

GECMUNIV

DISEC

**BACKGROUND GUIDE:
WAR IN SYRIA**

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIRS

Dear Delegates,

My name is Sara Jeong and I am currently a sophomore in Saint Paul Preparatory Seoul. I will be one of the chairs for this year's MUN Conference 2018. I am thrilled to be a chair for the DISEC committee. This is my first experience as a chair at an MUN conference. In truth, this will be my ultimate first try in participating in a formal conference. Some of the delegates might have lots of past experience and some might be total newbies like me. I not only look forward to hearing debates that are productive and eager from all of you, but I also want this conference to be a mean for all participants to build memories through our two day journey!

See you guys in March!

Dear Esteemed Delegates,

My name is Karoline Herman and I am a sophomore from Saint Paul Preparatory School in Seoul, South Korea. I feel extremely honored to be one of the chairs for this year's conference and for this committee. This is my first time being a chair for any MUN conference. In fact, this is my first time participating in MUN ever. Since this is my first time ever participating in a conference, I don't exactly have any tips or advice to give to you but just make sure that you are having fun and you're not too stressed! This conference is supposed to be a fun and memorable experience! So, good luck, and I hope to meet you guys in good health!

See you all in March!

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE

Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC), also known as the First Committee in the United Nations, was established in 1945. It is one of the six main committees in the General Assembly. This committee was called the Political and Security Committee, or POLISEC, until 1978 when it was changed to DISEC in order to centralize the committee around the topic of disarmament. It gained tremendous momentum during the Cold War in which political instability and conflict had reached its apex especially in areas of nuclear weapon development. DISEC offers a platform for delegates to speak for their country in order to settle problems around controversial military operations.

While DISEC is mainly concerned with promoting the disarmament of destabilizing weapons within countries, it also deals with international security issues -- such as global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community. DISEC serves to regulate the operations of disarmament and deals with global challenges and threats. This is in the hopes of maintaining the international peace and security between all the states within the scope of the Charter. Also, DISEC works in close coordination with the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Jihadist

A person that does essentially threatening things in the name of Islam.

Proxy war

A war that is started by a major but is not actually directly fought in by said major power.

IS

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

Arabs Spring

Also known as the Arab revolutions was a revolutionary wave of both violent and non-violent riots, protests, and demonstrations in the Middle East and North Africa.

NATO

Also known as the North Atlantic Trading Organization, is a military alliance between several North American states and European states. It was based off of the North Atlantic Treaty signed on April 4th, 1949.

Opposition

The opposition is referring to the group of people that are opposing the current Syrian president (Bashar al-Assad).

AGENDA INFORMATION

Historical Background

A series of anti-government protest, termed as the Arab Springs, swept across the Middle East and North Africa from the early 2010. The crash of conflict is still resonating until the present day. The core cause of this protest movement was to express the citizen's resentment towards Assad's regime. In addition to the mounting social problems of unemployment, corruption, and increase in product's price, the voices of anti-government protest gained momentum in the early 2011 with the successful uprising in Tunisia and Egypt. Lasted from January until February of 2011, protests in Tunisia and Egypt gained victory in matter of few weeks in taking down the dictatorships. The former president of Tunisia, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, stepped down from his office and fled the country. Likewise, without the military's support, Hosni Mubarak, the former president of Egypt, also ended his presidency.

Boldened and encouraged by the success in Tunisia and Egypt, the voices of Arab Spring movement gained momentum elsewhere throughout the Middle East, specifically in Syria. However, Syria's deviated into a completely different track. The Syrian protest led to a prolonged and bloody struggle between opposition groups and the ruling authority.

Holding the president's office since July 17, 2000, President Bashar al-Assad exercised tight grasp over the Syrian citizens. The protest of demanding the president to resignate, met a totally different response compared to that of either Tunisia or Egypt. President Assad responded with harsh crackdown on the demonstrations across the country with brutal force of zero hesitance in using open fire on civilians. His brutal oppression, drew huge criticism from number of international leaders as well as from the Human Rights Association. Despite the strong counterattacks by the Syrian leadership council in Istanbul, Assad's is continuing secure its sharp grip on power, as he obtained the support of critical military units of Syria's `Alawite minority. The war in Syria has gone on for more than six years and has claimed the lives of roughly a million people.

Status Quo

Currently the war in Syria is going on strong and is getting worse according to sources. It first started as a conflict between the people that supported the current president of Syria, Bashar al-Assad, and those who didn't, but it has escalated into something much bigger than that. All of the parties of the war, the Syrian-Arab Republic, the Syrian opposition, the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, have all been accused of war crimes such as murder, torture, and enforced disappearance. Also, all of the parties have been utilizing civilian suffering. They have been blocking access to food, water, and health services, as a method of war.

