



2025-2026 Model Arab League Crisis Handbook

The Crisis Committee: Specialized Rules

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National
Council
on US-
Arab
Relations



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What is Model Arab League?

The National Council on US-Arab Relations

Founded in 1983, the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations (NCUSAR) is a non-profit, nongovernmental, educational organization based in Washington, D.C. dedicated to improving knowledge and understanding of the Arab world. The National Council works to improve U.S.-Arab relations through people-to-people and leader-to-leader exchanges along with a wide variety of educational programs in the United States. For details on the National Council's full range of student opportunities – internships, study abroad, and exclusive travel opportunities – please visit www.ncusar.org.

The National Council understands that positive changes in the U.S.-Arab relationship require exposure, interaction, and conversation at a personal level. The National Council works to provide opportunities that have been proven to enrich student leadership and career skills, as well as academic offerings related to international affairs and the study of the Arab world. The largest such program is the Model Arab League.

A Brief Background of the Model Arab League Program

Since 1983, the Model Arab League Program (MAL) has offered American students an extraordinary opportunity to learn, practice, and develop essential leadership skills. Through MAL participation, students deepen their knowledge and understanding of the most critical social, economic, cultural, and political issues in the Arab world today. Students must work together to address problems and achieve consensus on questions with which diplomats wrestle on a daily basis. The dynamic and interactive nature of the program's emphasis on role-playing stimulates creativity, enhances learning, and cultivates understanding as no book, lecture, or coursework ever could.

Participation in a Model holds value for all students, regardless of their academic major or the subject matter of their courses. Participants gain valuable leadership training through the Model's constant challenges in debating, writing, editing, public speaking, critical thinking, and

interpersonal relations. All delegates come away having practiced the kinds of skills that will serve them well throughout their academic years, future careers, and personal lives. Year after year, delegates return to participate over and over until they graduate.

The first Model Arab League began at Georgetown University in Washington, DC in 1981. An idea conceived by Dr. Michael Nwanze, the MAL was based on the same general structure as the Model United Nations, a similar student debate program that had existed for several decades. Under the guidance of Dr. John Duke Anthony, the National Council was the first sponsor of the program and has coordinated, organized, and funded the Models since 1983.

Regional models began to form as word of the Models spread to university faculty across the United States. In 1991, the first high school Model Arab League was established in Atlanta, Georgia. By the 2014-15 academic year, there were nearly 20 models at both the university and high school levels, with national conferences for both high schools and universities. Many international MAL conferences have been founded as the program has been replicated the world over. Upwards of 150 universities, colleges, and high schools now participate, with over 2,000 total participants annually. The National Council oversees the coordination of all the Models and acts as the primary sponsor.

What is a Crisis Committee?

The Crisis Committee (Crisis) is a specialized committee which does not engage in debate in the same manner as other committees. The purpose of the committee is to simulate real world or historical government responses to crises. The committee is fast-paced: decisions have consequences which may result in additional real-time challenges, and delegates may be pursuing personal goals (according to their assigned roles) as well as the committee's objectives. At Model Arab League conferences, the Crisis Committee takes the form of a cabinet or meeting which has been convened to address a specific topic. Delegates portray government officials and other influential members of society with specific functions, which affect their policy recommendations.

The Crisis Committee, unlike other MAL councils, has the opportunity to make an immediate effect upon their topics of debate. They are not limited to the rules of formalized debate in the MAL handbook, and are able to make policy changes quickly instead of via a resolution. Delegates still use moderated caucuses, round robins, and other forms of moderated debate, but they can also expect more frequent opportunities for suspensions of the meeting (unmoderated caucuses). However, they have additional methods of addressing the crisis at hand. During the committee, delegates send notes/messages to the Home Government (backroom), write joint personal directives (JPDs) with other delegates, and create public press releases. They also pass directives, a short-form resolution which may have an immediate effect on the events of the crisis. These communications are then given to the backroom, which takes them into account when revealing the ongoing events of the crisis, and reveals their results to the delegates in due time.

Overall, the Crisis Committee represents a type of debate which is more responsive, relying on constantly updated information about the crisis to make its decisions. It is more interactive, involving collaboration between different individual actors, representing the same government or, at times, different governments. In past simulations, participants have dealt with defections, uprisings, national unrest, violence, and natural disasters, to name a few.

