

# Background Guide

## 15th Annual AUSMUN



**United Nations Human Rights Council  
(UNHRC)**

# Welcome Letter from the Director of Research



Greetings fellow delegates,

It's a pleasure to see you attending the American University of Sharjah's 2022 Model United Nations Convention (AUSMUN 2022). As the age-old adage goes, "with great power comes great responsibility," as delegates of nations at the world's largest international forum, you have a heightened degree of power and responsibility. Not only do you have a say in shaping solutions for the world, and bringing glory to your country, but also the pressure of ensuring that those solutions are pragmatic, feasible, and effective in solving the issues you have set to resolve. Not only do you have a space at the international platform, but also the responsibility to ensure that you set an apt example of your nation for the world to see.

With that being said, I wish you all the best for your preparations and I am really excited to see what your wonderful minds and enthusiastic selves come up with in the committee rooms. Finally, also remember that your responsibilities include having fun and making the best of your time at AUSMUN 2022!

Best Regards,  
Mohammad Amaan Siddiqui  
Director of Research - AUSMUN 2022

# MUN

## Welcome Letter from the Dais



Dear UNHRC delegates,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to our committee. To start off, We understand that delegates possess varying skill levels, and that debate may be taxing for some of you. We would like all of you to know that it is our utmost priority to ensure that you all have an entertaining, informative, and nurturing environment to debate. Our goal is for everyone in our committee to leave AUSMUN having learned, improved, or mastered a skill as well as having created a special memory that you will keep for the rest of your MUN careers. All we ask from you is to try your absolute best. Even if your best is a single speech, it is important for you to try your best. Moreover, it is quintessential to keep in mind that a committee's success depends on how well its delegates interact, communicate, and cooperate. When debating, you must think of yourselves as fulfilling not only the responsibility towards yourselves as delegations, but also the responsibility towards your fellow delegates for the greater good of the committee. Keeping that in mind, we expect you all to come to the committee well-versed in the topics at hand in order to not impede on the flow of the debate and committee overall. Respect and courtesy towards each other is highly expected from every one of you, too. Let us all work hand-in-hand to create an enthralling and momentous MUN experience for all of our committee members. Feel free to contact us on: [unhrcausmun2022@gmail.com](mailto:unhrcausmun2022@gmail.com)

Best Regards,

Lina Eldessouky, Sarah Al-Dulaimi, and Ziyad Hamed, Chairs  
Hana Moataz Elsergani, Research Assistant

# MUN

## Overview of the Committee

### History

In 1946, the United Nations (UN) created the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), which is made up of member countries, to promote international human rights. Moreover, because its members had a history of perpetrating crimes against human rights, the CHR was frequently accused of being a dreadful “jury.” To address this issue, in 2006, the CHR was abolished and replaced with the Human Rights Council, a new organization with amended membership standards (Chilton & Vilela, 2016). The Human Rights Council was established as part of a former Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s overall UN reform initiative, articulated in his 2005 report: ‘In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security, and Human Rights for All’ (Universal Rights Group, 2016). Furthermore, the three “pillars” on which the UN’s efforts have to be based are human rights, monetary and social development, and peace and security.

### Structure and Function

Human Rights Watch has been seeking to improve its abilities to promote and protect human rights across the world since its creation in 2006, as well as to be more sensitive to the needs of victims of human rights violations (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Indeed the Human Rights Council aims to raise awareness about the Council’s operations, keep its members responsible for their acts, and promote compliance with the Council’s goal of resolving “situations of human rights breaches, particularly, grave and systemic violations” across the globe (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Therefore, the United Nations Human Rights Council has been defined as an intergovernmental organization that is responsible for the promotion and maintenance of human rights worldwide, as well as investigating and making recommendations on human rights violations. In addition, it has the opportunity to assess any contemporary human rights issues and situations that require its attention.

Members of the Human Rights Council created a set of specific processes that are maintained (Blanchfield & Weber, 2020). For instance, special rapporteurs with national mandates can conduct investigations and provide advice on human rights issues in specific countries such as Cambodia, North Korea, and Sudan. Moreover, special rapporteurs with thematic mandates look into major global human rights issues including arbitrary detention, the right to food, and the rights of persons with disabilities. Additionally, the Council has a complaint procedure in place for people or groups to report human rights infractions in a confidential setting.

