

Committee: Economic and Social Council

Issue: Improving Living Conditions for Minority Groups

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PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates of the Economic and Social Council,

I would like to welcome you to the 2nd annual session of ACGMUN. I am Hakan Yaşar from the American Collegiate Institute in Izmir, Turkey. I have been doing MUN for 2 years and have been to six conferences prior to this one. I've been to MUN conferences in Turkey, Holland, and Ireland. However, I've never been an ECOSOC delegate but I always admired the committee and its work. Moreover, I believe that the issues that will be discussed in the committee are extremely crucial ones for today's world, especially my topic of minority rights. As a Turkish citizen, I am able to see the difficulties minorities, especially immigrants, face on a daily basis and it is really important for all of you to feel the same empathy. Therefore, I am absolutely thrilled to experience my first ECOSOC. Also, this is my first ACGMUN and more noticeably, my first chairing experience. Therefore, as you might have guessed, I am really nervous and excited. However, there is no reason for you to feel the same way as me, and my co-chairs will keep a constant friendly environment where fruitful and comprehensive debates will take place. I believe that the three days of discussing crucial topics will be extremely beneficial for you all, where you will learn a lot and make lifelong friendships. During the process of writing your resolutions you will come across many questions and I will be more than happy to fix your problems, answer your questions and concerns. So please feel free to contact me anytime via: hyasar@my.aci.k12.tr

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

For centuries, all around the globe, across all continents, minorities have been suffering greatly: most notably; Armenians during World War I, Jews in World War II, and more recently, the Rohingya people of Myanmar. For one reason or another, these people have been subjected to cruel acts by their own governments. The statement “their own governments” is a really crucial aspect of this issue. Here lies the biggest problem of this question. The minorities that are being discriminated against are usually citizens of the respective nations. Armenians were citizens of the Ottoman Empire, Jews were German citizens, and the Rohingya people were Myanmarese. Just because they are outnumbered by another group, it doesn’t mean that they should be subjected to such cruel acts. The reason why governments are committing such acts is to show their power. It is always easy to pick on the less fortunate and that is exactly what is happening to minorities.

A common question that might arise in the minds of delegates is the reason why the UN is deeply involved in this issue. Because the main aim of UN is to achieve a peaceful and sustainable world, the issue of minorities is one that the organization concerns itself with greatly. We can clearly see this with the numerous UN organizations and in the many passed resolutions, both in the General Assembly and the Security Council that concern this issue, as well as the multiple UN Peacekeeping missions on protecting minorities. All in all, the UN is concerned with this matter because the increase of such inhumane and cruel acts will result as a failure in the organization itself.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Minority

The smaller number or part, especially a number or part representing less than half of the whole.

Minority Groups

Any group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination.¹

¹ Definition by sociologist Louis Wirth (1945)//
<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/sociology/chapter/racial-ethnic-and-minority-groups/>

Race

Each of the major division of humankind, having distinct physical characteristics.²

Ethnicity

The fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition.³

Immigrant

A person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country.⁴

Discrimination

The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex.⁵

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

From the Forum on Minority issues held by the UN and United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) four main topics emerged. I would highly suggest the delegates to take a look at this very important document. These four topics are as the following;

Minorities and the Right to Education

At the beginning of this session, it is clearly stated that “Education is an inalienable human right, and is more than a mere commodity or a service.” (page 2) Therefore, no matter the person’s race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc. education is a necessity. It is stated in a separate clause that women and girls have an even harder time than when it comes to getting a quality education. Furthermore, we are reminded that accessible, free, and high-quality education is something every human being is entitled to. Therefore, states should act accordingly. We can also see the responsibilities of the governments such as but not limited to;

² “Race | Definition of Race in English by Oxford Dictionaries.” *Oxford Dictionaries | English*, Oxford Dictionaries, en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/race

³ “Ethnicity | Definition of Ethnicity in English by Oxford Dictionaries.” *Oxford Dictionaries | English*, Oxford Dictionaries, en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ethnicity.

