

*Protecting Civilians from Sexual and  
Military Violence in Combat Zones*

# **Committee Guide**

*Human Rights Council*





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## 1. Personal Introduction

Dear delegates,

I'm Amin Al Magrebi and I will be one of the two chairs of the Human Rights Council during the OLMUN 2019 conference.

I'm 21 years old. I was born in Syria and have been living in Berlin, Germany since 2015.

By June I will have finished my Abitur and will be searching for a university where I can study history, political science, or international relations. Hopefully, it will be in Berlin!

This MUN conference will be my fourth. I've been a delegate three times, twice in Oldenburg and once in Vienna. This will be my first time chairing a committee though.

In Berlin I'm active in local politics as a member of our district's advisory council for integration. I have experience in organizing demonstrations and other events as an activist as well.

I'm looking forward to the debate we will be having in our committee!

Amin Magrebi

Dear delegates,

I am Sophie Linsel and I will be chairing the Human Rights Council of the OLMUN 2019 together with Amin.

I am 17 years old and attend the 11th grade of the Graf-Anton-Günther-Schule in Oldenburg. At the moment I am living in the huge and incredibly famous city Sandkrug with my family.

(Hopefully) I will graduate in 2021 and am keen on studying international business management abroad, after I worked and traveled my way through the world.

This will be my 6th MUN and my third time chairing, but my first experience as an OLMUN chair. For two years I am an active member of the Inner Circle and also led our school intern MUN as a General Secretary.

I am very excited to be a part of this MUN once again and feel honored to chair the HRC with the lovely Amin by my side.

Sophie Linsel



## 2. Committee Introduction

The Human Rights Council is a body within the United Nations Organization, which was founded on March 15th in 2006, when a resolution in the General Assembly declaring its establishment passed. It is responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations giving recommendations on them. It has the ability to discuss all human rights issues and situations that require its attention throughout the year. The HRC consists of 47 member states, which are elected every three years. The HRC only has the right to make recommendations on how to combat violations of human rights, which are defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nevertheless, it can send its own observers to countries to report the local conditions to them. These have to be appointed either as "thematic mandates" or as a "country mandate". Thus, observers are either specialized on a certain topic or a certain country.

## 3. Introduction to the Issue

This year the Human Rights Council will try to tackle the problem of military and sexual violence against civilians in combat zones.

In many conflict zones today, war does not shy away from reaching the innocent. Governmental armed forces launch bombing campaigns against whole cities, paramilitary militias fire missiles at populated areas, drones take out their lists of targets. The only thing in common; civilians are not spared.

In 1949, four years after the end of WWII, the international community established the protection of civilians in and around war-zones through the Geneva Conventions, which were ratified by 196 countries. Yet, the new reality of war has changed because of the Cold War. Asymmetric conflicts and civil wars started replacing "classic" wars between states slowly, generating higher civilian death tolls and casualty ratios and sealed that the issue would always be present in international peace conferences.

The Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, commonly referred to as the Fourth Geneva Convention, is a set of international humanitarian laws that apply in times of armed conflicts and seek to protect non-combatants who are not or are no longer taking part in armed hostilities.

However, since the end of the Cold War in 1990 this trend of civil wars and domestic conflicts replacing international wars, has continued.

Sexual abuse is also appearing more often as a systematic policy of war, deployed to terrorize civilian communities. In some raids during the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, virtually every adolescent girl who survived militia attacks was later raped. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the rape of teenage girls was systematized into a deliberate policy. It has been estimated that more than 20,000 women have been raped in the Balkan Wars.

Today the problem is still relevant, and the victims do not just face death, but also catastrophic life conditions. Since the start of the Syrian Conflict in 2011, 11 million Syrians have been displaced forcibly, which is more than half of the

country's total population. In Yemen the war has led to severe destructions of the infrastructure and the deprivation of any access to clean water for 13 million Yemeni.

## 4. Topics

### 4.1 Syria

The Syrian Conflict has characterized the international failure of protecting civilians during the last decade. What has started as a peaceful civil uprising for freedom and dignity in the spring of 2011 has turned into a civil war due to the excessive force used by the Syrian Military, causing "the worst man-made disaster since World War II."

The total death toll of the conflict is estimated to be around half a million. Well over 200,000 civilian deaths have been documented since March 2011. The Syrian Regime Forces along its Iranian and Russian allies have been responsible for 94% of the civilian casualties.