Furthermore, according to Blanchfield and Weber (2020), the Council has 47 members, including 13 from Africa, 13 from Asia, 6 from Eastern Europe, 8 from Latin America and the Caribbean, and 7 from Western Europe and other countries. Members are chosen for three years and may not serve on the Council for more than two terms in a row. Moreover, the Council is based in Geneva, Switzerland, and meets three or more times per year for a total of ten weeks. At the request of any Council member and with the approval of one-third of the Council membership, it has the ability to hold sessions on specific human rights circumstances or concerns. Moreover, the Council has had 43 regular sessions and 28 specific sessions since 2006 (Blanchfield & Weber 2020).



# Overview of the Committee

In addition to that, according to Blanchfield and Weber (2020) the election of four vice presidents to represent the Council's regional divisions is presided over by the Council president. The Council bureau, composed of the president and vice presidents, is in charge of all Council procedural and organizational problems. Members elect a president from among the bureau members for a one-year term.

As for elections, all members of the United Nations are eligible to run for a seat on the Council. Moreover, the countries are nominated by regional groupings and chosen by secret ballot by the General Assembly, by the necessary absolute majority. Moreover, with a two-thirds decision of the members present, the General Assembly can suspend a Council member for gross and systematic abuses of human rights. The most recent election took place in October 2020, with the next one set for late 2021 (Blanchfield & Weber, 2020).

Lastly, an important element within the establishment of the new HRC is the implementation of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) (Spohr, 2010). The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a UN system that permits all UN Member States to assess each other's human rights records (U.S Department of State, n.d.). Simultaneously, each state under evaluation is given the opportunity to report on human rights conditions inside its borders, including actions taken in response to concerns voiced by other states (U.S Department of State, n.d.)

## Substantive Voting

Each member of the UNHRC shall have one vote. Decisions of the Conference shall be made by a majority of the representatives of States participating in the Conference present and voting. Representatives who abstain from voting shall be considered as not voting. If two or more proposals relate to the same question, the Conference shall, unless it decides otherwise, vote on the proposals in the order in which they have been submitted. The Conference may, after each vote on a proposal, decide whether to vote on the next proposals.

When an amendment is moved to a proposal, the amendment shall be voted on first. When two or more amendments are moved to a proposal, the Conference shall first vote on the amendment further removed in substance from the original proposal and then on the amendment next furthest removed therefrom, and so on, until all the amendments have been put to the vote. If one or more amendments are adopted, the amended proposal shall then be voted upon. A motion is considered an amendment to a proposal if it merely adds to, deletes, or revises any part of that proposal. The Conference may, at the request of the representative of a State participating in the Conference, decide to put to the vote separately the various parts of a proposal or a resolution. In such case the text resulting from the various votes shall be put to the vote as a whole. When the President has announced that the voting has begun, it may not be interrupted except on a point of order in connection with the actual conduct of the voting. Representatives of States participating in the Conference may explain their votes either before or after the voting. All elections shall be held by secret ballot unless otherwise decided by the Conference (General Assembly, 1951)

## Funding

According to Human Rights Watch (2016), almost two-thirds of the money raised by the UN Human Rights comes from voluntary donations from member states and other sources. The UN's normal budget will fund the rest. The UN's regular budget is paid by "assessed contributions" from each Member State, as agreed by the General Assembly.



# Topic I: Abating global racial violence

## Summary and History of the Issue

Racially motivated violence, or racism overall, seems to have originated within the last 400 years, but some argue that it has its roots in Graeco-Roman times (Isaac, 2006). The term “race,” when it pertains to humans, does not have any biological significance. Social scientists see it as a concept or construct created by humans in order to categorize members of the human species (Clair & Dennis, 2015). Throughout the Common Era, there have been countless examples of racial prejudice being exercised: from the time of the various European conquests, to the Atlantic slave trade, all the way down to the 21st century where most people are beginning to see just how deeply rooted racial prejudice is in the world’s various socio-economic and political environments.

