



**2021 - 2022**

# **Model Arab League BACKGROUND GUIDE**

**Council on Political Affairs**

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**National  
Council  
on US-  
Arab  
Relations**



**Original draft by Hannah Norton, Chair of the Council on Political Affairs at the 2022 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from the dedicated staff and volunteers at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations**

Honorable Delegates,

I am pleased to welcome you all to the Council on Political Affairs for the 2021-2022 Model Arab League Season! My name is Hannah Norton and I will be serving as your Political Affairs Chair at both the National Model Arab League and Southeast Regional Model Conferences. I am a Senior Political Science Major at Converse College (or now, Converse University) with a minor in Arts Management. I have participated in multiple Model Arab League conferences beginning in my Junior year of High School and I am thrilled to trade in my debating status to act as your chair this year. My previous participation in this council heightens my expectations in your ability as delegates to simultaneously form comprehensive solutions while maintaining a secure stance in your country's policy.

The Political Affairs Council is unique in its ability to make policy decisions that can be implemented in your country and your neighbors. In order to properly defend the political needs of your member state, it will be imperative that you conduct research beyond this background guide and the surface level. Due to the collaborative nature of political resolutions, I recommend exploring mutual interests that your country shares with fellow members. My suggestion for your research is to understand your country's primary concerns as well as develop a base for resolutions that will allow for input from your peers. Participation is key in conference and knowing the rules of procedure alongside your policy will ensure your confidence and productivity during debate.

It can be intimidating to enter Model Arab League conferences, however, each session is an opportunity to learn and grow alongside those you debate with. We are all constantly learning and I hope that each of you will keep that in mind as we move forward into this season.

Best of Luck,

Hannah Norton

## **Topic I: Analyzing stimulus policy efforts created during the Covid-19 crisis and their feasibility as models for long term improvement efforts.**

### **I. Introduction**

#### **A. General Background**

The Covid-19 pandemic affected nearly all aspects of daily life and emphasized global interdependencies as it quickly overwhelmed the globe. As the reality of the pandemic began to take effect, it was up to the governments of the world to protect their countries from short and long-term impacts of the pandemic. This meant that much of the government response included fast-paced measures such as “school closings, travel restrictions, bans on public gatherings, emergency investments in healthcare facilities, new forms of social welfare provision, contact tracing and other interventions to contain the spread of the virus, augment health systems and manage the economic consequences of these actions.”<sup>1</sup> Many of these measures were temporarily enacted by policymakers, but highlighted areas that are in need of attention, specifically institutional reform in public health and social welfare that have long been plagued with inequality.

In your analysis of stimulus policy endeavors it is important to examine both the monetary and fiscal stimulus policy implemented in your nation. Fiscal policy is often carried out by the government to help stimulate the economy through tax cuts and spending adjustments. An example of fiscal policy used during the pandemic is in Qatar where the government made “food and medical goods exempt from custom duties, waived rental and utilities fees for households and businesses until February 2021, and provided quarantined Migrant workers or those undergoing treatment with full salaries.”<sup>2</sup> Monetary policy is often conducted by the central bank in the country in which money supply is changed and economic improvement is the goal. The central bank in Brazil lowered policy rates and “changed capital requirements for small financial institutions” during the pandemic, exhibiting how monetary policy can influence the economy.<sup>3</sup> Fiscal policy will likely be a stronger focus in your research because where this fiscal stimulus was implemented can expose industries or factions that already experience inequities.

