

BACKGROUND GUIDE

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY



MEDMUN 2019

TOPIC 1

Rising rates of kidnap and forced child soldier recruitment in South Sudan

TOPIC 2

Freedom of the press in Turkey

Chairs Noon Khalil and Ekin Tug

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MEDMUN
Mediterranean Model United Nations

Distinguished Delegates,

We would like to warmly welcome you to the 2019 edition of the Mediterranean Model United Nations Conference. Our names are Noon Khalil and Ekin Tug. Noon is originally from North Sudan, a country in Northeast Africa. She is an International Baccalaureate student currently studying in the United Kingdom. She has been doing MUN for seven years now, and has held a range of positions, from being an admin to chairing conferences. Ekin is originally from Turkey and studies at Sorbonne University in Paris. Aside from chairing conferences, she is also apart of the organising team of Paris MUN.

We are both delighted to be chairing the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

The UNGA is a beginner committee, hence you will not have to worry as we will be providing you with plenty of support. As chairs, our responsibility goes beyond simply instigating debate; we will be available at all times, to help with understanding the topics, the flow of debate, terminology, writing clauses and resolutions, and anything else one might be struggling with.

We are very excited to meet all of you, welcome you to the beautiful town of Menton, and get to know each delegate. It is our hope that we have a splendid time in what will be a phenomenal committee!

Cordially,

Noon Khalil and Ekin Tug

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Topic 1: Rising rates of kidnap and forced child soldier recruitment in South Sudan

Introduction

South Sudan has been reported to recruit and use children. UNICEF estimates that more than 19,000 children have been recruited and used in the conflict between December 2013 and October 2017, with tens of thousands more at risk of recruitment. The UN verified 169 incidents affecting 1,022 children in 2016 and 159 incidents of recruitment affecting 2,596 children in 2015. Notably, 70 per cent of cases were attributable to the SSPDF and other government security forces and allied forces, including the Cobra faction of the SSDM which was integrated into the SSPDF in 2015. In 2016, 61 per cent of those affected by victims were attributed to the SSPDF and government security forces.

It is important to recognise that not all children are forcibly recruited. In South Sudan, only one-third of the boys associated with armed groups in South Sudan are recruited forcibly and violently. Some boys feel a “strong sense of responsibility to defend their communities and cattle from attack” and others are vulnerable in PoC sites, with boys as young as 11 years old reportedly leaving to join armed forces. Some children join “willingly” to protect themselves from being killed, and the vulnerabilities associated with a particular ethnicity or allegiance. A small proportion of children in South Sudan are reported to have joined in order to access food or money. Other children are held at gunpoint, detained, or abducted. Recruited children, even those recruited willingly, are also beaten and detained to prevent escape.

Children recruited and used by armed groups reportedly receive the same treatment as adult soldiers, often forced to walk long distances for days and receiving inadequate food. Children under the age of 14 often serve as bodyguards and cooks. Others work as servants for commanders, washing clothes, cooking, collecting firewood, making tea and fetching water. Where boys are more commonly reported to have received orders to kill civilians or loot property, girls are more commonly reported to have been used for sexual purposes. The following report will further elaborate on the issue and underline the necessity or collaborative efforts to combat it.

Definition of Key Terms

Kidnap: abduct (someone) and hold them captive, typically to obtain a ransom or exploit them¹

Forced: obtained by coercion or government’s physical power

¹ DK Illustrated Oxford Dictionary. Dorling Kindersley, 2003.

Child Soldier: any children under the age of 18 who are recruited by a state or non-state armed group and used as fighters, cooks, suicide bombers, human shields, messengers, spies, or for sexual purposes²

The [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) defines a child as any person under the age of 18. The Paris Principles, which have been approved by the [United Nations General Assembly](#), define a child associated with an armed force or group as:

any person below 18 years of age who is or who has been recruited or used by an [armed force](#) or [armed group](#) in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes. It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities

Recruitment: the action of enlisting new people in the armed forces

South Sudan³

Formal Name: Republic of South Sudan

Capital: Juba

Population: 7.5-10 million

Area: 619,745 sq km

Languages: English, Arabic (both official), Juba Arabic, Dinka

Major Religion: Christianity

Life Expectancy: 56 years (men) and 58 years (women)