Racism exists as a justification for the oppression and subjugation of a certain group of human beings at the hands of another group of human beings. It is often the case that the oppressors see themselves as superior to the oppressed due to physical or cultural characteristics such as skin color, where a person was born, etc. (Clair & Dennis, 2015). A majority of the examples of “racial superiority” seen throughout history show that Europeans are usually the ones oppressing non-white people (Lange et al., 2006). However, racial prejudice is obviously not exclusive to a single group of people. In addition to skin color, racial violence is also motivated by differences in ethnic and religious backgrounds. It is quintessential, especially in the status quo, to understand that racism is not confined to prejudice based on skin color because many of the 20th and 21st-century conflicts, campaigns, power struggles, and social issues employ prejudice based on differences in nationality, ethnicity\*, and religion. Examples of such include various foreign interventions by Western powers, religious discrimination, ethnic cleansing, and institutional racism\*\*.

\*The fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition

\*\* Discrimination or unequal treatment on the basis of membership of a particular ethnic group (typically one that is a minority or marginalized), arising from systems, structures, or expectations that have become established within an institution or organization.

# Topic I: Abating global racial violence



## Key Issues

### Religious Discrimination

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission defines religious discrimination as “Religious discrimination involves treating a person unfavorably because of his or her religious beliefs.” This definition does not only pertain to Islam, Christianity, or Judaism; it applies to other non-Abrahamic faiths as well. There have been numerous occurrences of religious conflicts in modern history. Examples of such are the Holocaust, Yugoslav Wars, and the Buddhist Uprising of 1966 in Vietnam. More recently, the most notable and ongoing conflict based on religious discrimination is the disastrous War on Terror and the consequent rise of Islamophobia.

Islamophobia saw a sharp rise following the September 11th, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center towers. This rise can be seen not only on the political stage but also on the societal stage. An EUMC (European Union Military Committee) report, which was a synthesis of several other reports consisting of 5 reports from each EU member state, was conducted rapidly after the 9/11 attacks. The reports kept a close eye on any possible developments pertaining to changes in attitude towards Muslims and/or reactions against them (Allen, 2004). The first 15 of these reports saw commissioning within only 24 hours of the attacks. The speed at which these reports were conducted hints towards the expectation of a negative reaction towards Muslims. The report concluded that “Muslims became indiscriminate victims of an upsurge of both verbal and physical attacks following the events of 11 September.”

Reactions towards Muslims included discriminatory acts such as the placing of seven pig heads on spikes outside of a mosque and the spraying of what was thought to be pigs’ blood on the outside and entrance (Allen, 2004). Moreover, Muslims also faced horrendous acts of violence across Europe. In Britain, an 18-year-old Muslim woman was beaten by a group of men with baseball bats because she identified as a Muslim. Other women donning the hijab were spat on and verbally abused. In Denmark, a Muslim woman was kicked out of a moving taxi. In Germany, Muslim women had their hijabs ripped off (Allen, 2004). These are just a few examples of the discriminatory outrage Muslims faced following 9/11.



# Topic I: Abating global racial violence

## Modern Slavery

Slavery is unfortunately still prevalent in our modern times. According to a 2017 report by the International Labor Organization, there were an estimated 40.3 million people trapped in modern slavery in 2016. This new form of slavery may go undetected by the public because it has been cunningly rephrased under different names. Modern slavery is usually referred to as an umbrella term under which there are numerous ways that slavery manifests itself in our world today (International Labor Organization, 2017). These various forms include but are not limited to: sex trafficking, bonded labor, domestic servitude, and forced labor (U.S Department of State, 2020). These forms relate to this topic as racial violence is often used to coerce victims into modern slavery and restrict them from exiting (UNODC, 2009). A prominent example of modern slavery is the Libyan Slave Trade which combines many forms of modern slavery.

