

# Montessori Model United Nations

## MMUN 2012



### General Assembly 3<sup>rd</sup> Committee Social, Humanitarian and Cultural (SOCHUM)

Dear Delegates,

It's a great pleasure to welcome you to the 2012 Montessori Model United Nations and to the General Assembly Third Committee Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian (SOCHUM). This committee works very hard on the human rights of the citizens of the world.

The following pages intend to guide you in the research of the topics that will be debated. For both the two topics, I strongly suggest that both delegates be involved in the preparation. Please note that this guide only provides the basis for your investigation. Once you get your country assigned, you will become the Ambassador of that country to the General Assembly, and you'll need to investigate further to represent your country in the best possible way. The more you learn about and understand the topics, the more influence you'll exert in the Resolution writing process. It is very important that you discover how and if your country has put any policies into place regarding these issues. Such information should help you write your Position Papers, where you need to cite the references in the text and finally list all references in the MLA format.

The MLA format may or may not be strictly adhered to in this Background Guide because the primary purpose is to provide you the initial launching pad to pursue your research on the two topics.

This is my fifth year serving on the dais at the MMUN and third as a President. It is a wonderful experience and I look forward to meeting you at the conference in April. Please feel free to contact me as you research and write your Position Papers. See you in New York!

Kind regards,

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## MONTESSORI MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2012



### **History:**

Founded in 1946 (United Nations Organization), along with other General Assembly committees, SOCHUM (Social Humanitarian and Cultural Committee) is the third committee of the GA.

### **Purpose and mission statement:**

SOCHUM deals with a range of social, humanitarian affairs and human rights issues that effect people all over the world (UNO). In the past, SOCHUM's resolutions and suggestions have played a crucial role while dealing with issues ranging from humanitarian aid, health services, rights of women and children to crime prevention, racism, and human trafficking. The committee also works collaboratively with other associations, non-governmental-organizations and subsidiaries such as the HRC, UNIFEM, UNDP and the HCR. Every issue and conflict has a social aspect to it, and as such the issues and tasks under SOCHUM's jurisdiction are closely linked to other committees at the United Nations. Any issue presented is decided by a standard majority vote similar to other GA committees.

### **Membership and authority:**

All 193 members of the UN are equally represented at SOCHUM, making it one of the largest committees at the United Nations. Although its recommendations and resolutions are not binding upon any of the members, it still has a wide scope of work and jurisdiction. Hence it also is one of the most important committees of the GA.

## Topic I: The Humanitarian Situation in the Gaza Strip



### **Introduction:**

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the longest and most complex conflicts in today's world. Going back as early 1900s, this conflict is what has currently lead to the grave humanitarian crisis in the Gaza strip. Millions of people in this strip of land in the Middle East are currently suffering serious lack of basic goods and services. An estimated, 1.1 million people, out of the 1.5 million total population of Gaza, is said to be dependent on humanitarian aid. In other words, 1.1 million people in this territory, for one reason or another, are not able to secure for themselves basic goods such as food, water and medicines.

The current humanitarian situation in the Gaza strip has reached alarming proportions. Yet, many people consider it something completely avoidable. Since it was caused by human reasons, that is a war, it just takes some human determination to put an end to the horrifying conditions under which so many people are living right now. The complexity of the underlying conflict is possibly a reason why this determination has not yet been formed. It is then important to understand the roots of the conflict in order to better understand the current humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

### **Background:**

The current situation in the Gaza strip can be traced all to way back to the late 1800s and early 1900s. Before the existence of a country named Israel, there was one called Palestine in that territory. Not entirely an independent country, Palestine was first part of the Ottoman Empire. After the end of World War I, when the Ottoman Empire was defeated, it then was assigned under the British rule. The British played a very important role in the beginning of the conflict. On the one hand, they supported Palestine as an independent State. However, they also publicly supported the creation of a Jewish State in that same territory.