Currency: Sudanese Pound



South Sudan gained independence from Sudan on 9 July 2011 as the outcome of a 2005 agreement that ended Africa's longest-running civil war.⁴ Made up of the 10 southern-most states of Sudan, South Sudan is one of the most diverse countries in Africa. It is home to over 60 different major ethnic groups, and the majority of its people follow traditional religions. Independence did not bring conflict in South Sudan to an end. Civil war broke out in 2013 when the president fell out with his then vice president, leading to a conflict

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"11 Facts About Child Soldiers." *DoSomething.org* | *Volunteer for Social Change*, www.dosomething.org/facts/11-facts-about-child-soldiers.

³ Central Intelligence Agency, 'South Sudan', available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ct.html>, accessed 2 April 2018.

⁴ "South Sudan Country Profile." *BBC*, BBC, 6 Aug. 2018, www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14069082.

that has displaced some 4 million people. A power-sharing agreement was signed between the warring parties in August 2018 in a bid to bring the five-year civil war to an end.

Background Information

In 1983⁵, civil war broke out among the Sudanese people, eventually creating in 2011 the countries known today as Sudan and South Sudan. This war led to the separation of families, murders, poverty, lack of educational resources and most notably, South Sudan child soldiers. The hardships initiated by the wars left many children with two brutal choices, either to remain free and unarmed, educated and hungry, or armed, fed and uneducated. Hence many children may choose to join the military - simply as a means of survival.

South Sudan child soldiers are known to be used in every way that an adult soldier would be used. Children are given and taught how to use assault rifles, engage in direct combat (as spies), and serve as cooks for troops among other activities. The demand for child soldiers decreased as the war seemed to dissolve in the early 2000s. Nevertheless in 2013 South Sudan ended a several-year-long ceasefire when tensions between different ethnic groups rose, and this proceeded to increase the demand for child soldiers again.

The United Nations estimates that there are 11,000 child soldiers in South Sudan, and the rate of abduction has been rising as the civil war escalates. Children are held at gunpoint, detained, or abducted. Recruited children, even those recruited willingly, are also beaten and detained to prevent escape. The most targeted population, are the refugees and displaced children who live in camps.



Those from rural areas or poorer backgrounds are recruited forcefully via coercion of power or doctrine by the armed forces. The forces dispose of birth certificates if found, to conceal the crime. The Lord's Resistance Army, one of the main kidnapers and child recruiters, recruits and uses South Sudanese boys and girls as cooks, porters, concubines, and combatants. Families are not given compensation or consolidation as the

⁵ <https://borgenproject.org/south-sudan-child-soldiers/>

children are taken in front of them to unknown regions and are never returned, they also are forbidden from contacting their families.

Child soldiers were observed throughout the country wearing military uniforms, manning checkpoints, being used as porters or bodyguards and carrying weapons. Some girls are also kidnapped to be recruited, these girls are subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence. Girls were most frequently affected during military operations carried out by Sudan People's Liberation Army. Moreover, schools and hospitals were targeted to be used for military purposes, girls and boys are forcefully seized to be recruited, in 2017 a total of 783 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified.

Timeline of Events

This following timeline of events from BBC⁶ highlights the major events and predicaments encountered by the Republic of South Sudan in the past ten years. Through assessing the events, one can identify the causes and roots of the child abduction and child soldier.

Independence Referendum

2009 December - Leaders of North and South reach deal on terms of referendum on independence due in South by 2011.

Numerous rebellions arose in the run-up to South Sudan's independence

South Sudan's enemy within

2011 January - The people of South Sudan vote in favour of full independence from Sudan.

2011 February - Clashes between the security forces and rebels in southern Sudan's Jonglei state leave more than 100 dead.

2011 May - North occupies disputed border region of Abyei.

2011 June - Governments of north and south sign accord to demilitarize the disputed Abyei region and let in an Ethiopian peacekeeping force

New state born

2011 9 July - Independence day.