#### **B. History of the Topic in the Arab World**

There have been varying strategies in response to the pandemic, but much of the outcome relies on the dependability of the healthcare systems in the region. The countries of the Gulf

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<sup>1</sup>Hale, T., Angrist, N., Goldszmidt, R. *et al.* [A global panel database of pandemic policies \(Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker\)](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01079-8). *Nat Hum Behav* 5, 529–538 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01079-8>

<sup>2</sup> International Monetary Fund. (2020). Policy Responses to Covid-19, <https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19#P>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Cooperation Council (GCC) utilized “a strategy based on prevention, strict control measures adopted and effectively enforced early on, and important means allocated to case detection and tracking.”<sup>4</sup> The ability to adapt quickly and adequately enforce procedures requires preparedness and stability, a hard principle to follow when a nation is facing conflict or fundamental issues before a crisis. The unresolved emergency circumstances faced by countries in conflict such as Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic, Palestine and Yemen predating the risk of Covid-19 have only been exacerbated by the lack of proper investment into their health systems. The main response across the MENA region was largely centralized with an emphasis on the creation of inter-ministerial structures, continuing public services, implementing public communication measures, and utilizing public procurement systems.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the initial trends in the Middle East and North African region that signified low infection rates, the pandemic quickly swept through the region, especially as efforts to stimulate the economy overpowered former public health guidelines. As the MENA region has weathered the pandemic, government debt has risen by 8.8 percent since 2019.<sup>6</sup> Countries in the Maghreb and Middle East have implemented multiple procedures to lower the impact of the pandemic on the private sector and individual households. Tunisia’s emergency plan included cash transfers and a free supply of some utilities for vulnerable and low-income households which was bolstered by the initiation of an economic recovery plan that continues previous efforts, such as a fund to support business reconversion.<sup>7</sup> Economic hardship remains an issue for youth and women, with their inclusion in economic recovery plans only given prominence in some states.

Due to the nature of the virus, a crucial element of response policy included investment in partnerships with other countries and organizations to seek solutions to the coronavirus. The emphasis on risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) was largely guided by the World Health Organization that helped many nations in the region to “strengthen community and media engagement; map national RCCE capacities; plan and implement knowledge, attitude and practice surveys; develop information, education and communication materials; and build RCCE capacity.”<sup>8</sup> Building up trust and transparency surrounding the reality of Covid and the measures that members were taking to prevent the spread helped to demystify misinformation and rumors.

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<sup>4</sup> OECD (2020), "COVID-19 crisis response in MENA countries", *OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19)*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/4b366396-en>, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 7,8.

<sup>6</sup> International Monetary Fund. (2021). *Regional Economic Outlook: Arising from the Pandemic: Building Forward Better*. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/REO/MECA/Issues/2021/04/11/regional-economic-outlook-middle-east-central-asia>

<sup>7</sup> OECD (2020), "COVID-19 crisis response in MENA countries", 34, 35.

<sup>8</sup> COVID-19 pandemic response in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: 2020 progress report of the Incident Management Support Team. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2021. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO., 16.

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

To produce an adequate solution to this topic, you should look specifically at what policy measures that your state put into effect due to Covid as well as the pre-existing institutions on emergency preparedness. Another aspect to consider will be the overlapping social, economic, environmental, and technological impact of the pandemic in your nation. With these details in mind, you should then seek out sectors and populations that are projected to endure the longest recovery periods. The tourism industry that largely employs women and youth are estimated to recover beginning in some states by 2022 with others extending into 2025.<sup>9</sup> In light of these sectoral uncertainties, those areas facing the most risk should hold priority.

The communal essence of Covid opens discussion on the interconnectedness of the world at large, opening the eyes of many that the struggle of your neighbor can soon be your own. Consulting countries that were experiencing instability and conflict before the onset of the pandemic in your analysis will be conducive in forming a solution that addresses the needs of all member states. A crucial aspect of resolution development should revolve around the idea of Arab unity and how this premise can lead to the shared prosperity of the region. This will also require cooperation at the national level as countries that held the most effective Covid-19 response were those with secure, pre-existing structures in place alongside institutional coordination.<sup>10</sup> The League of Arab States can continue to act as an example of how to move forward as a unit by collectively analyzing beneficial stimulus policy.

#### II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What organizations and countries did my state partner with to mitigate the effects of the pandemic?
- What social assistance programs were formed or bolstered due to the pandemic?
- What structures or institutions were already in place before the pandemic that aided in approaching the issues intensified by the coronavirus?
- What mutual policy efforts were made between your nation and other member states? Can they be used in a resolution to aid in recovery?