One topic of the Syrian war is the amount of refugees coming into Europe. While over 50% of the population of some countries, such as Hungary, Macedonia, and Montenegro, believe that they should not be accepting any refugees from Syria, other countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, believe that they should be helping and taking in as many as they can. To date, 1 million refugees are currently in Lebanon, 666,000 are in Jordan, and 3 million are in Turkey. Since 2015, the number of immigrants has been decreasing. This sudden drop in refugees can be attributed to a Turkey-EU deal where Turkey takes back refugees that traveled by Sea to the Greece Islands and then the EU resettled them in Turkey. Not only that but there has been a tightening of border controls in the Western Balkan islands. Despite this, the death rate of the journey from Syria to refuge has increased by 34% since 2015.

There is an international law that bans the use of any chemical weapons in war. This is because everyone agrees that it is too harsh to use on the people. But reports said that while chemical weapons are illegal, both the opposition and the Syrian government have used them. While both the Syrian government and the opposition has denied the use of chemical weapons, no one seems to be believing them. After the reports of chemical weapons being used, both America and Russia agreed that all chemical weapons currently in the hands of both of the parties should be confiscated and destroyed. This was a very important decision because both America and Russia are supporting different sides of the war-Russia is supporting the Syrian government while America is supporting the opposition.

There have been lots of other events that have led to current status of the war. In February of 2016, there was a very short ceasefire. While this ceasefire does not include attacks on UN-designated terrorist groups, at the end of February, the ceasefire was said to still be holding. During this ceasefire, the Syrian government, along with Russian and Iranian support, was able to take Palmyra back from ISIL. Though, by the time July rolled around, the ceasefire had ended and the fighting between the Islamic government and the rebels had escalated. In late 2011 and early 2012, there were a lot of ill-fated efforts to end the conflicts. For example, in 2011, Syrian officials agreed to something called the Arab League initiative which ordered that all Syrian government stop their violence against civilians and protesters and that they remove all armored vehicles. It also called for all political prisoners be released. This didn't work, though, since there are still political prisoners and there is still violence against civilians seeing that over half of Syria's pre-war population is either dead or displaced.

STANCES OF UN MEMBER STATES AND PARTIES

Russia

One of the most important ally of the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad. The main reason for Russia to openly engage in the supporting side is because the survival of current Syrian regime is critical in maintaining Russia's influence in the Middle East. The Syrian port of Tartous is the key naval facility that servers to ensure Russia's domination in the Mediterranean base. It is continuing to support the president by constantly supplying military arms to the Syrian military force. Russia's direct support has gained international criticism, but the country is resolute in their stance since the beginning of 2015, when Russia launched air strikes against rebels while arguing that the were aiming at all IS and the terrorist as their target.

United States

The major opposition of Syrian government. The US has accused President Bashar al-Assad for the responsibility of the prolonged war. Since 2014, it has been providing limited military support to "un-radical" rebels. It has mildly conducted air strikes on IS and other jihadist groups in Syria while trying to avoid major attacks of directly intervening with the battles between the rebels. The US attempt in training Syrian soldiers have failed with yielding little to no success. The US is advocating the need for negotiations to end the war by establishing a transitional Syrian government.

Saudi Arabia

An arms dealer of the rebel groups in the Syrian War. They have provided weaponry and ammunition. In 2013, the Financial Times stated that Qatar was becoming larger when it came to providing weaponry but since then, Saudi Arabia has become the leading provider of arms to rebel groups. Since Saudi Arabia is supportive of the rebel groups, it can be inferred that they are against the current president Bashar al-Assad. As of 2016, the refugee count of Saudi Arabia is 2.5 million.

Turkey

A fervid opponent against the Syrian dicating regime. In addition to being a key supporter of the Syrian opposition, it has been burdened with receiving roughly two million refugees. It's policy of allowing rebel fighters and arms shipments has been misused by foreign jihadists who used it as a way of joining the IS. In 2015, Turkey opened its air base of Incirlik to US aircraft and drones targeting Syria and IS. Turkey is continuing to support the Syrian rebels groups as well as other groups that are fighting against the current Syrian ruling regime with financial and logistical support.

Iran

Ally of Syriaever since the Iran-Iraq war and it hasn't been any different with the Syrian Civil War. Iran has helped the Syrian government by providing financial, logistical, and technical aid as well as sending combat troops and training for other troops.

