



Denver East High School & Denver Center for International Studies

**MODEL UNITED
NATIONS CONFERENCE**

Saturday, April 20th, 2019



BACKGROUND GUIDE



**INTERMEDIATE U.N.
EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC,
AND CULTURAL
ORGANIZATION (IUNESCO)**

**Intermediate U.N. Educational,
Scientific, and Cultural Organization
(IUNESCO)**

Topic 1: Freedom & protection of the press

Topic 2: Media accountability

Council Directors

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Dear Delegates,

Thank you for attending the Denver Center for International Studies/East High School 2019 MUN conference, and a big welcome to all of you planning to participate in the Intermediate UNESCO council. I'm Thandi Glick, and I'll be your chair for this council. I'm a sophomore at DCIS, and this is my 5th year participating in Colorado MUN. I am excited to see how delegates approach the increasingly controversial and globally relevant issue of media safety and accountability. This council will break down this broad subject into two topics:

- I. Freedom and protection of the press
- II. Media accountability

Due to the pertinence that this topic has in much of the world, and to the recent examples of violence associated with these subjects, we expect delegates to show engagement and maturity throughout the course of this council, and to address these issues in a thorough manner befitting of intermediate delegates. Please note that while this background guide should serve as a starting point for your research, delegates are expected to continue their own research outside of this document.

This council is operating as a UNESCO committee and will follow all standard Colorado MUN procedure. Position statements should fit the traditional Colorado MUN format of 10.5 point Helvetica font and should fit into the box provided on the Colorado MUN website. In order to conserve paper, we do ask that position papers for this council be submitted by email to 775422@dpsk12.net by midnight of April 17th at the latest. Feel free to directly email your council director with any questions regarding this council.

Thank you, and good luck!

- Thandi Glick
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Overview of Council

Globally, journalism plays a huge role in holding world governments accountable, educating citizens, and maintaining the cross-cultural interconnectedness of today's world. This council seeks to address two prominent issues surrounding journalism and the media in general. The first topic encourages delegates to formulate solutions to the violence that faces journalists around the world, while continuing to fully represent the interests of the state that they are portraying. In the second topic, delegates are asked to address the role of the state in maintaining the news media's responsibility to the public: protecting citizen privacy and mitigating the spread of false and manipulated information.

This council will follow all standards of Colorado MUN procedure. As a UNESCO body, veto power does not apply in this council; all voting members will have equivalent sway when voting. Observer states/guest delegates may vote on procedural matters, but not on substantive issues. All delegates are encouraged to make use of directives throughout council in an appropriate and relevant manner.

Topic 1: Freedom and Protection of the Press

History

Limitations on freedom of the press and journalistic safety have always been a concern in the world, but in recent years, the issue has become more pertinent than ever. With the arrest of Raif Badawi and the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, violent threats against members of the press have come to global attention.



Jamal Khashoggi had been in self-imposed exile from Saudi Arabia since June 2017. He was working for the Washington Post when he was murdered in Turkey. In his column in the Washington Post, he had prolifically criticized Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the current ruler of Saudi Arabia, and had also been a strong advocate for increased freedom of the press in the Middle East and globally.

On October 2nd of 2018, Jamal Khashoggi entered the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul, Turkey. He was reported missing later that day. Saudi Arabian officials claimed that they had no knowledge of the whereabouts of the expatriate. But a month later, on November 15th, the Saudi Arabian government finally admitted to the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. According to the Washington Post, this assassination was one of as many as 43 targeted killings of journalists in 2018. Saudi Arabia is considered one of the most dangerous countries in the world for members of the press, and the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, in addition to earlier actions like the arrest of Raif Badawi, exemplify the issues surrounding press freedom in the state.

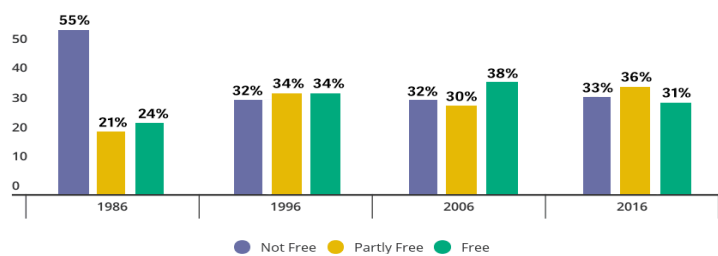
While mention is made of news media in the constitution of Saudi Arabia, legislation in the country dictates and restricts the actions of the press, rather than providing protection for the rights of journalists themselves. Article 39 of the Saudi constitution stipulates that reporters in the state must be polite and respectful, particularly when referencing government officials. Article 39 also serves to bar journalists from reporting on issues that are deemed to endanger the security or sanctity of the state.