⁴ “Immigrant | Definition of Immigrant in English by Oxford Dictionaries.” Oxford Dictionaries | English, Oxford Dictionaries.

⁵ “Discrimination | Definition of Discrimination in English by Oxford Dictionaries.” *Oxford Dictionaries | English*, Oxford Dictionaries, en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/discrimination.

affirming the right to education, eliminating discrimination, having budgetary policies, and education programmes.

Minorities and Effective Political Participation

It is extremely important for minorities to be able to voice their own opinions and beliefs. Therefore, their participation in politics is crucial. Hence, the second part of this document. The governments are clearly recommended to “take effective measures to end discrimination. They should consider, for instance, instituting independent monitoring and complaints mechanisms designed to prevent discrimination in voting, vote fraud, intimidation and similar acts that inhibit the effective participation of all, especially members of minorities, in electoral activities.” (page 17) It is also stated that governments should have a policy statement where they recognize the diversity in their respective region.

Minorities and Effective Participation in Economic Life

“Economic exclusion is a cause, a manifestation and a consequence of discrimination against persons belonging to minorities. Many minorities have historically been excluded from full and effective participation in economic life, both in the developed and in the developing world.” (page 28) With this part of the general consideration of the topic of minorities and effective participation in economic life, we can clearly see that the economic scene is one that is highly biased. Most of the time, minorities have an extremely hard time with coming up with a good income that is fit for themselves and their family. Governments are recommended to change any of their legislation that is limiting the participation of minority groups in the economy. Furthermore, governments are expected to take necessary actions such as but not limited to; measures against discrimination and recognizing different minority groups.

Guaranteeing the Rights of Minority Women and Girls

“Women belonging to minorities frequently experience unique challenges and multiple or intersecting forms of discrimination emanating from their status as members of minorities and as women or girls. This may make minority women and girls particularly vulnerable to violations of their rights in both public and private life.” (page 46) It is a fact that women and especially girls suffer greatly when living as minorities. Even native females have major difficulties and when you consider that these females are minorities, their difficulties even increase. Rape, violence, harassment, lack of education are some of the biggest issues women and especially minority women face all around the world. Often they are stripped from some of their basic human rights. In this forum, some of the recommendations are the following:

Men and women should cooperate in society as to truly achieve equality. Equality must be active in all parts of our daily lives: in the workplace, in schools, inside the house, and on the streets. Another recommendation is targeted to national, regional, and local governments. They are expected to acknowledge the difficulties women face, change their policies and legislation, remove barriers and obstacles, and many more.

UN Peacekeeping Missions⁶

UN Peacekeeping missions have been extremely active regarding minority issues. Most notably, the prevention in Srebrenica was perhaps the reason why UN Peacekeepers have a negative reputation today. Although this particular mission was a failure, this doesn't mean that UN Peacekeepers are always unsuccessful. For example, the mission in Sierra Leone was a huge success. After the mission was concluded, it was called "A triumph for the people of Sierra Leone." Furthermore, another success story of UN Peacekeepers would be Burundi, taking the nation out of a long ethnic war. In conclusion, carefully research your delegation's policies regarding Peacekeepers in order to see if you can benefit from them or not in your resolutions.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

United States of America

The United States is undoubtedly the leading force when it comes to migrants and minority groups. In 2016 there were 43,739,300 immigrants in the nation which meant that nearly 45% of the American population were immigrants. However, the controversy starts with the current government in charge. Both during his campaign and after his inauguration, Trump has been open about his views on immigration and minority groups. Calling Mexican immigrants "criminals" and "rapists" and banning Iranian, Iraqi, Somali, Sudanese, Syrian, and Yemeni immigrants from entering the country were two of his most controversial acts. However, certainly not all Americans are racist or discriminative. The backlash of this ban was incredibly huge in the US. People of all races, ethnicities, religions, genders, and ages met in airports to protest the decisions of Donald Trump, and to welcome these "forbidden immigrants". Furthermore, during Barack Obama's presidency, an executive action was taken in the name of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) which gave education and work rights to nearly 900,000 immigrants living in