At that time, a big movement known as Zionism was taking place, which caused migration of large numbers of Jewish people, to what is now the State of Israel. Zionism was mainly driven by religious ideas, since Jerusalem and other parts of that territory are

considered holy ground in Judaism. However, the persecution of the Jewish community during the times of and prior to World War II by the Nazi regime, exacerbated the migration phenomenon and caused even a larger numbers of people moving to Palestine.

All this combined caused a conflict where both groups of people, the Jewish and the Arab community claimed rights to establish an independent State in the same territory. Since both groups could not agree on something and external factors, such as the British government, were only complicating the situation, a final plan was actually proposed by the newly created United Nations in 1947. According to this plan, strongly backed by the United States, the disputed territory was to be divided to create two independent States: Palestine and Israel and having Jerusalem be international territory. However, the partition plan failed and the Jewish community took over in entirety all the territory, thus founding the State of Israel.

The current territory of Gaza was first controlled by Egypt after the partition plan failed and Israel was established as a State in 1948. However, in 1967, during the six-day war, Israel acquired important territories from its neighboring countries such as the West Bank, Golan Heights and Gaza. In 1993, some progress was made with the signing of the Oslo Accords in which Israel authorized the Palestinian Liberation Organization some administrative autonomy to govern the occupied territories, including Gaza. Furthermore, in 2005, Israel pulled out its troops along with a lot of Israeli settlers from Gaza claiming an end to the occupation. This however, is not recognized internationally since Israel still continues to exercise effective control over the air and maritime space of Gaza, as well as the borders.

Since then, two main political groups that have disputed the government of Gaza, are the Fatah and Hamas, with the first one being more neutral and the second one being more extremist. Fatah was in power until mid 2007, when Hamas took over the government. This only intensified the fight and further complicated things since Israel's view of Hamas is that of an extremist group. Many governments around the world consider Hamas to be a terrorist organization and thus the Hamas led government in Gaza has very little support from the international community, including other occupied territories that are still governed by Fatah, such as the West Bank.

Israel has always been very restrictive when it came to the movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza. However, after Hamas took power in Gaza, the situation has exacerbated and the blockade imposed on Gaza by the Israeli government became much more strict. At first, after pulling out of Gaza, Israel had declared that it would allow the entrance of humanitarian aid and other goods into Gaza. However, shortly after Hamas took over power in 2007, Israel declared Gaza a hostile territory and imposed severe restrictions on the goods that could enter and leave Gaza.

Rocket attacks have been fired on Israeli population from Gaza, presumably by Hamas. In fact, in a period of six months after Hamas took over, 697 rockets and 822 mortar bombs were fired against Israeli towns. On December 2008, Israel responded with the deadliest attack on the population of Gaza to this day. Also known as operation Cast Lead, Israel launched a full front attack against Gaza, which lasted 22 days which comprised of air strikes and land excursions into Gaza. This intense military campaign

against Gaza left big areas of the strip destroyed. Combined with the strict blockade imposed by the Israeli government, the current situation in Gaza is really alarming. Many sources claim that Gaza is facing the worst humanitarian crisis since the Israeli-Palestinian conflict began.

### **Possible Solutions:**

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OCHA) frequently publishes reports and fact sheets that describe the current situation that people in Gaza are enduring. According to the July 2011 fact sheet by OCHA:

- The population of Gaza is 1.6 million, with over 50% under 18.
- 38% of Gazans live in poverty.
- 31% of the Gazan workforce is unemployed and 47% of youths are unemployed.
- 54% of Gazans are food insecure and over 75% are aid dependent.
- Economic output in 2010 is 20% lower than in 2005.
- 35% of Gaza's farmland and 85% of its fishing waters are totally or partially inaccessible due to Israeli military measures.
- 50-80 million liters of raw and partially treated sewage are dumped in the sea each day.
- Over 90% of the water from the Gaza aquifer is undrinkable.
- 85% of schools in Gaza run on double or triple shifts.
- Since the beginning of 2010, 59 people have been killed in tunnel accidents including 5 children and 115 have been injured.
- The main crossing for movement of Palestinians in and out of Gaza (Rafah Crossing at the Egyptian border) remains limited to the passage of 500 people per day.