Around 5 million Syrians have been turned into refugees and further 6 million have been internally displaced in Syria. These figures come from a country that had a population of 22 million before the outbreak of the war.

In order to regain control over the revolting territories the Syrian Regime Forces have conducted a policy of besiegement, bombardment and forced displacement. In 2016 this has reached a peak; over one million people were living in besieged areas, stranded all over Syria. Tens of thousands have starved.

This besiegement has been accompanied by aerial bombardment and the targeting of hospitals and medics, followed by forced displacements en masse. Over 68,000 barrel bombs have been dropped by the Syrian Forces on areas inhabited by civilians.

Internationally prohibited chemical weapons have been used in Syria. In 2019 the Organization for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) examines hundreds of cases where chemical weapons have been used in Syria in the last 6 years. While the Islamic State is responsible for 5 chemical attacks, the Syrian Regime Forces are responsible for more than 200.

Furthermore, the Syrian Regime Forces are also accused of mass arrests, systematic torture and the killing of prisoners. Syrian prisons were described by an Amnesty International report as "human slaughterhouses."

Another big issue in Syria is rape. Because of fear of public shame, many victims keep silent about the sexual crimes that have been committed against them, which confuses many statistics. Tens of thousands have been victims of rape or sexual violence during the war in Syria.

The Opposition Forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces are not quite innocent as well. They have been accused of recruiting minors, kidnappings, extrajudicial executions and shelling of civilian areas. The SDF have been furthermore accused of ethnic-cleansing.



## 4.2 Yemen

The civil war that broke out in Yemen in 2015 has created the world's biggest humanitarian crisis. The Saudi-led international coalition is trying to restore the legitimate Yemeni government led by Abed Rabbo Mansur Hadi, which had been militarily ousted through the Houthis aided by Iran.

It is estimated that over 60.000 combatants have perished in the last 4 years. 6.000 civilian deaths have been documented. The Saudi-led Coalition is responsible for three-quarters of them. A third of the Coalition's airstrikes have targeted non-military targets, hitting crucial infrastructure and other civilian structures in clear violation to the laws of war. This has unleashed a massive humanitarian crisis.

Yemen is a country of 28 million. Half of the country's population has been displaced because of the ongoing civil war. 19,3 million Yemenis do not have access to clean water or sanitation and nearly 14 million have been pushed to the brink of starvation. An estimate of 85,000 children under the age of 5 may have died from extreme hunger or disease since the start of the war.

These unbearable realities are responsible for the worst cholera outbreak in recorded history. More than 1,1 million cases of acute watery diarrhea or cholera have been reported causing over 2,500 deaths.

On the other side and although they lack air forces, the Houthis have been responsible for many crimes as well. Houthi forces have fired artillery and rockets indiscriminately into cities such as Taizz and Aden, as well as into Saudi Arabia. They have routinely shelled civilian neighborhoods, laid hundreds of thousands of landmines throughout the territories they have ceded since 2015, recruited children and detained and tortured thousands of innocent people.

The crisis in Yemen has given rise to negative coping strategies, such as child marriage, forced prostitution and "survival sex."

Studies and statistics are hard to be conducted, since such issues are chronically underreported owing to shame and stigma, fear of "honor crimes," poor service coverage and the requirement that responders refer cases of sexual violence to the police.

Amnesty International has reported that prisoners in the Coalition prisons, which are run by the UAE, are falling victims not only to beating and torture, but also to sexual abuse and rape.

## 4.3 International Terrorism

Terror groups have different political and ideological goals, but they all use the same psychological effect:

They spread fear and horror among citizens. In our connected world the terror is easily transported to every region, with Europe being the focus of international terrorism. After attacks on Madrid, London, Paris, Brussel, Istanbul, Barcelona and Berlin, the threat is still not banned.

According to the US Department of State 18.753 people have died from terrorism in 2017 worldwide.

Terrorists nowadays choose so called “soft” targets. Not only symbolic places or landmarks are affected, but every crowd of people. A huge problem is that there are practically no safe zones anymore, an attack could happen everywhere at every time, all around the globe.

Especially lone culprits who are not interacting in any networks are hard to identify. Jihadist propaganda addresses exactly those people, to recruit them as assassins.

