution to this problem is not an easy one. Decades worth of rhetoric have shaped a mindset the world is reluctant to shake off. It is the responsibility of this council to identify the aggressors in this negative rhetorical battle, formulate strategies on how to effectively protect Diasporas across the globe, and promote an image of truth and peace.

It is also important to note how each member state's policy influences these ideas and to keep other member states accountable for their actions. Perhaps delegates would consider a positive message campaign, or a promotion of tourism and education. Creating unity amongst religious factions is another possibility for combatting these ides. Delegates should be creative when looking for ways in which to write resolutions, with the goal of preventing and eliminating the spread of Anti-Arab and Anti-Islamic rhetoric.

V. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How has islamophobia or anti-Arab rhetoric affected the citizens of my nation?
- Are there any policies in my state that could be contributing to anti-Arab sentiments both in the region and around the world?
- What are the needs of Arab Diasporas around the world?
- How can the League as a whole create policy to combat anti-Arab sentiment and build pathways towards peace?

III.   Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What can this Council propose to protect Arab Diasporas across the world?
- What sentiments exist that promote islamophobia and an anti-Arab agenda? Where do they come from?
- What programs exist which currently promote education of the Arab World and Islam? How can they be used to educate the world and ultimately protect citizens of Arab member states and Diasporas?
- What statement can this council make to let the world know the truth about Islam and the Arab World?

IV.   Additional Resources

- "CAIR Islamophobia Monitor"
  CAIR lays out the ways in which islamophobia affects citizens with graphics and explanations.

- "APA Feature on Islamophobia"
  The American Psychological Association studies the impact on anti-Muslim sentiment and explores ways of prevention.

- "The Qatari Crisis"
  The Middle East Eye gives an overview of the current situation in Qatar and its links to islamophobia.

- "Countering Islamophobia: An Unfinished Business"
  The IPHRC gives this report on the status of Islamophobia and methods to counter it.