The Libyan Slave Trade is a recently exposed crime against humanity that received global attention in 2017. This issue is a branch of the even larger and more catastrophic crisis of Black African migrants treading treacherous waters in order to reach Italy and further parts of Europe (Mafu, 2019), a crisis that has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Africans (Mafu, 2019). Italy has since attempted to lessen the number of immigrants by supplying Libyan authorities with finances and training, but it seems that these resources have been grossly misallocated. Farmers in Southern Italy have also taken advantage of the crisis to profit from the influx of cheap labor (Mafu, 2019).

The slave trade involves Black Africans inhumanely detained in Libya as they migrate to flee from violence and economic struggles namely in Sub-Saharan Africa. They see Libya as the path to Europe, but as the migrants are smuggled across borders, they are instead imprisoned by Libyan officials and militias. The detainees are then placed in detention centers with extremely poor living conditions. In addition, these detention centers have become the trading grounds for the purchase of migrants (Sherlock & Al-Arian, 2018).

According to Sherlock & Al-Arian (2018), a former inmate named “Boubaker Nassou” describes the centers as “slave markets” and “prison[s] where they sell people.” Libyans would come to these centers and attempt to negotiate with the guards to buy an inmate; some of the reported prices would go from \$150 to \$350 (Sherlock & Al-Arian, 2018). Buyers of inmates from these prisons would exploit them for labor. The labor performed by the inmates was considered as repayment for the price paid for their release. In addition, buyers would sometimes sell the inmates to other detention centers for a profit. Black African migrants are a commodity, and actions perpetrated against them are examples of human rights violations.. In the same article, another former detainee named Mohammed says, “If you’re not Libyan they don’t think you’re human. You’re an animal in their eyes.” What happens within the walls of Libyan detention centers is nothing short of modern-day slavery, and is a scarily accurate example of the adage “History repeats itself.”



# Topic I: Abating global racial violence

## Genocides and Ethnic Cleansing

According to Bell-Fialkoff (1993) ethnic cleansing refers to “the expulsion of an ‘undesirable’ population from a given territory due to religious or ethnic discrimination, political, strategic or ideological considerations, or a combination of these” (p. 110). In other words, it is the process of homogenizing a certain territory’s ethnic composition. Furthermore, Ethnic cleansing entails the expulsion of a small number of people from a certain region, followed by the resettling of majority group members in the minorities’ abandoned houses and property. In sum, ethnic cleansing is a program of ethnic displacement and relocation that can be carried out in a violent or nonviolent manner. All of these efforts are intended to create ethno-territorial unity. As a result of ethnic cleansing, many people have developed depression and other types of psychological distress (Boyle, 2017).

Genocides, on the other hand, have been defined by The United Nations as “with the intent to destroy an ethnic, national, racial or religious group” (Quran, 2017, para 6). They categorize genocide as acts of inflicting physical or mental injury, and deliberately imposing living circumstances that are designed to cause the groups physical demise in whole or in part. Moreover, Quran (2017) mentions that to be considered genocide, the activities must be carried out with the intention of wiping out an entire group of people.

An example of both a genocide and act of ethnic cleansing would be the Uyghur Muslim genocide that is occurring in China. According to Clarke (2013), China is frequently described as “a culturally homogeneous nation-state” (p. 110 as cited in Finnegan, 2020), with the Han-Chinese ethnic minority acting as the majority. In reality, China is home to a variety of ethnic minorities, many of whom live in territories that were added to China during the rise of the Qing Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Finnegan, 2020). Of the ethnic minorities in China, the Uyghur community has attracted a lot of attention in recent years on the assumption that they are terrorists and extremists (Finnegan, 2020). Furthermore, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, properly known as Xinjiang, is home to about 11 million Uyghurs (Fifield, 2019).