Many other countries, including the United Kingdom and Afghanistan, maintain less authoritarian restrictions on freedom of speech and press.

Freedom of the Press 2017

HISTORICAL TRENDS IN PRESS FREEDOM

Distribution of countries among the three press freedom categories



Freedom House

Despite its status as a global social and economic leader, the United Kingdom is not an entirely welcoming environment for journalists: the country has no legal protections for journalists, and in some cases, free speech can be legitimately dangerous for members of the press and others.

Globally, some organizations dedicated to the protection of free speech and journalistic rights do exist. One such organization is the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a nonprofit founded in 1981 with the goal of protecting freedom of the press in areas where journalists are at a high risk. The group also works to collect data on the threat facing journalists in different regions of the world, and to advocate for journalists and freedom of the press world-wide.



CPJ, and similar organizations like Reporters Without Borders and the International Press Institute work to protect freedom of the press around the world, but the actions taken by these associations rarely have the extensive reach or effect of UN legislation.

Guiding Questions

- To what extent should protection of the press be the responsibility of the state?
- How should the government respond to journalistic criticism of the state or of state officials?
- To what extent does the UN have jurisdiction over the protection of journalists, particularly those targeted by the state?
- Are the threats facing journalists an extensive enough issue to justify UN involvement?
- What legislation exists on a national and global scale to protect the rights of the press in various areas of the world? What changes should be made to these resolutions to allow them to have greater effect globally?

Topic 2: Media Accountability

State-run Media

According to the ACE Network, a large percentage of world media is publicly owned—that is, sustained with government or public money. Within this form of media ownership, an important distinction must be made between Public Service Broadcasting (PSB), non-partisan media outlets that are funded by public money, and actual state-controlled media. While state-operated media sources may serve a role as a public service, or as a means of providing information on emergency situations and government actions, state-run media is typically viewed as a propaganda instrument.

Directly state-controlled broadcasters were the standard model in the Soviet Union and in other totalitarian states through the 1990s, and this model of broadcasting has proven pervasive: over 25 years subsequent to the fall of the Soviet Union, states like Russia, Uzbekistan, Latvia, Belarus, and Cuba maintain systems of far-reaching state-sponsored media censorship. Globally, other world governments maintain state-run broadcasters, in some respects as a byproduct of colonialism. In the 19th and 20th centuries, both the United Kingdom and France utilized a PSB model of media, and English and French controlled governments in colonial states typically continued to operate state-sustained media sources. Overseas, though, public media sources often preserved far less independence than English and French counterparts like the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and following independence, many post-colonial states continued to use media broadcasters as the propagandist arm of the government.

Today, many world governments continue to use state-run media as a means of controlling information. The model is especially often used by former or current totalitarian states, by post-colonial governments, and by states embroiled in violent conflict. Recently, attention has been drawn to such governments in countries like North Korea, China, Syria, Libya, Myanmar, and Turkmenistan. Other states such as South Africa and the United States also utilize other methods to maintain some form of government control or check over news media.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is likely the most well-known example of state-controlled broadcasting, with the country ranking second on the Committee to Protect Journalists' list of most censored countries, as published in 2015. The state maintains and tightly controls the primary television channel, Korean Central Television, while also operating multiple national and local broadcasting stations under state control. Additionally, the country's 12 newspapers are all state-owned, with the majority of their content originating with the state-run Korean Central News Agency. Access to alternative media outlets is similarly restricted: according to the Associated Press only 9.7% of North Korean citizens have access to cell-phones, and the vast majority of those with cell-phone access, including institutions like schools, are unable to access an unrestricted global internet.

The North Korean government, however does not seem to view these constraints as antithetical to freedom of speech, a right which is called for in Article 53 of the country's constitution. Indeed, when the DPRK has taken actions against journalists in the past, the state has portrayed this censorship as a necessary measure to quell journalists they accuse of distorting facts and manipulating the public: when the state expelled BBC correspondent Rupert Wingfield-Hayes during the 2016 7th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea, they accused him of illegitimately and unfairly criticizing the system. Presentation of censorship as a necessary means of ensuring national safety is common across regimes with limited media freedom, particularly in Communist states, where access to foreign sources is especially restricted.

China is one such state which maintains a sophisticated method of controlling access to some foreign media, even in a country with a much more technologically literate population than North Korea's. Through a system of censors known as the "Great Firewall of China", the PRC uses a combination of technology and human censors to block access to certain foreign websites, and to maintain a check over Chinese users of social media. China maintains that this censorship is necessary to lessen the negative influence of Western values on Chinese citizens. The Jinping Administration has argued that surveilling news media and the internet is necessary to ensure national security, monitor problematic use of social media, and to allow the government to preserve the relationship between the news media and citizens.