#### III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What policies utilized during the pandemic could benefit vulnerable groups the most?

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<sup>9</sup> International Monetary Fund. (2021, April). *Regional economic outlook update. Middle East and Central Asia*. Middle East and Central Asia Department.

<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/REO/MECA/Issues/2021/04/11/regional-economic-outlook-middle-east-central-asia>, 7.

<sup>10</sup> Abouzzohour, Y. (2021, March 22). *One year of COVID-19 in the Middle East and North Africa: The fate of the 'best performers'*. Brookings.

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/03/22/one-year-of-covid-19-in-the-middle-east-and-north-af-rica-the-fate-of-the-best-performers/>

- Are there cooperative efforts that could help recovery efforts across the League? What sectors could use the most stimulus investment?
- What role does technology play in the future of crisis response?
- How can the League address the inequalities that were worsened by the pandemic?
- What fiscal efforts from the pandemic can be utilized to improve the healthcare, economic outlook, social concerns, and education of MENA residents?
- How could joint crisis response employed during the pandemic benefit countries in conflict?

#### **IV. Additional Resources**

- [OECD Country Policy Tracker](#)
- [Covid-19 Crisis Response in MENA Countries](#)
- [MENA: COVID-19 amplified inequalities and was used to further ramp up repression](#)
- [Knowledge and Anxiety about COVID-19 in the State of Qatar, and the Middle East and North Africa Region—A Cross Sectional Study](#)

## **Topic II: Exploring possible avenues for including national civic organizations in implementing the commitments of member states.**

### **I. Introduction**

#### **A. General Background**

The function of civic organizations varies across the world, shifting to fill the needed roles within civil society. A Center for Strategic and International Studies report offers that civil society organizations can be defined as “an ecosystem of organized and organic social and cultural relations existing in the space between the state, business, and family, which builds on indigenous and external knowledge, values, traditions, and principles to foster collaboration and the achievement of specific goals by and among citizens and other stakeholders.”<sup>11</sup> This broad definition leaves roles open for the different capacities of civic organizations. The goals of these organizations address a plethora of concerns within their communities, including issues of labor, religion, healthcare, education, peace-keeping, hunger, addressing environmental problems, and empowering citizens.

Collaboration is a key aspect in civil society and these civic organizations will often come together with the state in order to function effectively within the national sphere. The role of civil society organizations can be integral to filling in the gaps at the community level and implementing policy recommended by the state. This is especially true in the Gujarat and Bihar States of India where national government officials and CSOs worked in tandem in disaster governance policy development and implementation. State agency interviewees in India believe that CSOs are “problem- solvers and innovators,” act as “intermediaries between the government and the people,” serve as “implementing agencies,” and “as having the necessary manpower and resources to provide last-mile connectivity.”<sup>12</sup> Fostering the space for a complementary relationship between national and local governments with civic organizations can help to adequately address national interests.

#### **B. History of the Topic in the Arab World**

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have always had unique and continually evolving responsibilities in the Middle East and North Africa. As CSOs exist in the spaces between states, businesses, and families, they tend to provide a certain level of structure in areas lacking guidance. The critical role of CSOs can be further emphasized by their service in countries or

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<sup>11</sup> VanDyck, C. K. (2017). (rep.). *Concept and Definition of Civil Society Sustainability*. Center for Strategic and International Studies. Retrieved from <https://www.csis.org/analysis/concept-and-definition-civil-society-sustainability>

<sup>12</sup> Syal, R., van Wessel, M. & Sahoo, S. Collaboration, Co-Optation or Navigation? The Role of Civil Society in Disaster Governance in India. *Voluntas* (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-021-00344-8>

regions experiencing conflict. Syrian civil society organizations have only grown after the uprisings during the Arab Spring with most of them operating locally. The goals of these organizations have shifted over time with some maintaining their crisis relief role by continuing to provide health and social services and development as other CSOs move towards media, culture, law, advocacy, and politics.<sup>13</sup> The inclusion of these civil society organizations in expert groups and UN-led political processes characterize the growing need for the incorporation of CSOs in fulfilling or complementing governmental affairs.<sup>14</sup>