At the start of 2018, China has imprisoned over 1 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in hundreds of internment camps in Xinjiang, according to a United Nations human-rights panel. Since then, satellite photography has revealed that the camp network has expanded (Shepp, 2021). Survivors claim that captives were forced to shout slogans in support of President Xi Jinping (Shepp, 2021). According to Shepp (2021), the Uyghurs have been arbitrarily imprisoned and treated in ways that are difficult to comprehend. Torture, such as waterboarding and forms of sexual abuse, is used against them, for example. They are compelled to reject Islam, eat pork, and consume alcohol, and they are constantly monitored to ensure that they do not pray. Detainees are frequently not charged with a crime and have no legal recourse to challenge their imprisonment. In addition to that, because they are forbidden from interacting with their family, many detainees simply vanish. China has pressured other countries to deport Uyghurs back to China who have fled the country and sought refuge abroad; they usually vanish once they return. Meanwhile, across Xinjiang, cultural and religious landmarks are being desecrated at an alarming rate. Despite the government’s official tally of 24,000 mosques in the region, according to research published last year by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, less than 15,000 remain standing, and more than half of those that do have been damaged (Shepp, 2019). Furthermore, about half of the region’s cultural heritage monuments, including ancient pilgrimage sites, have been damaged or destroyed (Shepp, 2021). In addition, according to the interviews and statistics, the state routinely conducts pregnancy tests on minority women and encourages them to use intrauterine devices, sterilization, and even abortion. Xinjiang has seen a substantial surge in the use of IUDs and sterilization, despite the fact that the country as a whole has seen a decline in both those strategies (The Associated Press, 2020).



# Topic I: Abating global racial violence

## The Exploitation of Migrant Workers

A migrant worker is defined in the International Labour Organization (ILO) instruments as a person who migrates (or has migrated) from one country to another with the intention of being employed other than on his/her own account, and includes anyone who is regularly admitted as a migrant for employment (Simon et al, 2015). However, some migrant workers are exploited in specific countries. For instance, migrants are forced to work for little or no pay, frequently under threat of penalty, in conditions known as labor exploitation. There are several ways to compel someone to do something, including: threats of exposure to immigration officials, use of violence or intimidation, accumulated debt, and retention of identity papers (Stop the Traffik, 2021). Moreover, Mucci et al. (2019) have shown that depressive symptoms, anxiety, and substance misuse are the main developing disorders that are shown in migrant workers. This leads to poor living circumstances, which are exacerbated by social exclusion and arduous labor. In reality, migrant workers are frequently subjected to verbal or physical abuse, and they are frequently engaged in hazardous, harmful employment.

An example of migrant exploitation would be the kafala System, which is mostly seen in Middle Eastern countries. The Kafala System is when International workers are linked to their local sponsor, or kafeel, who is usually their employer, through the sponsorship system. This system has been endorsed by Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, as well as Jordan and Lebanon (Robinson, 2021). The state gives sponsorship licenses to local individuals or businesses to hire foreign immigrants, with the exception of Bahrain, where the worker's sponsor is a government agency rather than the employer. The sponsor pays for travel and lodging, which are normally dorm-style facilities or, in the case of domestic staff, at the sponsor's home. Rather than recruiting people directly, sponsors can use private recruitment agencies (PDF) in the countries of origin to find workers and aid with their immigration into the host country (Robinson, 2021).

Global anti-racism demonstrations triggered calls for Arab nations to abolish this “exploitative” sponsorship system for migrant laborers, which has been compared to contemporary slavery (Barkawi, 2020). Around 23 million migrants, largely from poor African and Asian nations, labor in the Arab world under the system of Kafala. Moreover, according to Barkawi (2020) those who support demonstrators calling for an end to racism in the United States and abroad, according to labor rights activists in the area, should look closer to home, where foreign workers endure exploitation and abuse under Kafala. Moreover, human rights groups and organizations have also criticized the Kafala system for granting employers unrestricted discretion, allowing for an ongoing stream of human rights crimes (Hall, 2018). Many migrant workers' working conditions, for example, are in flagrant violation of “fair labor” laws, and sponsors have the authority to revoke or suspend employees' passports and documents, as well as levy fines, for any reason they see fit. Workers who are underpaid, overworked, or abused may be imprisoned by their ‘madams’ or ‘masters’ in a residence or at a workstation (Hall, 2018). Passports, visas, and phones are regularly confiscated, and domestic workers are confined to their homes (Robinson, 2021). Non-domestic workers are typically kept in overcrowded hostels, which have become more dangerous since the spread of the coronavirus. Workers in the dorms are at increased risk of contracting COVID-19, and many do not have adequate health care (Robinson, 2021). Furthermore, according to Robinson (2021) the economic crisis has made life considerably difficult for migrant domestic workers, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 outbreak. Many people have reported that during the lockdown, occurrences of abuse intensified, and that their employers decreased their salary – if they paid them at all (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Hundreds of workers have been stranded outside consulates or embassies since May, many without money, passports, or possessions, as well as return tickets for those who cannot afford expensive repatriation flights (Humans Rights Watch, 2020).



