

Committee Guide

The Sunni-Shia Conflict

Arab League



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1. Personal Introduction

Hello future Delegates,

My name is Renée Ensink, I am 17 years old and I live in Hardenberg, which is a city in the Netherlands. I am currently attending my fifth year at the Vechtdal College Hardenberg, where I follow a curriculum of natural sciences. I am beyond excited to share my first chairing experience with Rasmus as his co-chair of the Arab League. I have attended 4 MUNs before this OLMUN. One of these was OLMUN 2017, where I have some very fond memories of, and I am delighted to come back as a chair. I love listening to music (Ed Sheeran, Harry Styles and Dua Lipa are some of my favourite artists), reading and watching movies and series on Netflix. I also love spending time with my friends, some of whom have come with me to this year's OLMUN, and I am looking forward to introducing them to Oldenburg and the amazing conference. I hope all of you will have as much (and maybe even more) fun as I had last year.

See you on the 12th of June!

Dear Delegates,

My name is Rasmus Conrad, I am 17 years old and currently attending the eleventh grade at Herbartgymnasium Oldenburg. It is my honour to chair the Arab League at OLMUN 2018 together with Renée. This year's conference will be my ninth MUN, my third OLMUN and my fourth conference as chair. Besides MUNs, I do a lot of sports but mostly badminton, play the clarinet and tenor saxophone, enjoy reading books and meeting friends. As every year, I am really looking forward to a great conference and a lot of fun in our committee and the evening events with you.

See you soon in Oldenburg!

2. The Arab League

2.1. About the Arab League

The Arab League, or formally correct the League of Arab States, is a regional organization of Arab States currently consisting of 22 States located in and around North Africa, the Horn of Africa and Arabia. The Council of the Arab League is the principal institution and has seven special committees comparable to those of the UN.

2.2. History of the Arab League

The Arab League was formed in Cairo on 22 March 1945 with six members: Kingdom of Egypt, Kingdom of Iraq, Transjordan (which was renamed Jordan in 1949), Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. Yemen joined as a member on 5 May 1945. Over the years, 15 other countries have joined the League, namely Libya (1953), Sudan (1956), Tunisia and Morocco (1958), Kuwait (1961), Algeria (1962), Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (1971), Mauritania (1973), Somalia (1974), the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO; 1976), Djibouti (1977), and the Comoros (1993). It also contains 4 observer states: Brazil, Eritrea, India, Venezuela, and Armenia. The aims of the League in 1945 were to strengthen and coordinate the political, cultural, economic, and social programs of its members and to mediate disputes among them or between them and third parties, especially Israel. The signing on April 13, 1950, of an agreement on joint defense and economic cooperation also committed the signatories to coordination of military defense measures. In its early years the Arab League concentrated mainly on economic, cultural, and social programs. In 1959 it held the first Arab petroleum congress and in 1964 established the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO). Also in 1964, despite objections by Jordan, the league granted the PLO observer status as the representative of all Palestinians. This was upgraded to full membership in 1976. Under the leadership of Mahmoud Riad, the third secretary-general (1972–79), political activity increased. The league, however, was weakened by internal dissension on political issues, especially those concerning Israel and the Palestinians. After Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel on March 26, 1979, the other members of the Arab League voted to suspend Egypt's membership and to transfer the league's headquarters from Cairo to Tunis. Egypt was reinstated as a member of the Arab League in 1989, and the league's headquarters returned to Cairo in 1990. Syria's participation has been suspended since November 2011, as a consequence of the civil war.

2.3. Main goals and challenges

While the Arab League is committed to respecting the established government in each member state and to guaranteeing its sovereignty and independence, the League set itself several objectives from the outset: to maintain and strengthen the solidarity

among the Arab states in the face of external threats; to ensure cohesion and peace between the member states by offering to arbitrate in the event of conflict between two or more member states and by opposing any recourse to force; and to ensure the cooperation of member states in various areas, such as but not limited to social, legal, parliamentary, financial, economic and cultural affairs.

• **3. Introduction and Basic overview of the topic**

3.1 Introduction

More than 85 percent of the world's 1.5 billion Muslims are Sunni. They live across the Arab world, as well as in countries like Turkey, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia. Iran, Iraq and Bahrain on the other hand are largely populated with Shias.