These events are typical of a Crisis Committee because they combine real-world events with the consequences of decisionmaking in real time. The committee's progress is defined by the actions of the delegates, and they have the opportunity to succeed (or fail) based on their own merits. The consequences of committee actions have the potential to snowball if not properly considered, and unpredictable events may occur at any time. The Crisis Committee tries to simulate the complex nature of these types of political interactions, while also being a rewarding educational experience for delegates.

Chair, Backroom, and Delegate Responsibilities

The Chair and Vice Chair

The Crisis Chair is the moderator of debate and responsible for ensuring the productivity of the room, as in any other Model Arab League committee. Some of their duties include managing debate, encouraging shy speakers, and promoting a realistic approach to the crisis. Sometimes debate can become hectic, chaotic, and silly. Part of the Chair's job is to keep delegates focused on the real-world response and ramifications of delegate actions. They can also contact the Crisis Coordinators and get clarifications on their decisions and announcements in order to benefit the committee's progress. Their assistant is the Vice Chair. While in other MAL rooms the Vice Chair is an elected delegate, the Crisis Committee has a dedicated Vice Chair. In fact, there are no elected officers in crisis in order to minimize distractions for the delegates. Together, the Chair, Vice Chair, and delegates make up the frontroom, where actions taken are seen by all delegates.

The Crisis Coordinator

The Crisis Coordinator facilitates committee sessions from the "backroom." This person can represent the Home Government of delegates, other governments, the news, and more. The Coordinator is responsible for all of the information surrounding the crisis, and may periodically direct the committee to address an emerging issue, deal with unresolved issues from the initial crisis or background guide, provide information from someone else relevant to the committee (such as an absent government official, another government, or even the media or public), or implement the actions proposed by committee members through directives, crisis notes, and press releases. The Crisis Coordinator may also decide to modify or reject the requests of committee members, or address individual delegates who are not representing their assigned role accurately. The Crisis Coordinator is the authority on the actions of the committee as it pertains to the tasks at hand, and cannot be overruled by the delegates or the Chair.

Delegates

Individual delegates represent various ministers or prominent members of their government. They may also represent other individuals, depending on the unique nature of the Crisis Committee. The primary objective of all delegates should be to resolve the issue(s) at hand, as described in the background guide. However, they must do so in a manner that is consistent with their professional and sometimes personal interests, which may conflict with the governments they represent, other members of the committee, or both.

In addition to researching the crisis itself, delegates should prepare for their roles by researching the individual role to which they are assigned. This includes understanding that person's background, interactions with other government officials, and any other possible motivating factors. An accurate representation of the person is important because it will help facilitate the overall debate and response to the crisis. Delegates should be prepared to debate not only via their research, but have the proper tools to succeed. Delegates should bring writing utensils, their research notes, and post-its (for communicating with other delegates) on hand. They may also find benefit in bringing lined paper/notepads and staplers in order to write notes, directives, and JPDs.

In-Room Debate

In-room debate rules defer to the Model Arab League Handbook and must follow all NCUSAR regulations listed there. Delegates should refer to the handbook and the Chair for rulings on parliamentary procedure and prewriting regulations. There are a set number of instances where the room will implement modified procedures to improve the flow of debate or interrupt debate for crisis updates from the Crisis Director and staffers (See: Crisis Updates, Timed Crises).

In-room debate is called the “frontroom” in Crisis, to pair with the “backroom” where Crisis Coordinators enact events based on communications from delegates in the front room and their written materials. Notable about traditional in-room debate in crisis is the increased likelihood of round robins and unmoderated caucuses, which allow more speaking time for delegates and face to face communication, especially during a directive cycle (See below).

Crisis Updates

Crisis updates are the primary mechanism through which the backroom (Crisis Coordinator/staffers) inject new developments into the committee. These may be driven by delegate actions or introduced independently. A crisis update could include, but is not limited to, any of the following:

- The “real world” consequences of prior committee decisions
- Escalations such as protests, diplomatic fallout, or military events
- Clarifications and developments in subplots (e.g., covert missions or diplomatic maneuvering)

Following each update, a brief Q&A session allows delegates to clarify new information before debate resumes. At the conclusion of the update, normal debate will resume, but is expected to take into account the new information presented.

Directive Cycle

The crisis directive cycle refers to the period of time where delegates are able to write, debate, and amend directives, and to their passage. During one directive cycle, all delegates have a

chance to write language and work with other delegates based on the rules of parliamentary procedure. This cycle repeats and is generally as follows:

1. A crisis update is given from the Crisis Coordinator, followed by Q&A with the delegates.
2. The Chair will open the floor to any points or motions. At this time, a motion for a round robin, unmoderated caucus, or short moderated caucus might all be entertained at the discretion of the Chair.
3. While participating in motions following a crisis update, delegates should begin writing directives either individually or collaboratively with nearby delegates.
4. During an unmoderated caucus, merge directives to align with your Chair's directions. Merging is almost always encouraged as it reduces redundancy, increases room alignment, and supports delegate collaboration.
5. Delegates then vote on directives, and passed directives are sent to the Crisis Coordinator.