# Topic I: Abating global racial violence

## Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

### International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICEAFRD) is a UN treaty that was entered into force on the 4th of January, 1969. The ICEAFRD introduced precise definitions for racial discrimination and guidelines surrounding it. The document condemned all forms of discrimination and identified certain inalienable rights (OHCHR, 1965). In addition, the ICEAFRD implored all members of the convention to take the necessary actions in their respective countries to protect their people from discrimination and enforce the regulations that help prevent it. Moreover, the ICEAFRD also established the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) as well as various infrastructure surrounding its leadership, membership, voting procedures, etc. Furthermore, the CERD requests reports from its member states on the measures they have taken to combat racial discrimination in legislative, judicial, administrative, and/or other affairs.

### European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), is a commission consisting of independent and impartial members who work to protect people residing within the territories of the Council of Europe's member states from all types of racial discrimination. The ECRI officially came into action in 1994 and was built upon the foundation of respect for human rights. Its function is in fact similar to the CERD, wherein member states gather to discuss various reports, statistics, and solutions pertaining to antisemitism, discrimination, racism, religious intolerance, and xenophobia (Gachet, n.d).

# Topic I: Abating global racial violence

## Questions a Resolution Should Address

1. What have countries previously done to combat racism and what failures have they been subjected to?
2. What institutions did the countries comply with in order to fight racial violence?
3. What countries have worked together to ensure protection to the majority and minority of the population?
4. What psychological toll did racial violence have on the targeted groups, and what solutions did the countries uptake to solve this problem?
5. How did countries ensure that the solutions they have suggested will be applicable in the future?

## Recommended Sources for Further Research

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# Topic II: Tackling the Issue of Honor Killings of Women

## Summary and History of the Issue

Honor killings are defined as, “acts of violence, usually murder, committed by male family members against female family members who are perceived to have brought dishonor upon the family” (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Perpetrators typically commit these acts against their female relatives for going against the norm of what their family deems as correct behavior for their family. Some of the main reasons for honor killings include refusing to marry a partner chosen for the female, marrying for love, having sexual relationships outside of marriage whether consensually or not. However, such acts are only relevant to female members in the family and not to males. Another reason that can be observed is seeking a divorce as it is seen as an act of shame, as society often blames women for the divorce as women are supposed to be seen as kind and forgiving and to stand by their husband regardless of the way he treats her. Indeed any of these acts are seen as acts of dishonor and are typically enough to trigger an attack.

Moreover, the communities do not only allow these acts to occur, but in some cases, they also encourage the family to commit harm to the female in question. To further elaborate, the male members of the family are ridiculed by their communities and ostracized for ‘allowing’ the females to act in a way that brings dishonors to the family. Thus, they will be seen as cowards for not getting rid of the shame brought upon them by their female family members.

In such communities, women are typically seen as properties of their families where their bodies and sexuality do not belong to them. Due to the nature of these acts, it can sometimes be difficult to quantify the number of honor killings that occur per year because in order to qualify as an honor killing there must be a clear intent to restore one’s family’s honor through this act. However, the UN estimates that around 5,000 women and girls are murdered in an honor killing per year with a high concentration in the Middle East and South Asia regions. The country with the highest rate of honor killings is widely considered to be Pakistan, where approximately 1,000 out of the 5,000 annual killings reported take place.

Despite the clear violation of human rights that these acts infringe upon, there are many reasons that they still occur in modern society.