OCHA categorizes the blockade as a denial of basic human rights for the people of Gaza. Many people have a hard time securing food, water, health and even construction materials to rebuild parts of the territory that were destroyed after operation Cast Lead. Additionally, there is a clandestine tunnel "industry" in which many people risk their lives to smuggle basic goods across the border into Gaza through underground tunnels.

To further complicate the situation, Hamas is also interfering with the provision of humanitarian aid to the territory. In fact, on February 2009, Hamas apparently seized shipments of humanitarian aid that were sent to Gaza. The Secretary-General of the United Nations issued a statement the next day condemning the issue and requesting that Hamas immediately release the consignment of humanitarian goods it seized and to refrain from interference with the provision and distribution of humanitarian assistance in Gaza.

Various actors at the international level have addressed the issue of humanitarian situation in Gaza. OCHA, for example, monitors the situation and constantly publishes report on the matter. Another important actor in this situation is the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East or UNRWA. Since an estimated 1.1 million people, or three-quarters of the entire population, are Palestine

refugees registered with UNRWA, the Agency plays a major role in providing assistance to the affected people within Gaza.

UNRWA is doing major work in various areas of basic services in Gaza. Education, health, infrastructure, food aid and even microfinance are some of the areas that UNRWA works on. For example, UNRWA started a program called School for Excellence in which they provided:

- school meals
- summer learning programmes
- extra classes in difficult subjects
- support materials to simplify the curriculum

Unfortunately, as UNRWA itself reports, due to lack of funding for extra teachers and facilities, as well as the ongoing blockade, about 90 per cent of UNRWA schools are run on a double-shift basis, leaving students with a truncated education.

Even the Security Council of the United Nations has occupied itself with the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza. Even when the Security Council does not address issues of humanitarian assistance, it has repeatedly condemned the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and called for the unimpeded provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance, including of food, fuel and medical treatment.

Other efforts have also been undertaken by actors outside the United Nations system in order to help the people of Gaza. For example, in March 2009, the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza was organized to address the immediate humanitarian situation in Gaza and mobilize donors to provide financial and political support for the Palestinian Authority in order to alleviate the socio-economic and humanitarian situation being faced by the Palestinian people.

Another important and difficult aspect of the situation in Gaza is the security of humanitarian aid workers. Even when a lot of assistance is still needed to alleviate the lack of basic needs that the population of Gaza is facing, some work is already being done. However, because there is still an ongoing conflict between the Hamas led government in Gaza and the State of Israel, humanitarian personnel is constantly faced with dangers in doing their work. In May 2010, for example, Israel raided a group of six ships from two international human rights organizations that sought to deliver humanitarian aid and construction materials to Gaza and impeded the delivery of the much needed aid. No deaths or destruction took place, however, the international community still condemned the episode.

### Research Questions:

1. Is this issue a problem in your country/ neighboring countries/ continent?
2. Who and what are the stakeholders of this issue?
3. What are the positions of the various stakeholders on this issue?
4. What strategies/solutions have been attempted?
  - a) What have worked? Why?
  - b) What have not worked? Why?
  - c) What could be improved? Why?
  - d) What new need to be introduced? Why?
5. How this problem has/is affecting your country/ neighboring countries/ continent/ world?
6. If this issue is not a problem in your country, then how can they be involved?
  - a. Why and why not?
7. What and how can children like you be involved in the prevention and occurrences of the issue?
8. What are some facts, figures, statistics regarding the issue – national, regional, international?

### Summary:

The international community as a whole has been occupied with the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza for years now. International organizations as well as individual States have condemned the crisis and taken action by providing much needed assistance. However, the aid is still not enough - 1.1 million people are dependent on the humanitarian aid and it is important to assure the constant flow of goods and services into Gaza.