Timed Crises

During a timed crisis, the Coordinator will interrupt normal debate to present delegates with an issue they must solve within a set time limit (typically 30 minutes to an hour, although they can be shorter). Delegates will then be allotted additional unmod time if requested, and have a Q&A period as described in Crisis Updates.

Communication with Backroom

Communication with the Backroom for this committee will be fully **handwritten**. If a delegate has any questions about this or requires any accommodations, please contact the Secretary General and NCUSAR. Communications to backroom may be achieved through the following methods:

1. Handwritten Notes

- a. Notes include a written component, and **may** include visual drawings, maps, etc.
- b. Notes are often formatted as letters to a personal or professional correspondent of the delegate (Eg. an Assistant, Spouse, or Colleague). Action items should be bulleted for the sake of clarity.
- c. Successful notes often include a “Too Long; Didn’t Read” (tl;dr) or objective 1-liner at the bottom to summarize their goals and desired action items or communications for the backroom.
- d. Notes will be conducted via a 1-pad system, which generally looks as follows:
 - i. Delegates are given 30-40 minutes to draft a crisis note.
 - ii. Notes are collected by backroom and returned with responses.
 - iii. Delegates are given 30–40 minutes to draft an additional note, and the cycle repeats.

2. Directives

- a. Directives are short-form resolutions, focusing primarily on operational clauses without too many details or subclauses in order to get key action items across. Substantive yet concise clauses are successful.
- b. Directives include a sponsors list, a title, and key operative clauses. Often, a signatories list or perambulatory clauses are not required.
- c. Directives may be subject to a page limit and sponsor limit, at the jurisdiction of the Crisis Chair and Secretary General.
- d. Directives are often encouraged to be merged with each other as a sign of collaboration, as well as to eliminate redundancies and reduce the number of active directives at a time (an issue that can emerge due to the speed and ease with which delegates write directives because of the shorter format).

3. Joint Personal Directives (JPDs)

- a. Joint Personal Directives are written in the form of a directive, but treated like the notes to the backroom.
- b. These directives are aimed to be a collaboration between two or more delegates, and utilize each of their powers in order to accomplish a shared goal.

4. Press Releases and Communiques

- a. Short letters and announcements directed toward other Cabinets, the public, or media.
- b. Used for diplomatic communication or narrative shaping, these will not be actually released to anyone besides the backroom, although crises will develop as if they are.

Closing Notes

Preparing for the Committee: Tips and Tricks

1. Be Prepared for Changes: Remember, updates shared may either be designed by the Crisis Coordinator or as a result of the delegates and/or committee, based on the Coordinator's implementation of notes and other communications.
2. Ask Questions: Good questions to ask during crisis update Q&A focus on the who, what, where, when, and why of the information that was shared.
3. Crisis Updates: To successfully respond to crisis updates:
 - a. Propose directives that address the unfolding situation
 - b. Send follow-up communications to relevant actors via the backroom
 - c. Use unmoderated caucuses to coordinate strategy
4. Know your Role: Research your assigned portfolio thoroughly and understand its relevance to the crisis.
5. Balance Realism and Creativity: Ground your proposals in reality but don't be afraid to think outside the box.
6. Write Clearly and Concisely: When writing directives and notes, brevity and clarity go a long way.
7. Be Collaborative: Merge similar directives, engage with other's ideas, and build coalitions and fluid blocs.
8. Adapt Quickly: The crisis situation will change rapidly, so be ready to shift tactics and respond.
9. Use Notes Strategically: Even if you aren't speaking frequently, you can remain a powerful actor through well-crafted backroom communications.
10. Have Fun: Don't forget, this conference is intended to be a fun learning experience, and this is a special type of debate - don't be afraid to lean into the controlled chaos!

Remember to reach out to the Crisis Chair, Crisis Coordinator, or Secretary General with any questions. Good luck delegates!

APPENDIX

Crisis Notes: Structure and Example

Structure:

Objective: Summarize WHY you want to do the steps in this (this is where you add your arc)

(Greeting of choice) _____ (address to a character/person of choice, examples could be a lover, personal assistant, mercenary, whatever you want),

Add some fun dialogue that is interesting to read. Keep it short.