### Lack of Education

There have been many debates regarding the role of education and literacy in eliminating honor killings. Many argue that individuals with a higher level of education do not consider killing as a way to restore their honor however due to the strong cultural and traditional beliefs some held no level of education would shake those beliefs. A study conducted in 2018 concluded that education is a strong tool in minimizing the rationalization of honor killings as a tool to control women. However, due to the prevailing lack of education in tribal and rural areas, the education provided could not change the minds of those subjects (Khan Bangash et al., 2018).

# Topic II: Tackling the Issue of Honor Killings of Women

## Lack of Laws that Protect Women from these Acts

In many countries, the laws to protect women and girls are either inadequate, unenforced, or nonexistent. In 2014, a pregnant woman was stoned by her family right outside the high court's building where many police officers were present but did nothing to stop the situation. The father later said that he felt no regret over his actions as his daughter had disgraced the family by marrying a man of her choice ("pakistan woman stoned", 2014). Despite the fact that in 2004 honor killings were outlawed in Pakistan there continue to be many similar cases like the one described above, as these crimes go unpunished. In another incident that took place in Denmark, Ghazala Khan a Danish woman of Pakistani descent was shot to death for marrying an Afghan husband after her family was made aware of the marriage. Before their marriage, Ghazala and her husband contacted the Danish police several times for help but were refused. Only after the act had been committed did the government take action, by sentencing all perpetrators in the first case of an honor killing in Denmark.

## Lack of Protection within Communities

Honor killings can be seen more prominently in collectivist societies where the needs of the family or clan come before the needs of the individual. Typically, in these patriarchal societies, men take control of the behavior of the woman in their family with regards to their social life. As an example, in Afghanistan, honor crimes remain very high along with many other forms of violence against women, and are increasing as attitudes fail to keep pace with economic and social changes. Finding safety is difficult as women fleeing their husbands or families may be imprisoned and returned to them and there is, again, a culture of impunity even more profound than that which exists in Pakistan. The male and surprisingly female members of these communities typically encourage this behavior or participate in it as bystanders, in the case of Ghazal Khan, while her and her husband were fleeing it was her aunt who informed her father of her whereabouts.

# Topic II: Tackling the Issue of Honor Killings of Women

## Key Issues

Honor killing originated in Rome where women were violated by their male relatives or family members with the sole justification of protecting the honor of the family (Elakkary et al., 2013). This archaic tradition is still being committed today and it goes beyond race and religion. There are many reasons that trigger violence against women across the world which is further discussed within the key issues.

### Role of Marriage in Honor Killings

Honor killings are acts of violence often perpetrated by male family members against female relatives who are seen to have brought the family disgrace. Individuals in a woman's family might attack her for a multitude of reasons, including refusal to get an arranged marriage, seeking a divorce — even from an abusive husband — or allegations of committing adultery. An attack might be triggered simply by the belief that a woman has acted in a certain way to “dishonor” her family. Honor murders, for example, might occasionally target people who choose boyfriends, lovers, or spouses from outside their family's ethnic and/or religious community. Girls and women are labeled as disgraceful and punished for a variety of reasons. Consider the case of a young woman who refused to marry the guy her family had chosen for her, a cousin. Instead, she picked a partner for herself and eloped with him. She was three months pregnant when she was beaten to death with bricks by a crowd of twenty individuals, including her father, siblings, and the cousin she had jilted (Selby, 2016). According to article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, men, and women of full age, regardless of race, religion, or nationality, are free to marry whoever they want. The freedom to marry the partner of our choice is vital; nevertheless, in certain countries, women are prohibited from using this right since they are viewed as the personal property of a man. Women are viewed as a commodity that their fathers, husbands, and brothers possess and govern. Women are not supposed to express any sentiments or wants that are contradictory to their fathers, spouses, or brothers' preferences. Women have always been denied the right to pick their marital partners. The groom is traditionally chosen by the family's head of household, which is usually the father. The bride has no voice in the proceedings, and any rebellion of the procedure is frowned upon. In Islam, women who are successful in marrying the partners of their choosing are sometimes blackmailed by their fathers with claims of zina (unlawful sexual relations). The wali (the closest male adult relative) has responsibility and authority over marriage in Islamic law. The wali is usually the father, and if it can be proven that the father did not consent to the marriage, it will be considered invalid. If the marriage is invalid, any sexual relations between the man and the woman will be considered zina.