Article Two of the Charter of the Arab League emphasizes that a key aspiration of the League is to coordinate policy among member-states, an action that is easier said than done.<sup>15</sup> With all decisions made by the LAS revolving around the affairs and interests of their citizenry, state governance could utilize national civic organizations to implement these policy changes not only on the governmental level, but civic as well. Although members are not bound by resolutions unless the council reaches unanimous consent or their country accepts them, actually implementing the joint resolutions of the council, with the help of national civic organizations, would be a reminder that the League is capable of collective action.

The agenda for the 155th Arab League Council Session in March of 2021 included topics such as joint Arab action, security of navigation and energy supplies in the Arab Gulf region, Arab national security, cooperations with regional and international organizations, supporting the internally displaced people in Arab countries, and developing the Arab system for combating terrorism.<sup>16</sup> With these agenda items at the forefront of the Organization, it is clear how civil society organizations could be useful in carrying out the resolutions formed in this session and moving forward. The members of the League of Arab States can simultaneously improve citizen engagement and Arab unity by collaborating with national CSOs through clearly established structures. Responding to national matters through CSOs can help to circumnavigate the possibility of another Arab Spring (that was largely caused by a dissatisfaction with a lack of government responsiveness to the needs of citizens).

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<sup>13</sup> Ahmad, J. (2019). (rep.). (N. Majid, Trans.) *Changing Contexts and Trends in Syrian Civil Society*. IMPACT Civil Society Research and Development. Retrieved from [https://www.impact-csrd.org/reports/Changing\\_Contexts\\_Mapping\\_SyrianCSOs\\_2019\\_EN.pdf](https://www.impact-csrd.org/reports/Changing_Contexts_Mapping_SyrianCSOs_2019_EN.pdf), 32.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> League of Arab States, *Charter of Arab League*, 22 March 1945, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3ab18.html> [accessed 17 July 2021]

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs: The State of Qatar. (2021, March 3). Qatar Chairs 155th Regular Arab League Council Session at the Ministerial Level. <https://www.mofa.gov.qa/en/all-mofa-news/details/1442/07/19/qatar-chairs-155th-regular-arab-league-council-session-at-the-ministerial-level>.



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

A resolution for this topic should act as a framework for national civic organizations and governments to collaborate in the implementation of Arab League resolutions. Victor H. Mlambo, Sphephelo P. Zubane, and Daniel N. Mlambo claim that “for civil society to succeed, they must have strong and viable institutional capacity and structural arrangements, as well as an enabling legislative and functioning legal and political environment.”<sup>17</sup> With the previous quote in mind, it is important to remember that some members will have repressive laws in place regarding civil society organizations and separate solutions may be required to meet everyone's regulatory requirements. Despite the present laws and conditions constricting civic organizations, common regional affairs can still be carried out by the members of the LAS and their approved national CSOs. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development further emphasized the positive role of CSOs during the Covid-19 pandemic by stating that a “Governments’ willingness to collaborate with civil society has been key for effective crisis response in many countries.”<sup>18</sup>

Depending on your country, civic organizations may fall under a different definition than that described in the general background, so use your discretion as to what falls under that term. Some nations may exclude online entities or governmental organizations from their consideration of civil society, however the decision of what civic organizations that your government would be willing to include in resolution building will be the primary concern. It is advisable to lean into the civic aspect of these organizations as they are often responsible for holding governments accountable and seeking political transparency in the policies affecting them and their communities. If the League can view CSOs as an asset rather than a troublesome group, the future of good governance and civic engagement will be greatly improved.

#### **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- What laws and regulations are in place in your country regarding civic organizations? How do they limit or propel the goals of these organizations?
- What collaborative efforts have been made between your government and national civic organizations in the past?
- Is there a national civic organization whose goals align with specific government or Arab League plans that could be useful in future endeavors?
- Are national civic organizations or local CSOs more common in your state?
- What is the most common service that the civic organizations provide in your nation?