⁶ "Past Peacekeeping Operations Peacekeeping." *United Nations*, United Nations.

the US. However, with the new government in force, this programme will vanish by March 2018, which raises a big question mark in a lot of people's heads as nearly 1 million immigrants will be unable to work or get an education. It is not possible to detect the futures of these so called "dreamers".⁷

Syria

For than six years, Syria has been the number one country associated with refugees and therefore, holds a huge importance when it comes to the topic of migrant groups. There are more than 6 million Syrian refugees all across the globe. If these immigrants were to all come together and form an EU country, they would have been ranked 24th by population.

Myanmar

Perhaps the biggest human rights violation recently happened in Myanmar. Around one million Muslim Rohingya people were either slaughtered by the Buddhist Myanmar people or forced to migrate to Bangladesh. Just because the Rohingya people were a minority group, and they possessed some differences mainly in religion, they were the victims of inhumane, and cruel acts. As the United Nations, we should not tolerate such actions. Unless your respective delegation's policy states differently, every nation should condemn such actions. However, as we are not the Security Council but rather ECOSOC, we can't condemn any action. Instead, it should be our priority to take the necessary actions to prevent a similar occurrence.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Although their area of expertise is not specifically minority rights, they work regarding human rights in general and therefore tackle minorities rights as well. *"Minorities in all regions of the world continue to face serious threats, discrimination and racism, and are frequently excluded from taking part fully in the economic, political, social and cultural life available to the majorities in the countries or societies where they live."*⁸

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR)

UNHCR is the world's leading organization when it comes to immigrant rights. They co-operate with other international organizations and governments in order to

⁷ The name "dreamers" comes from a proposal with the name of DREAM Act back in 2001, which never became reality.

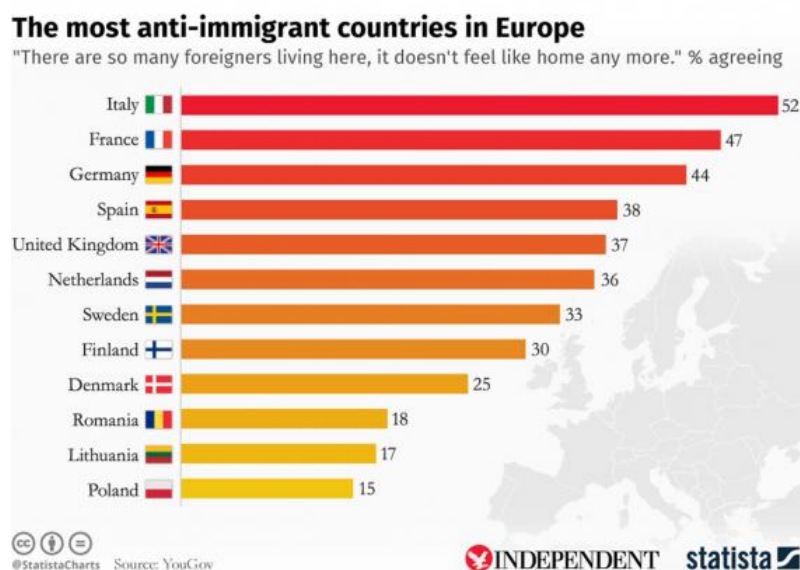
⁸ Quote by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay

ensure the well-being of immigrants, especially women and girls, all around the world.

BLOCS EXPECTED

The blocs I expect to see should be regarding similarities in ethnicity, religion, race, etc. Especially Muslim majority nations should act together against the United States of America, keeping in mind Donald Trump's policies on minorities and especially his immigration ban. However, these are not the only nations that should be against Trump's government. Also, nations with high numbers of Latino and Hispanic citizens should act together in order to voice their beliefs.

Moreover, the two opposing sides on the issue of immigrants should go against each other as immigrants make up big portions of minority groups all around the world. For example, countries such as Italy and France should have opposing thoughts as to Turkey seeing that the public view on immigrants differ greatly.