# Topic II: Tackling the Issue of Honor Killings of Women

## Honor Killings as a Result of Rape and Sexual Assault

Across many cultures, rape victims are blamed for bringing “shame” to her family. They are punished by being abused and sometimes get murdered by their own family members in the name of honor killing. In a report by BBC, “fathers will kill their own daughters” if it is discovered that they were raped (Harter, 2011). They claim by taking their “own daughters” lives, they are doing them a favor. Out of sheer desperation, women seek out places where they can get an abortion. So even though steps are taken to criminalize honor killing, some countries are reluctant and if a man were to be prosecuted for the killing, the defense focuses on the woman’s alleged behavior, and the crime against her is ignored, which explains why the annual murder rate is high. It is reported on the United Nations Population Fund that around 5000 women are killed for honor (Britannica, 2021).

## Honor Killings Due to a Lack of Societal Education

Education plays a role in developing our morals of what is right and wrong. It also plays a vital role in changing our perceptions. It should be noted that educated people are the ones to support the rights of women. Lack of education is correlated with a lack of respect for the equality of women. Some researchers claim that perpetrators of honor killings can sometimes lack education or belong to rural classes (Reimers, 2007). What that means is that the cases of honor killings are higher in regions where there is a lack of awareness and education. For instance, in areas such as the south of Punjab, Pakistan, the level of education is low and the reported cases of honor killings are high whereas in central Punjab due to media and a higher level of education, the reported cases are found to be low (Ali et al., 2020). This is because the media played a proactive role to combat and control the disturbing crime as it is finally forced into the light and in front of the concerned authorities. However, there is evidence that authorities in the subcontinent are handing out lighter sentences to perpetrators, sometimes even as low as a few months (Ali et al., 2020). The reasons for handing out lighter sentences could be due to reducing the overflow of prisons and bribery.

## Honor Killings Due to Religion or Culture

No religion gives an individual the right to take someone’s life. Considering Islam, it is mentioned in the Quran that whoever kills another human being intentionally will take their place in Hell (Government of Canada, Department of Justice, Electronic Communications, 2017). If a murder does occur, the murderer must either give blood money to the victim’s family or suffer the same fate as his or her victim. Honor-based crimes existed as cultural practices finding their roots in Roman civilization. The main point of mercilessly murdering women is associated with culture and not religion. It points more towards protecting the pride and honor of a family in a specific religion or culture. Yet, the male family members would justify their killing using religion and not culture. In fact, some Muslims would assert that in Islam, extramarital or relationships out of wedlock are forbidden which has been mentioned in their holy scripture. So, if two people are involved in a relationship and their families discover it, they use Islamic law to justify their killing even though as previously mentioned Islam does not support the killing of individuals. This is just one instance where religion is used to support their wrongdoings. However, people of different faiths may face similar fates.

# Topic II: Tackling the Issue of Honor Killings of Women

## Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

### The United Nations General Assembly's Third Committee

In November 2000 the third committee of the general assembly met to adopt two draft resolutions on crimes against women where the first draft was titled, "working towards the elimination of crimes against women committed in the name of honor" (United Nations, 2000). The delegation of Jordan proposed three amendments, two of those were adding the word "premeditated" before the word crimes and the delegates of Morocco and Pakistan supported these amendments. After a vote on these amendments, they were defeated by a record vote of 22 in favor to 80 against, with 24 abstentions. After some debate the draft resolution without any amendments was put up to vote and reached a record of 120 votes in favor to 0 against, with 25 abstentions. In the end a consensus could not be reached.

# Topic II: Tackling the Issue of Honor Killings of Women

## Questions a Resolution Should Address

1. What have countries previously done to eradicate the act of honor killings against women?
2. Why has this ancient practice prevailed to this modern age? What factors could have contributed to its continued practice?
3. What role does the concept of honor take on in collectivist societies and how does it influence the members of these communities?
4. What kind of impact would law radicalization have on societies where honor killings are seen as part of the cultural norms of the country?

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