#### **III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

- What previous Arab League resolutions can you carry out alongside national CSOs?

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<sup>17</sup> Mlambo, V. H., Zubane, S. P., & Mlambo, D. N. (2020). Promoting good governance in Africa: The role of the civil society as a watchdog. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 20(1), e1989. 2,3.

<sup>18</sup> OECD (2020), "COVID-19 crisis response in MENA countries", 2.

- How can civic organizations help to implement and develop your own governmental policies and plans?
- What procedures would improve the nature of government relations with CSOs?
- How can your government and national CSOs work together to promote civic engagement?
- What current regional political issues can be addressed by working with CSOs?
- Could your country work with local CSOs in order to collect data to meet the needs of your populace? How could this information be useful in league-wide efforts?

#### **IV. Additional Resources**

- [POLICY DIALOGUE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: WHAT ROLE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS?](#)
- [Q&A: Legal Framework and Environment for Nongovernmental Groups \(NGOs\) in Egypt](#)
- [ICNL's Civic Freedom Monitor](#)
- [The Hard Reality of Civil Society in the Arab World](#)
- [Public Administration in the Middle East and North Africa](#)
- [Constitutions and peace processes: A primer](#)
- [Egyptian Youth-led Civil Society Organizations: Alternative Spaces for Civic Engagement?](#)

### **Topic III: Discussing the rights of prisoners with an emphasis on preventing torture, arbitrary detentions, and extrajudicial executions.**

#### **I. Introduction**

##### **A. General Background**

Abuses against the rights of prisoners has been a longstanding global issue that the United Nations (alongside other international organizations) has attempted to put an end to. In 1955, the First United Nations Congress established the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners which was revised in 2015 with the addition of rules recommended by the Expert Group known as “The Nelson Mandela Rules.”<sup>19</sup> The United Nations Human Rights Committee clarified in 1992 that “persons deprived of their liberty enjoy all the rights set forth in the The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, subject to the restrictions that are unavoidable in a closed environment,” thus alleviating prisoners from the notion that their rights are to be removed upon incarceration.<sup>20</sup> Despite these documents acting as a minimum for the rights of prisoners, countries remain that have not signed nor ratified them as well as those that commit violations regardless of these standards and their commitment to these international covenants.

This topic is set to address specific abuses of prisoners rights regarding the prevention of future exploitation. Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights clarifies that wherever the death penalty is still legal, it can “only be carried out pursuant to a final judgement rendered by a competent court,” clarifying that extrajudicial killings take place when a prisoner is murdered without facing trial by a competent court or faces death where the death penalty is illegal.<sup>21</sup> Amnesty International defines arbitrary detention as “being detained for no legitimate reason or without legal process” and torture as “when somebody in an official capacity inflicts severe mental or physical pain or suffering on somebody else for a specific purpose.”<sup>22</sup> Undeterred by these terms of abuse clearly defined by International law, prisoners still face the violation of their rights by those in authority. The Political Council should discuss how they can prevent the abuse of prisoners rights within the League.

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<sup>19</sup> United Nations. (2020). *Nelson Mandela International Day, July 18, For Freedom, Justice and Democracy*. United Nations. [https://www.un.org/en/events/mandeladay/mandela\\_rules.shtml](https://www.un.org/en/events/mandeladay/mandela_rules.shtml).

<sup>20</sup> U.N. Human Rights Committee, General Comment 21, paragraph 3. The Human Rights Committee provides authoritative interpretations of the ICCPR through the periodic issuance of General Comments.

<sup>21</sup> United Nations. (1955). *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/instree/b3ccpr.htm>

<sup>22</sup> Amnesty International. (n.d.). *Key facts about detention and why it is a core human rights issue*. Detention and imprisonment | Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/detention/>.