Add the steps to achieve one of your arc goals. You can not do everything in the world in one note. You have to move slowly.

1. Numbered
2. Steps
3. Work
4. Best!

Add a TL;DR (too long; didn't read) at the end of your note and summarize WHAT your steps are doing.

Example Note:

Objective: Secure control over the national water desalination sector as the first step toward removing the current Prime Minister and installing myself as head of government.

Dearest Sheikh's most underpaid but most competent advisor,

You know as well as I do that the Prime Minister survives not because he is skilled, but because he has convinced the nation he alone can quench its thirst. Meanwhile, our desalination plants are aging, our rivers are choking, and the Ministry of Water Resources is run by men who think a "long-term solution" means praying for rain.

I intend to become the nation's sole authority on water. When the taps run dry, the people will come to me, not to him. Once the governors and ministers depend on my pipelines, they will sign whatever decree I place in front of them, including the one that removes the Prime Minister from his seat.

Steps to implement:

1. Quietly acquire majority shares in Al-Bahr Desalination Co. through shell companies registered abroad.
2. Leak documents proving the Ministry has been falsifying water quality reports—ensure these reach the press on the hottest week of the year.
3. Offer “emergency relief” by supplying clean water to drought-stricken provinces, branded with my personal crest.
4. Propose a “National Water Emergency Council” to coordinate all desalination and distribution—under my leadership, of course.
5. Persuade key tribal leaders that their regions will receive priority access to water in exchange for public endorsements.

By the time the next Cabinet session arrives, the Prime Minister will find himself parched, both politically and otherwise.

TL;DR: Control desalination, starve the Ministry of credibility, become the indispensable source of water and power.

Caveat: If the Sheikh grows suspicious, give him exclusive rights to the coastal resort project to keep him pacified until the transition is complete.

Joint Personal Directives: Example and Notes

Notes on JPDs: JPDs are short, to the point agreements between two or more countries. Unlike a directive, they are not approved by the committee nor revealed to them. Upon completion, pass them directly to the chair/vice-chair to be given to the backroom staff with the next note or directive cycle.

Example Joint Personal Directive:

DRY OUT THE PRIME MINISTER

SPONSORS: Somalia, Algeria

The sponsors hereby direct the following:

1. Secure controlling shares in Al-Bahr Desalination Co. through offshore shell entities to mask political involvement;
2. Instruct media outlets to release investigative pieces on Ministry of Water Resource corruption during peak summer shortages;
3. Provide “emergency water aid” to select provinces, branding shipments with sponsor branding to redirect public gratitude;
4. Push for Cabinet adoption of a “National Water Emergency Council” chaired by the sponsors’ representatives, centralizing operational control;
5. Offer discreet incentives to key tribal leaders and provincial governors in exchange for public statements to undermine the Prime Minister’s leadership.

The sponsors expect progress updates within 30 days and reserve the right to take more aggressive measures if the Prime Minister resists displacement.

Directives: Example and Notes

Notes on Directives: Directives may be short, to the point, and are often merged with other directives. They should be written by hand, and the main body of text follows resolution writing requirements. Sponsor and signatory limits are set by the Chair, as are page limits, if necessary.

Example Directive:

DIRECTIVE: EAT MORE FRUIT

SPONSORS: Qatar, Saudi Arabia

Recognizing the propensity of sailors to get scurvy,

Be it hereby resolved that the League of Arab States:

1. Commits to providing oranges to sailors originating from ports in the Arab League; and
2. Requests that educational programs inform students about the importance of a balanced diet, including in
 - a. Primary School,

- b. Secondary Schools, and,
- c. Vocational training.

SIGNATORIES: Oman, Yemen

Press Release: Example

Example:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

League of Arab States Announces Historic Water Sovereignty Pact

Cairo, Egypt — In a landmark decision aimed at securing the region’s most vital resource, the League of Arab States has endorsed a framework to bring the majority of desalination operations under domestic control.

The “Water Sovereignty Pact” commits member states to jointly acquire strategic desalination infrastructure, invest in renewable energy driven expansion, and establish a unified pricing policy to ensure affordable access for citizens.

“This is not just about water. It is about self-reliance, stability, and the security of future generations. By controlling our own resources, we ensure that no outside power can hold our nations hostage to thirst.”

Implementation of the pact begins immediately, with the first round of acquisitions and capacity expansions scheduled to be completed within the next fiscal year.

For further information, please contact your respective Water Resources Minister.