2011 August - UN says at least 600 people are killed in ethnic clashes in Jonglei state.

2012 January - South Sudan declares a disaster in Jonglei State after some 100,000 flee clashes between rival ethnic groups.

⁶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14019202>

2012 April - After weeks of border fighting, South Sudan troops temporarily occupy the oil field and border town of Heglig before being repulsed. Sudanese warplanes raid the Bentiu area in South Sudan.

2012 August - Some 200,000 refugees flee into South Sudan to escape fighting between Sudanese army and rebels in Sudan's southern border states.

2012 September - The presidents of Sudan and South Sudan agree trade, oil and security deals after days of talks in Ethiopia.

2013 March - Sudan and South Sudan agree to resume pumping oil after a bitter dispute over fees that saw production shut down more than a year earlier. They also agreed to withdraw troops from their border area to create a demilitarised zone.

2013 June - President Kiir dismisses Finance Minister Kosti Manibe and Cabinet Affairs Minister Deng Alor over a multi-million dollar financial scandal, and lifts their immunity from prosecution.

2013 July - President Kiir dismisses entire cabinet and Vice-President Riek Machar in a power struggle within the governing Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

Civil war

2013 December - Civil war erupts as President Salva Kiir accuses his former vice-president, Riek Machar, of plotting to overthrow him.

Rebel factions seize control of several regional towns, thousands are killed and many more flee. Uganda troops intervene on the government's side.

2014 January - A ceasefire is signed but broken several times over subsequent weeks, and further talks in February fail to end the violence that displaces more than a million people by April.

2014 April - UN says pro-Machar forces sack the oil town of Bentiu, killing hundreds of civilians.

2014 August - Peace talks begin in Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa and drag on for months as fighting continues.

2016 April - Riek Machar finally returns to Juba and is sworn in as first vice-president in a new unity government - but is sacked in July after further conflict and goes back into exile.

2016 November - UN sacks Kenyan commander of its peacekeeping mission over the failure to protect civilians in Juba during July violence. Kenya withdraws its troops from the peacekeeping mission.

Japanese peacekeepers arrive South Sudan, the first time in nearly 70 years that Japan has deployed its soldiers overseas with a broad mandate to use force if necessary.

2016 December - A UN commission on human rights says a process of ethnic cleansing is underway in several parts of the country, a claim that President Salva Kiir denies.

2017 February - A famine is declared in parts of South Sudan in what the UN describes as a man-made catastrophe caused by civil war and economic collapse.

2017 May - President Kiir declares unilateral ceasefire, launches national dialogue.

2017 August - The number of refugees fleeing violence in South Sudan to Uganda passes the one million mark, according to the UN.

2018 August - President Kiir signs power-sharing agreement with Riek Machar and other opposition groups in a bid to end the civil war. The deal will see Machar return to government as one of five vice-presidents

UNICEF'S Involvement

UNICEF's work with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) over the years led to a reduction in its use of children in South Sudan's Government military. Nevertheless, as of the 2013 conflicts, the progress and work of UNICEF is being reversed. UNICEF continued to advocate with the SPLA on releasing children and called upon opposition forces and groups to do likewise.

As of 2014, UNICEF have heightened their efforts to combat the violation of human rights occurring in South Sudan. The United Nations has stationed peacekeepers to observe the civil war and observations were made regarding child soldiers, despite the fact that forcible or voluntary recruitment of persons under the age of 18 was publicly prohibited. However, tackling the issue was difficult due to the obscurity in the situation. UNICEF set up a monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM) to gather information on armed forces and groups that recruit and use children, not just as combatants, but also in support functions that put their lives in danger. The MRM allowed the UN to take action and start negotiating solutions.

Mahimbo Mdoe, the head of UNICEF programmes in the country expressed his opinion on this issue clearly, "No child should ever have to pick up a weapon and fight". In April 2018, UNICEF instigated the release of 207 child soldiers from armed groups in South Sudan, part of a series of planned discharges that should see nearly 1,000 children return home over the coming months. However, there still remained 19,000 children in armed forces.