## B. History of the Topic in the Arab World

As a basis for the rights of prisoners in the Middle East and North Africa, the entirety of the region has not ratified all international human rights laws, but the League of Arab States did adopt the Arab Charter on Human Rights (ACHR) at a summit in May of 2004. Only ten members have ratified the charter as some states hold the concern that it clashes with the pre-existing human rights laws and treaties that they have committed to or their ratification of the charter would require them to change their own laws and policies to comply with it.<sup>23</sup> All members are signatories to the ACHR and it would be helpful to be mindful of articles 7-11, 13, 15, 18, 21 and 23 in particular with regards to the human rights of prisoners.

The Arab Spring of 2011 had varying effects on human rights across the league, with some governments welcoming NGOs and human rights observers into their countries and other governments implementing repressive reforms that led to an increase in arbitrary detentions of political opponents and increased obscurity regarding prisons. Egypt was a hub of activism during the Arab Spring, but under President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, prisoners face a lack of access to healthcare and Egyptian law authorizes prison officials to use force against prisoners.<sup>24</sup> On June 1, 2021, 63 democracy and human rights organizations in Egypt asked that President Al-Sisi and the Egyptian authorities publicly condemn extrajudicial executions and torture, launching independent investigations into these abuses regardless of they took place in detention. This request also included a plea to release those detained arbitrarily, provide protections against arbitrary arrest for human rights activists, and end the arbitrary arrest of LGBTQI+ persons by authorities.<sup>25</sup> Advocacy letters and the political appeals of other governments often go unaddressed or the existence of these abuses is denied by the Egyptian government.

One of the most famous extrajudicial killings in recent Arab history is the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. He was a Saudi Arabian journalist that fled Saudi Arabia in September of 2017 feeling concerned for his safety as his articles were often critical of the Saudi government. His assassination took place on October 2, 2018 at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey where he was attempting to retrieve papers attesting the divorce of his ex-wife.<sup>26</sup> A report by the U.N. Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Agnes Callamard, found that Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi was the victim of a premeditated extrajudicial execution,

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<sup>23</sup> Rishmawi, M. (2009, October 6). *The Arab Charter on Human Rights*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/23951>.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Mission Egypt T. H. R. (2021, March 31). *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Egypt*. U.S. Embassy in Egypt. <https://eg.usembassy.gov/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices-egypt/>.

<sup>25</sup> Freedom House. (2021, June 1). *Egypt: NGOs Call on Authorities to End Crackdown on Freedoms*. Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/article/egypt-ngos-call-authorities-end-crackdown-freedoms>.

<sup>26</sup> Al Jazeera. (2021, February 26). *Timeline of the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi*. Human Rights News | Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/26/timeline-of-the-murder-of-journalist-jamal-khashoggi>.

for which the State of Saudi Arabia is responsible.<sup>27</sup> With an “unclassified report from the US Office of the Director of National Intelligence [placing] blame on Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman” for the operation that killed Jamal Khashoggi, it is critical that the League of Arab States discusses what avenues can be taken to protect the human rights of prisoners.<sup>28</sup>

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

The Political Council will need to identify what they can do to protect prisoners from torture, arbitrary detentions, and extrajudicial executions. With regard to state sovereignty, this will be the time to decide what role independent organizations can play in surveying the conditions of prisoners. The challenge of this topic will be coming to a mutual decision on how much of a role that the LAS will have in the rights of state prisoners. Regardless of the alleged crimes of prisoners, they are still citizens of the League and fall under the affairs and interests to be safeguarded by the League.

Possible routes to take will include the development of policies that can be implemented to build on the ideas outlined in the ACHR and analyzing how independent organizations can effectively examine the rights of prisoners without impeding on state sovereignty. There are several avenues for improving the human rights of prisoners, including increasing access to healthcare and examining the present regulations of prisons in your country. This could also be a time to discuss concerns with the Arab Charter on Human Rights and recommendations for how it could better fit the needs of members. A solution should analyze present measures in place to protect prisoners’ rights, consider the role of international human rights laws, and outline proactive measures that will prevent future abuses.