The Sunni-Shia conflict is 1,400 years in the making, dating back to the years immediately after the Prophet Mohammed's death in 632. The Prophet died without having appointed a successor leading to a massive split over the future of the rapidly growing religion – chiefly whether the religion's next leader should be chosen by a kind of democratic consensus, or whether only Mohammed's blood relations should reign. The arguments are complicated but essentially boil down to the fact that Sunnis believe the Prophet's trusted friend and advisor Abu Bakr was the first rightful leader of Muslims or "caliph", while Shias believe that Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law Ali was chosen by Allah to hold the title. Both men did eventually hold the title – Abu Bakr first until his death, and Ali fourth after two previous caliphs were assassinated – but the schism really commenced with the decision of the next successor. While Sunni Muslims argue that their interpretation of Islam follows the Sunnah (ways of Mohammed), Shias argue that Ali was the rightful first caliph and only his descendants could claim to be the true leaders of Muslims. As with any division that lasts over a thousand years, the Sunni-Shia split led to each denomination developing its own unique cultures, doctrines and schools of thought.

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3.2. Basic Overview over the topic

These different views on the rightful leader had led to numerous civil wars. Fundamentalist factions of both Sunni and Shias promote terrorism. They believe in

jihad.

Over the years, thousands upon thousands of Sunni jihadists have streamed into Iraq from places such as Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Egypt. Making up a small minority of the Sunni insurgency, these foreign jihadists are nevertheless responsible for some of the most gruesome acts of violence, mass-casualty events aimed at stoking a chain reaction of sectarianism. And the same can be said about Shia jihadists. These terrorist organisations include The Islamic State (IS) and Al-Qaida.

The Islamic State consists of Sunnis who have claimed territory in Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria. It is widely known for its videos of beheadings and other types of executions of both soldiers and civilians, including journalists and aid workers, and its destruction of cultural heritage sites. The United Nations holds IS responsible for human rights abuses and war crimes. IS also committed ethnic cleansing on a historic scale in northern Iraq. The jihadists make money by selling low-cost oil on 'their' land. They have the impression that they are superior to all non-Sunnis and have the right to murder and enslave these people.

Al-Qaeda ideologues envision a complete break from all foreign influences in Muslim countries, and the creation of a new caliphate ruling over the entire Muslim world. Al-Qaeda's leaders regard Shias and other sects as heretical and its members and sympathizers have attacked their mosques and gatherings. Characteristic techniques employed by al-Qaeda include suicide attacks and the simultaneous bombing of different targets.

These two terrorist groups are the most extreme examples of the conflict between Sunnis and Shias, but by no means the only ones. It is in any case clear that this issue is in dire need of a resolution.

3.3. Possible measures to reduce the tension and conflict

To this very old and complicated conflict there have been different suggestions for reduction of the tension and the conflict made. First of all, in Article 30 of the Arab Charter on Human Rights, which was adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States on 22 May 2004, is stated that "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion". The problem is the rest of the Article because it allows to annul this freedom by law. Additionally to that, there exists no Arabian Court of Human Rights and no governmental or private reports on violations of the Human Rights. By

changing that at least an official legal discrimination of either Shia or Sunni Muslims would be prohibited.

Another idea would be to fight religious extremists and terrorists, who are trying to separate Shia and Sunni Muslims and bring them up against each other and to stop financing them in other countries for proxy wars and more thereby influence. With the Joint Arab Force (JAF), which was established in March 2015 by the AL General Secretary in order to counteract extremism and other threats to Arab States, there already has been made a step against terrorism. But it will be crucial that both religious dignitaries and politicians call for Muslim unity against religious extremism for a better, more peaceful Arabic region. This could take place by treating both Shia and Sunni Muslims more equal and raise public awareness of the benefits a better relationship of Shia and Sunni Muslims would cause.

3.4. Resolutions

Arab Charter on Human Rights

<https://www.google.de/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=6&ved=0ahUKEwiL8L3Bi5LaAhUJaxQKHSLC7IQFgheMAU&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.unicef.org%2Ftdad%2Farabcharterhumanrights.doc&usg=AOvVaw04xmFXx3r6P6Yyd5RGaUsN>

UN Resolution 60/150. Combating defamation of religions

http://dag.un.org/bitstream/handle/11176/257291/A_RES_60_150-EN.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