However, assistance is not enough. It is fundamental to address the underlying causes of the humanitarian situation such as the blockade and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict itself. As long as there is no long lasting peace guaranteed in the region, any other action will be only a temporary remedy to the horrible conditions under which millions of people are currently living. It is necessary to make good use of every diplomatic tactics to bring every party in the conflict to the table and try to negotiate a long-lasting solution.

### Reading/Research References:

<http://www.ochaopt.org/>

<http://www.unrwa.org/>

<http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2008/news/gaza/>

United Nations Bibliographic Information System search results on “humanitarian” and “Gaza”:

<http://unbisnet.un.org:8080/ipac20/ipac.jsp?session=1311L387D819N.138938&menu=search&aspect=subtab124&npp=50&ipp=20&spp=20&profile=bib&ri=&index=.SW&term=humanitarian+gaza&matchopt=0%7C0&oper=AND&x=0&y=0&aspect=subtab124&index=.TW&term=&matchopt=0%7C0&oper=AND&index=.TN&term=&matchopt=0%7C0&oper=AND&index=.AW&term=&matchopt=0%7C0&uloper=%3D&ullimit=&uloper=%3D&ullimit=&sort=>

## **Topic II: The Land Rights of Indigenous People**



### **Introduction:**

- The term indigenous people refers to a populace that has inhabited a geographical location prior to settlers from outside cultures and ethnic groups. There are as many as 400 million indigenous peoples in the world today that live in the borders of over 70 countries. The United Nations does not have a universal definition of the term “indigenous,”
- However these groups often identify under these categories:
- Self-identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member
- Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies
- Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources
- Distinct social, economic, or political systems
- Distinct language, culture, and beliefs
- Form non-dominant groups of society
- Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.

Indigenous peoples are most commonly identified with different group names rather than with the term indigenous peoples. These group or clan names include: tribes, first peoples/nations, aboriginals, ethnic groups, adivasi, and janajati. These groups often stay to themselves and do not desire to communicate with the outside world. There is often harsh language and cultural barriers that further polarize these groups from mainstream society. Interaction with non-indigenous groups causes circumstances to

become increasingly complex. The biggest conflicts are over the land rights, use of resources, and the self-determination of indigenous peoples. Non-native peoples who live in close proximity to indigenous groups often view these cultural groups as inferior. It is frequent for non-natives to believe it is best for these peoples to assimilate to a more modern culture. However, most indigenous peoples are satisfied with their distinct culture. Another serious issue is over land boundaries. Indigenous peoples feel the land rightfully belongs to them, or there is no one owner. Non-natives continue to infringe on these lands and claim territories as their own.

**Background:**

There have been clashes with native groups for centuries. Many societies have been overrun and conquered. Some groups were lucky enough to resist or eventually migrate to less desirable lands. Each country has tales of indigenous struggle and strife, often with the outsiders gaining dominance of the region. Today, a selection of indigenous groups has been able to survive due to living in secluded locations whether on small islands or deep in forests. Other surviving groups have been moved to secluded inshore locations.

The United Nations has dealt with the struggles of indigenous peoples on a larger level in the past 30 years. In 1982, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) created the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples known as WGIP. This established mandate was developed to protect indigenous peoples by setting regulations. After a lengthy study that evaluated the oppression, marginalization, and exploitation of indigenous peoples, a larger number of international organizations were able to recognize issues native peoples faced. Finally, during the 62<sup>nd</sup> session of the General Assembly in 2007, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was passed. This declaration asserts that all cultural groups add to the diversity of humankind. It recognizes the respect for these peoples and their land and territories. Support for this declaration is almost unanimous. However, the rights of indigenous peoples and their lands are threatened every day.