### **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- How does your state protect the rights of prisoners?
- What vulnerable groups are being targeted for arbitrary detention/arrest, torture, and extrajudicial executions? What programs or policies would reduce harm against these groups?
- Are their specific motives (political, economic, etc.) behind the abuse of prisoners rights?
- What treaties or characters does your country have commitments to? What laws and policies do you have that reflect these commitments?
- Who has access to prisons in your state? Is their official data on the conditions faced by those in detention?
- What prisoners rights abuses have been enacted in your state? How were they addressed?

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<sup>27</sup> United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (2019, June 19). *Khashoggi killing: UN human rights expert says Saudi Arabia is responsible for "premeditated execution"*. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24713>.

<sup>28</sup> Al Jazeera. (2021). *Timeline of the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi*.

### **III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

- What protections are necessary and feasible for prisoners across the League?
- Who can prisoners notify if their rights are being violated?
- What role can independent organizations or committees play in protecting the rights of prisoners?
- Are their programs in place that emphasize prisoners rights throughout the League? How can they be utilized in a resolution?

### **IV. Additional Resources**

- [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, GA res. 2200A \(XXI\), 21 UN GAOR Supp. \(No. 16\) at 52, UN Doc. A/6316 \(1966\), 999 UNTS 171, entered into force Mar. 23, 1976.](#)
- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations](#)
- [14-POINT PROGRAM FOR THE PREVENTION OF EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS](#)
- [Patterns of Torture in Bahrain: Perpetrators must Face Justice](#)

## **Topic IV: Addressing the role of transparency and political integrity in electoral trust in the region.**

### **I. Introduction**

#### **A. General Background**

The United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 that outlines 17 sustainable goals, including goal 16 that emphasized peace, justice, and strong institutions. The most pertinent part of goal 16 to this topic is section 16.6 that promotes the “[development] of effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.”<sup>29</sup> Finel and Lord claim that “Transparency is increased by any mechanism that leads to the public disclosure of information, whether a free press, open government, hearings, or the existence of nongovernmental organizations with an incentive to release objective information about the government.”<sup>30</sup> In order to improve transparency and political integrity in electoral trust in the MENA region, there must be a concerted effort to improve existing mediums that promote accountability.

Lack of transparency does not only affect the inner workings of good governance, but also the ability for a country to respond effectively to crises. Without open and direct lines of communication between the government, civil society, and the affected institutions, the government and officials would lack the necessary information to make “timely, decisive actions.”<sup>31</sup> The World Bank notes that the lack of data available from the MENA region alongside insufficient transparency “inhibits the advancement of discussion and policies framed around firm dynamics.”<sup>32</sup> This analysis stresses the need to improve data capacity to ameliorate electoral distrust caused by ineffective policy.

#### **B. History of the Topic in the Arab World**

A lack of political trust has long plagued the Arab League as uprisings during the Arab Spring emphasized a general discontent with the performance of political institutions. Areas that are cause for concern surrounding political integrity and transparency include the perception of threats in the region to extend beyond borders due to the shared Arab identity, the economic stress that is placed upon political leaders to solve existing and evolving issues, and political

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<sup>29</sup> Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2015, October 15). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. United Nations. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>.

<sup>30</sup> Finel, B., & Lord, K. (1999). The Surprising Logic of Transparency. *International Studies Quarterly*, 43(2), 315-339. Retrieved July 10, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2600758>

<sup>31</sup> Mena Economic Update. (2020). How Transparency Can Help the Middle East and North Africa. *The World Bank*. 15.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 4,19.

regime transition to those outside of the former elites creating a pressure on the new leaders to enforce truly representative politics.<sup>33</sup>

The United Arab Emirates has been successful in its efforts to improve the overall ethical sanctity of the cyclical relationship between the government, public officials, and the communities that they serve. With the perception of political advancement acting as a major part of public trust in institutions, the UAE federal government provides the necessary support and services to public officials to carry out public services that reach their ethical and professional standards.<sup>34</sup> This positive relationship between the government and its employees provides peace of mind to citizens that they can trust their public administration institutions to carry out the principles of their positions appropriately.