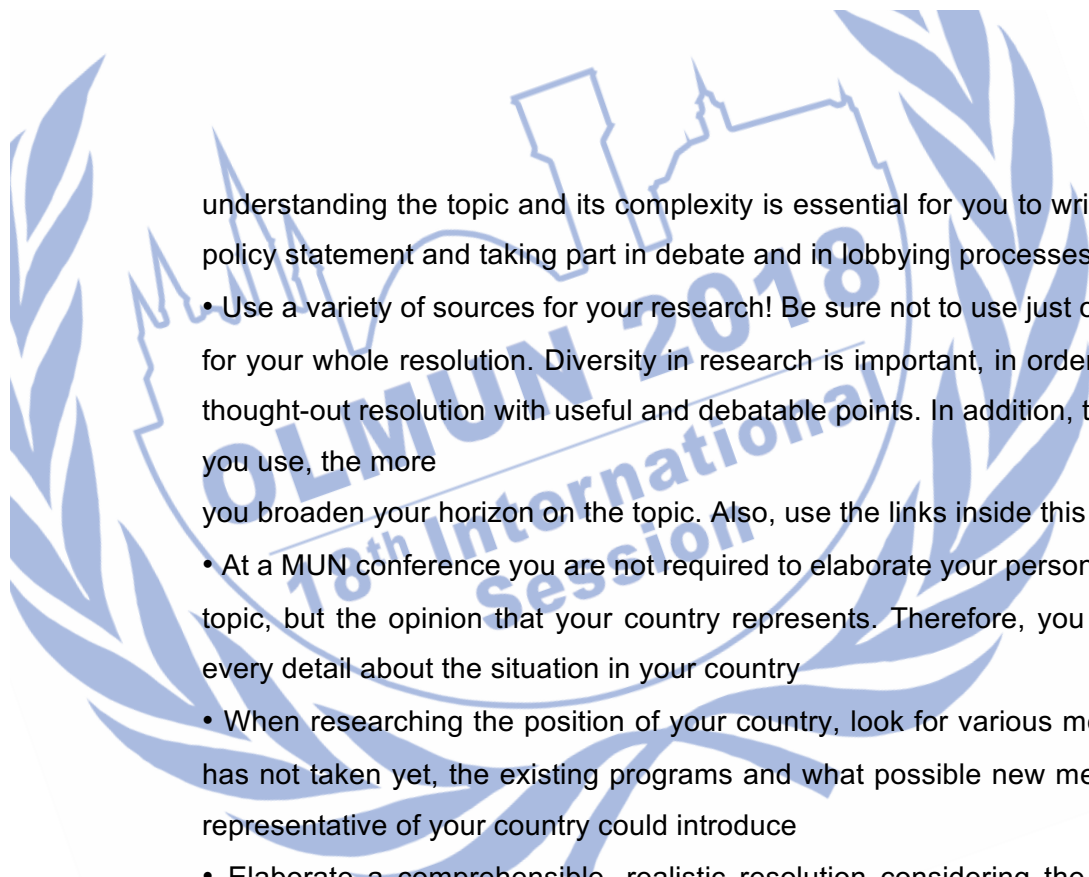
4. Research

4.1. Policy statement and draft resolution

This is a Committee Guide which means it should guide you, help you to familiarize yourself with the topic and motivate you to further learn about the dispute between Sunni and Shia Muslims. Its purpose is not to limit your research to this guide, since your resolutions should be as diverse as possible in the end!

Please remember:

- Begin your research in time and don't wait until the last minute because



understanding the topic and its complexity is essential for you to write a resolution, a policy statement and taking part in debate and in lobbying processes

- Use a variety of sources for your research! Be sure not to use just one single source for your whole resolution. Diversity in research is important, in order to reach a well-thought-out resolution with useful and debatable points. In addition, the more sources you use, the more you broaden your horizon on the topic. Also, use the links inside this guide!
- At a MUN conference you are not required to elaborate your personal opinion on the topic, but the opinion that your country represents. Therefore, you need to find out every detail about the situation in your country
- When researching the position of your country, look for various measures it has or has not taken yet, the existing programs and what possible new measures you as a representative of your country could introduce
- Elaborate a comprehensible, realistic resolution considering the position of your country! Of course, this resolution needs to be realistic considering that you are a representative of an existing country with existing positions. Within this frame, you need to find a self-contained solution, which you can present in our committee

Furthermore, we want to see some of your research results before the conference, since we don't want anyone to be unprepared in our committee. Because of this, we would like you to send us a policy statement of your country until May the 20th 2018. Additionally, we want you to send us a draft resolution, which will be due on May the 25th 2018. Keep in mind that these dates are the latest, so we advise you to send us these documents earlier in advance. For those of you, who do not know how to write a policy statement or a resolution, please look it up in the Official OLMUN 2018 Handbook. If you have any further questions, whether they concern preparation, the conference or anything else, please do not hesitate to contact us and consult us: arableague@olmun.org

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4.2. Helpful links

<https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB19.pdf>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications>

https://www.diffen.com/difference/Shia_vs_Sunni

<https://www.cfr.org/interactives/sunni-shia-divide#!/sunni-shia-divide>

<http://balochistanpeoplesfront.blogspot.nl/2006/12/shia-equality-or-shia-supremacy.html>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7959531.stm>

https://www.bpb.de/system/files/dokument_pdf/Naher%20Osten_Wohlstand_Religionen.pdf