### Possible Solutions:

Violations to the rights of indigenous peoples ignite when outside groups take actions that are exclusively beneficial to them. This is seen when land is taken or natural resources are used or mined. Many undeveloped areas include raw materials that are of great value. Precious metals, stones, and resources rarely have value to native peoples. Non-natives desire profit from these commodities and often permeate into native territory. This often takes a toll on the living conditions of indigenous peoples. Communities can be invaded, land is often polluted, and conflict is almost inevitable. When there is a conflict between native and non-native peoples, the non-natives are at an enormous advantage. Non-natives can cause severe harm to indigenous communities because of superior technology and voracious minds. This is why indigenous land and peoples need to be protected.

Between March 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 1996, the UN Experts Seminar on Indigenous Land Rights and Claims took place in Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada. During this conference there were suggestions that were agreed upon by the member base. All uphold the current aim of protecting indigenous land rights.

- Native representation should be included in State governments
- Fair judicial processes for the implementation of treaties between indigenous groups and both local and national governments
- Land rights freely negotiated between parties, rather than being imposed by national governing forces
- Renunciation of legal doctrines and policies that limit the land rights of indigenous peoples

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples implements many regulations regarding the protection of indigenous peoples and their lands. This was passed on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September, 2007 with a majority of 144 votes in favor. There were 4 votes against (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States) at the time of adoption; these countries now support this declaration. There were 11

abstentions (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burundi, Colombia, Georgia, Kenya, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Samoa, and Ukraine). Since its adoption, Colombia and Samoa have changed their positions and now maintain their support.

This declaration states many objectives that will help relieve indigenous land right abuses as it proclaims:

- No discrimination against any indigenous group
- Indigenous groups are never to be subject to forced assimilation
- Prevention of dispossessing land, territory, and resources
- No indigenous group shall be forcefully moved, and if they do move in an agreement, they have the option to return to their land
- Indigenous groups have the right to their own spiritual relationship with the lands
- This land cannot be subject to the storage of hazardous waste or materials

During a UN Press Conference in May 2011, UN officials went over many integral parts of securing the land rights of indigenous peoples. Many ideas are additional developments of past agreements. However, there are additional and more in depth actions that can be made and target a wider span of right abusers:

- Bilateral and multilateral agreements are pertinent in the dissolving of land control tension
- There must be a discontinuation of armed forces entering indigenous territory
- There must be a discontinuation of forced migrations
- Individual governments must uphold principles of human rights
- Continued use of the Universal Periodic Review Process
- Governing bodies must take up critical situations on a case-by-case basis
- Multinational companies must recognize the rights of indigenous communities
- Reforestation efforts must be promoted
- Research into and use of sustainable energy will cause a reduction on the reliance of fossil fuels which are often mined in regions that inhabit indigenous populations

### **Research Questions:**

1. Is this issue a problem in your country/ neighboring countries/ continent?
2. Who and what are the stakeholders of this issue?
3. What are the positions of various stakeholders on this issue?
4. What strategies/solutions have been attempted?
5. What have worked? Why?
6. What have not worked? Why?
7. What could be improved?
8. What new strategies need to be introduced?
9. How does this problem affect your country/ neighboring countries/ continent/ world, and what effect has it had in the past?

10. If this issue is not a problem in your country, then how can they be involved?
11. What are some facts, figures, statistics regarding the issue – national, regional, international?

**Summary:**

The International Decade of the World's Indigenous People is 2005-2015. So there is currently much attention on the rights of indigenous populations. There are many obvious solutions to this problem, but often greed overrules the consideration for other cultures. Most countries agree what the problems are, and many are proactive in solving this issue, but how many of the past injustices will be undone? This issue affects scores of countries and millions of people. Some indigenous populations even want to end all ties with the country of which they are geographically a part. Each case may have to be handled separately, but the international community must come together and be more consistent in an approach to protect the land rights of indigenous peoples.

**Reading/Research References:**

<http://www.un.org/en/ga/>

[http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)

[http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2011/110518\\_Indigenous.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2011/110518_Indigenous.doc.htm)

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