Jordan was the first country in the MENA region to establish an Access to Information Law providing that “anyone with a legitimate interest” could request information. It also established an Information Council that is meant to be “responsible for ensuring that information is provided to its applicants.”<sup>35</sup> Although these initial steps appeared to mark an improvement in government transparency, the council decisions are non-binding, state employees can use their discretion as to what information is confidential or not, and the exemptions law following the National Charter of 1991 has limited any real access the law could allow.<sup>36</sup> With a majority of Jordanian journalists practicing self-censorship, it is time to consider how the trust in electoral and governmental integrity can be rebuilt.<sup>37</sup>

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

The Political Council should pay close attention to present transparency laws and anti-corruption policies that exist across the Arab League and assess their efficacy. An assessment of any data sharing capacities that exist within national or region based NGOS can help in the formation of a solution to this topic. Inclusion of findings on civic organizations from topic two could be helpful as CSOs have an increasing role in government accountability and ensuring transparency in electoral processes. The approach of this council may require the inclusion of international organizations or the creation of a body that can independently review positive reform efforts to achieve transparency, political integrity, and electoral trust.

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<sup>33</sup> Spierings, N. (2017). Trust and Tolerance across the Middle East and North Africa: A Comparative Perspective on the Impact of the Arab Uprisings. *Politics and Governance*, 5(2), 4-15. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v5i2.750>, 13.

<sup>34</sup> John Dixon, Shahjahan Bhuiyan & Yılmaz Üstüner (2018) Public Administration in the Middle East and North Africa, *International Journal of Public Administration*, 41:10, 759-764, DOI: 10.1080/01900692.2018.1433207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2018.1433207>, 761.

<sup>35</sup> Omar, Y. (2021, June 23). *Access to Information in Jordan*. TIMEP. <https://timep.org/explainers/access-to-information-in-jordan/>.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Freedom House. (2020). (rep.). *Freedom on Net 2020*. Retrieved from <https://freedomhouse.org/country/jordan/freedom-net/2020>



Clear communication between citizens and the state will be key in rectifying a lack of trust in the obscurity provided by the state. It will be prudent for a resolution to emphasize the role of independent media in efforts to improve electoral trust and political integrity across the region. Enhancing citizens' media literacy could help to reduce the negative effects of misinformation. Mass media can help make evidence available and citizens can urge policymakers to act upon such evidence.<sup>38</sup> Although regime or government criticism is outlawed in many Arab countries, investing in evidence-based policy could improve citizen perception of government responsiveness.

## **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- What role does the media play in transparency and accountability in my state?
- Who controls the various media platforms in my nation? What political or business biases affect them?
- What electoral processes take place in my country? Who is capable of voting in these processes?
- What NGOs or CSOs could develop data on election integrity and governmental transparency in my state?
- What political influences affect the ability to improve transparency and electoral trust in my government?

## **III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

- What data capacities and sharing provisions could be implemented to improve electoral trust?
- Are there protective policies that could be applied to protect NGOs or other independent organizations?
- How can the LAS increase civic participation in efforts to encourage government integrity?
- What capacity does the League have to create socio economic indicators that can be applied to transparency?

## **IV. Additional Resources**

- [The Role of Monitoring and Evaluation in the MENA Region, with a Focus on the Arab Uprising Countries](#)
- [How Transparency Can Help the Middle East and North Africa](#)
- [Public media accountability: Media journalism, engaged publics and critical media literacy in the MENA](#)

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<sup>38</sup> Jaafar, S. B., & Amer, A. (2017). The Role of Monitoring and Evaluation in the MENA Region, with a Focus on the Arab Uprising Countries. *EVALUATION 2030 FOR*, 155, 160.

- [Impact and Success of Programming on Anti Corruption, Transparency and Accountability in the MENA Region](#)
- [Middle East & North Africa: Corruption as Institutions and Political Rights Weaken](#)
- [Global governance by goal-setting: the novel approach of the UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)