On the 11th of September 2001 a new level of terrorism escalated. Within a few minutes 2 planes crashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City. With some delay another abducted plane hit the Pentagon in Washington, another one came down in eastern Pennsylvania. Four planes kidnapped and controlled by terrorist killed over 4.000 people that day.

Left behind is a world holding its breath and hoping to never experience such atrocious actions ever again.

The victims of those cruel crimes are civilians, people with family and normal lives like ours, who just where at the wrong place to the wrong time.

This committee focuses on solving the problems of international terrorism. Hereby, it is your duty to find solutions to one of the world’s biggest problems.

#### 4.4 UN-Employees´ Rape Scandal

For years there have been rumors of Blue Helmets raping women and children on their missions. Hundreds of cases have been reported, where soldiers in an UN mission are accused of raping or abusing civilians in conflict zones.

In 2018 the former UN humanitarian aid chief Andrew MacLeod raised allegations against 3,000 auxiliary staff of the UN. He stated that UN employees possibly raped over 60,000 people in the last ten years. MacLeod claimed that covering up sexual offenses is a “usual procedure in the UN.”

Furthermore, 3,000 employees working worldwide for the UN are estimated to be pedophiles. MacLeod explains in an Interview with ***the Sun***:

*“There are ten thousand development workers worldwide with pedophile tendencies, but if you are for example wearing a UNICEF T-shirt nobody will ask what you are doing. They can do whatever they want with impunity. The system is faulty, this should have been stopped years ago”*

The UN have been covering up for their workers for years now. Employees will also be getting fired if they try to draw the public's attention to those cases.

MacLeod bases his calculations on an UN-report from February 2017. According to the report there were 311 cases of sexual violence (309 of them were women and children) committed by UN workers in 2016, mostly by Blue Helmets.

Nobody knows exactly how many people have fallen victim to sexual violence by UN-workers already. Sexual abuse is a real problem in the rows of the UN employees and needs to be solved.



## 5. Hints for the Debate and Resolutions

The Human Rights Council's mandate is to promote "universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all" and "address situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations, and make recommendations thereon."

The Council can in many cases do nothing more than documenting violations against human rights and giving recommendations. This has been a clear weakness, especially lately in the cases of Yemen and Syria.

The Council does not have the mandate to impose or enforce its resolutions, this should be kept in mind during the committee sessions and this is why the Council places importance on cooperation with other bodies, such as the General Assembly.

## 6. How to Use this Guide

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 protection of civilians in armed conflicts. 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** and a **draft resolution** of your country until **June 1st 2019**. 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 2019 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: [hrc@olmun.org](mailto:hrc@olmun.org)

Sincerely yours,  
Sophie and Amin

## 7. Sources and Further Reading

### General:

- Civilian Casualty Ratio. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civilian\\_casualty\\_ratio](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civilian_casualty_ratio)
- Patterns in Conflict: Civilians Are Now the Target. <https://www.unicef.org/graca/patterns.htm>
- BBC Broadcast - Are 90% of war fatalities civilians? <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cswk37>

### Syria:

- Syrie, Le cri étouffé; a French documentary film about the rape campaign in Syria. Available on Youtube. <https://tinyurl.com/y295xx5s>
- SYRIA: HUMAN SLAUGHTERHOUSE: MASS HANGINGS AND EXTERMINATION AT SAYDNAYA PRISON, SYRIA. <https://tinyurl.com/m7bp53m>
- If the Dead Could Speak: Mass Deaths and Torture in Syria's Detention Facilities. <https://tinyurl.com/jx8ua3v>
- Syria: Mass Deaths and Torture in Detention: <https://tinyurl.com/y67du9a6>
- The 6th Anniversary of the Break-out of the Popular Uprising towards Freedom, and the Killing of the First Civilians. <https://tinyurl.com/y2mtjdfd>

### Yemen:

- Visualizing Yemen's Invisible War. <https://www.yemenpeaceproject.org/invisible>
- YEMEN: 'GOD ONLY KNOWS IF HE'S ALIVE': ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE AND DETENTION VIOLATIONS IN SOUTHERN YEMEN. <https://tinyurl.com/y58t7zth>
- Yemen: Civilians Bombed, Shelled, Starved. <https://tinyurl.com/y8dp3hkb>