Other states, such as Libya, South Africa, and the United States (USA), retain varying levels of control over the news media outside of explicitly state-run media. While South Africa's 1996 constitution upholds freedom of the press, apartheid-era legislation and 2004 anti-terror laws restrict journalistic coverage of government institutions. On the basis of these laws, journalists are frequently harassed or legally barred when looking into controversial issues, including government finances and the inner workings of the African National Congress. South Africa, along with other states around the world, maintains a level of government control over journalistic practices that, according to Reporters Without Borders (RSF), leaves media freedom in these areas in a fragile state. In many states, varying levels of government control are seen as the necessary courses of action to preserve the role news media and alternative sources of information like the internet play in those states. In Europe, legislation has recently been implemented with the goal of ensuring that social media in particular stays in its place--and doesn't inadvertently endanger consumers.

EU Data Protection

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which was implemented by the European Union (EU) in May of 2018 is the most recent form of EU legislation designed to protect consumer rights and private data. The policy requires that companies protect personal user data ranging from names, addresses, IP addresses, health and genetic information, ethnicity, political views, sexual orientation, and even consumer social security numbers. Prior to the application of GDPR, EU countries utilized the Data Protection Directive, an older form of EU data protection law that had been in use since

1995. The measure was largely outdated, having not been adapted since its drafting at the beginning of the Internet age. The GDPR has been advocated for by EU member-states as a necessary move to preserve the security of citizens' sensitive information, but the legislation also holds sway over data on social media sites such as Facebook. The policy is aimed at controlling and ultimately eliminating cases like Facebook's 2018 'view as' exploit, which allowed for the online sale of personal data, including direct messages, through access tokens. Facebook's failure to report the data breach within the GDPR-granted 72 hour reporting period resulted in an EU imposed €20,000,000 (22,533,400 USD) fine to the company. According to EU policy-makers, the regulations are intended to protect EU citizens, making it more difficult for media corporations like Facebook to harvest and profit from sensitive user information, as in the above case. Some opponents of the measure argue, however, that the policy does not have the power to truly hold major conglomerates like Facebook accountable in a meaningful way.

Spread of Misinformation

True freedom of speech, particularly in an unregulated environment like the open internet, often comes with the caveat of misinformation--a totally equilateral platform, like many social media sites are, can allow inaccurate information to spread rapidly and widely. One of the most harmful examples of this is the anti-vaccination movement, which gained traction after a falsified 1998 study linking the MMR vaccine to autism secured a wide platform on social media. Since the rise of the anti-vax movement, unsubstantiated claims about the dangers of vaccination have proliferated unchecked, largely due to the unregulated spread of information that is possible on social media in much of the world. This flood of inaccurate information has been tied to falling rates of vaccination in developed nations, and preventable outbreaks of diseases like measles. This increasingly harmful misinformation campaign has led many to question the viability and value of an unchecked and, in some cases, unreliable internet.

Discreditation of the Press

In states with, broadly speaking, strong protections for freedom of speech, some have begun to question the reliability of traditional media sources as well. In the United States particularly, government scrutiny and undermining of news media is becoming an ever more pervasive issue. The increased diminishment of press protections in the USA is perhaps best exemplified by the 2018 Inter American Press Association (IAPA) mission to the USA. The IAPA, which works with legislators and journalists in areas of the western hemisphere where the rights of journalists are at risk, recently launched a function in the US--a country which, until relatively recently, has widely been perceived as a global beacon of free speech. Trump era denigration of the free press has been blamed for the shift in attitudes.

Accusations of "fake news" have been powerful in swaying public opinion--a 2018 Knight Foundation poll found that only 23% of Americans described themselves as confident in newspapers, and the number dropped to only 20% when citizens were questioned about television news. Globally,

numbers are similarly dropping. Public mistrust in the media can serve as a natural check to falsified or biased information, but it can also be manipulated by state governments, allowing governments to seize control over contested media sources and to silence media critics. The duality of this issue makes public opinion an important facet of both journalistic accountability to the people, and the ultimate freedom and safety of the press.

Guiding Questions

- Does state-run media play a necessary role in national security and in ensuring the reliability of news media?
- How does governmental control create bias and unreliability in news media?
- What role should the UN and UN bodies play in ensuring that people have access to fair and reliable information?
- What role should the state play in ensuring that citizens have access to fair and reliable information?
- What purpose should news media play in the maintenance of the state? What duty should news media serve in regard to citizens?
- To what extent should news media and information in general be regulated by the state?
- How can freedom of speech and the press coexist with public security?
- What role should the state play in mitigating the spread of false information, particularly that spread through the internet?
- How does open criticism and investigation of the government negatively or positively impact the state? The people?

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