China

Like many other countries involved in the Syrian crisis, China has been avoiding heavy involvement in this war. Unlike Russia, whose country is openly intervening in Syria and supporting the Syrian regime with launching multiples of air strikes, China is leaning more towards letting the Syrian to decide the fate of their own country. Nonetheless, China's involvement is increasing greater in the recent years. Partnered with Russia in its position for Syria, China has rejected the UN proposal to sanctioning of Syrian government.

Iraq

The Iraqi government Nouri al-Maliki has established that they are a supporter of Bashar al-Assad. It is said that they are afraid of the Sunni rebellion and are afraid that they will empower similar forces in Iraq. Before they took this stance, Iran said that Assad should step down and that everyone shouldn't take action in Syria's affairs but now it has changed to support of Assad because they are afraid of the threat of the Sunni party.

France

A supporter of the opposition forces in Syria. For this, the president of Syria declared that the reason for the Paris Attacks of November 13th, 2016 was because of French support of the opposition of Syrian government. France's intense involvement in Syrian conflict can be explained by three factors. First, France is trying to establish itself as a forceful world power by supporting the opposition forces in Syria. Second, France is fulfilling its historical role or offering a different way than the United States, meaning that they are offering a different foreign policy than the United States. Third, France wants to show that it is very supportive of the opposition in order to enhance its security alliances with other anti-Assad Sunni countries.

Britain

Britain is currently backing up from further participating in the Syrian conflict. The Defence Security of Britain, Michael Fallon has claimed that Britain was fully supportive of the offensive against the Syrian government, but it seems it is unlikely that Britain will design take extensive military campaign than they do now.

Canada

The ongoing endless conflict in Syria, which has lasted for six year, lead to the birth of massive scale of humanitarian crisis. Canada is actively taking part in supporting the Syrian Refugees. With international effort in increasing its security development and assistance in Syria's neighbouring country as well as expanding its own country's refugee settlement. Canada has also supported the US' military in launching limited airstrikes in Syria.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

These things should be established:

Obstacle 1: What to do with Assad

Do you think that Assad should step down or do you think that the rebel/terrorist groups should be eradicated first? What's the priority and which do you believe will bring Syria peace faster?

Obstacle 2: How to effectively fight terror groups in Syria

It is essential that NATO, Iran, Russia, and Syrian army joins forces in order to combat the terrorist groups. The problem with this is the fact that NATO is supporting said terrorist groups.

Obstacle 3: Extremist movements' ties to West's allies

A lot of the ideas that the terrorist groups have are from Western culture and also, a lot of their weaponry and financial support are from the west and its allies.

Characteristics of the parties of the war and the war itself:

The combatants are inexhaustible: Most wars end because one side surrenders. One side could surrender because they have run out of arms, are tired, or have realized that they will never win. Now, if only the opposition and the Syrian government were involved in this war, it wouldn't ended quite quickly for both of those groups are quite weak. But since both groups are backed by powerful allies, both sides are never going to get tired.

Both sides are incapable of losing and winning: Most of the time, instead of focusing on winning, the countries focus on making sure that the opposing side doesn't win. This means that while both don't win, they both don't lose either meaning that the war goes on and on and on without end. When one side does something, the other side will do something as well except bigger and better. Then, the other side does something else that is bigger and better and the cycle continues. Since both the sides have strong nations backing them, they are always able to challenge each other and they are always able to do better.

Structure of the War Encourages Atrocities: Civil wars rely on the support of the people more than the support of foreign nations but not the Syrian Civil War. Since the Syrian Civil War relies a lot on the support of foreign nations, the Syrian government doesn't really have the incentive to protect its citizens. In fact, the civilians could even be considered potential threats and even targets.

It has been said that the more foreign support there is, the more prolonged a war will be. So a possible solution would be to limit the foreign support.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Should the arms trade between states that are not involved with or not situated in the warring area be limited or encouraged?
- What are the motifs of countries to join in the prolonged war in Syria? What might the countries gain from doing so?
- According to the current situation, what would be the most rational solution?
- Will Syria manage to establish their wanted democracy if the rebel forces succeed and they no longer have their Assad regime? If not, why wouldn't they be able to establish a stable country?
- How are countries involved in the Syria conflict affected?
- Do you think that since the number of refugees has decreased, it means that Syria is starting to stabilize itself/the war is starting to reach its end, or do you think that it is the calm right before a storm?
- Do you think that limiting the amount of foreign support will be detrimental to the to the two sides and the civilians or do you think that it could eventually bring it to a resolve?

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