#1 Europe immigration policies graph

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
November 1814-June 1815	Congress of Vienna
24 April 1915	Armenian Genocide. Around 1.5 million Armenians were replaced, tortured, and killed

	by the Ottoman Empire.
1941-1945	Holocaust// the killing of around 6 million Jews by Nazi Germany.
10 December 1948	The Signing of United Nations Declaration of Human Rights
18 December 1992	The signing of the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities
7 April-15 July 1994	Rwandan Genocide. The killing of 500,000 to 1,000,000 Tutsi Rwandans by members of a Hutu based government.
11 July-13 July 1995	Bosnian Genocide (Srebrenica)// The killing of approximately 8,000 and expelling 25,000-30,000 Bosnian Muslims
October 1999-December 2005	United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)
2017	The inhumane acts against the people of Rohingya. The Rohingya are a minority group in Myanmar which is made up from around 1 million Muslims. In 2017, they were killed and tortured by Buddhist people of Myanmar and therefore had to flee from the country

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES, AND EVENTS

A/RES/3/217

This General Assembly resolution is also known as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Signed in 10 December 1948, the declaration states the basic rights every human being is entitled to no matter their race, color, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, political view, etc.

A/RES/47/135

In the 92nd plenary meeting of the General Assembly, the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities was passed. This declaration is a more detailed Universal Declaration of Human Rights because rather than tackling all human rights in general, this document is specifically for minority rights. Therefore, it is extremely crucial for the delegates working on this topic to read the declaration.

RES/6/15

The most notable recommendation in this resolution is the establishment of a forum on minority issues in order to provide a platform for minorities to voice their beliefs and concerns.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Although stated many times in this report, the two declarations (Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities) and the Forum on Minority Issues are extremely important documents for this issue.

However, these documents are not the only attempts to solve this issue. There are two very important congresses as well. The first one is the Congress of Vienna held in 1814 where the fate of the German Jews were taken into consideration. The second one is the Congress of Paris held in 1856 where the statuses of Christians in the Ottoman Empire, and the Jews were discussed.

However, in recent years the issue has been increasing greatly and new solutions are extremely in need. Seeing that the policies are changing, the solutions should change as well.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

There are many different issues regarding the topic of improving living conditions for minority groups and therefore, there are many possible solutions as well.

First of all, the majority group's mindset should be changed seeing that in many cases, the minority groups are unwanted in the country even though they are legal citizens as well. So, raising awareness is a crucial step to take in order to tackle this issue. There are many different ways of raising awareness. For example, using mass media, creating seminars, giving speeches in schools, and many more.

Furthermore, we should be alarmed by the increasing number of refugees all around the world, most notably the Syrian refugees and the Rohingya people. As the UN, it is our responsibility to create a world in peace and the atrocities immigrants face cannot and should not be ignored. Therefore, I expect every delegate working on this issue to include at least one detailed clause regarding immigrant's rights. This

clause can be about their accommodation, nutrition, transportation, protection, and many more. The sky is the limit for this part of the issue.

However, you delegates must not forget that the question that you will tackle is not solely about immigrants. Although immigrants are a huge factor in this issue, it is about minority groups in general. So, there must also be clauses that will assure the well-being of minorities. For example, organizations that will work with either one, or multiple ethnic, racial, or religious groups can be formed. The aims of these organizations can be varied. They can work for their basic human rights, increasing their participation in politics, economy, and many other areas. It will also be a great idea to make this organization work alongside UN, UNHCR, or OHCHR.

After all these steps, there is still something very important to do and that is assuring that these implications are not short term solutions but rather long term ones. It will be up to the delegate to decide how this will be done but it should definitely be included in your resolutions.

All in all, these are just a few ideas that I suggest you include in your resolutions. There are many other important ideas for finding feasible solutions and please feel free to add them. I expect well written resolutions that are action-taking and offer long term solutions.

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