Most recently in September 2018, South Sudan has become the 168th country to agree to the UN treaty committing to end the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. Government ambassadors Kureng Garang and Agnes Oswaha formalised the country's accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC) at a ceremony with UN officials on 27 September. OPAC is an organisation that ensures states ban the recruitment and use of children under the age of 18 in armed conflict. South Sudan is the latest country to pass the treaty following the Central African Republic's ratification in September 2017. Via the agreement, South Sudan started to demobilise all children currently within its armed forces and multiple armed groups and offer 'physical and psychological recovery and help their reintegration'⁷.

⁷ <https://www.child-soldiers.org/news/south-sudan-joins-opac-and-commits-to-ban-child-soldier-recruitment>

Reintegration is one of the major elements that need to be dealt with. These children have faced brutal conditions that caused them both physical and psychological damage and they need medical and psychiatric attention, before their return into society. Child Soldiers International (CSI) is working to support these efforts.

As of now the situation is calmer within the republic due to the signed peace agreement between President Salva Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar.

Countries recruiting Child Soldiers

Many countries have been exposed for using child soldiers and recruiting children into varied branches of the army. Below there is the list of countries, alongside South Sudan, that were reported to have the biggest cases of forceful recruitment in 2017/18. Other countries involved include; Myanmar, India, Somalia, Iraq, Colombia, Mali, Syria, and Central African Republic.

Other nations mainly prohibit the use of child soldiers and advocate against it. Especially countries within the European Nation and America and Canada.

Afghanistan: After decades of violent conflict, severe poverty and a lack of other opportunities have driven children into the fighting on all sides. Children taking part in hostilities risk being killed, injured or sexually abused, and have been used as suicide bombers. For many children in Afghanistan, war is a way of life. By August of 2017, 84⁸ children were recruited and about 3200 were killed and maimed.

DPR Congo: Children continue to be recruited and used by numerous armed groups in DRC. Girls are often used as 'wives' and sexually abused by their commanders and other soldiers. Although a third of all children associated with armed groups in DRC are thought to be girls, they make up only about 7 % of children released to date. When they are released or escape from armed groups, many never receive any support to reintegrate into their communities and for the few who do, the support has often been poorly adapted to their needs. Many are shunned by family and friends and some even chose to go back to the bush, not being able to face the rejection.

Thailand: Years of armed violence in southern Thailand has had a huge impact on children. They have been killed in indiscriminate attacks, and recruited and used by military groups outside government control and in some cases by self-defence militias associated with the government. Armed groups have attacked schools and killed teachers, while the Thai military have occupied schools, undermining children's right to education. Child Soldiers International has documented the recruitment and use of children by both sides of the insurgency.

⁸ <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/where-we-work/afghanistan/>

Yemen: There have been nearly 1500 cases of child recruitment in Yemen since the escalation of hostilities in 2015. According to UNICEF, this is a long-term problem in Yemen. In Yemeni culture, it's considered that a boy enters manhood at the age of 14 or 15 - and part of being a man is taking up a weapon. The UN documented nearly 850 cases of child recruitment in 2015, a five-fold increase over 2014. Houthi forces recruited a majority of these children - but Popular Committees and the extremist group Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which at times reportedly fought alongside pro-government forces, also recruited children. In 2013, the UN secretary-general cited reports of young boys being recruited by Al-Qaeda, also called Ansar al-Sharia, for sexual exploitation.

Possible Solutions

Many of the solutions circle mostly around UNICEF and reintegration programs. UNICEF has said it will assist in the release of more than 1,000 children in 2018-19, some necessary support structures are in place, whilst donations are needed to help set up others. The long-term goal of this work is to facilitate the release of children from the armed forces and groups in South Sudan, and for all of them to benefit from assistance programmes which match their needs. Some specific solutions to look at, can be such as but not limited to;

1. Establishing and enforcing 18 as the minimum age for recruitment worldwide
2. Commencing and supporting societal development, providing education, food, water and shelter. Development will become a viable alternative to military recruitment
3. Ensuring that the government presents rigid laws about the economic and social rights of families and each individual within
4. Maintaining strong monitoring and reporting on violations against children in war-torn countries via the UN Security Council
5. Capable nations should donate funds to organisations like Child Soldiers International, as they help free children and set up de-radicalisation and reintegration programs

Topic 2: Freedom of the Press in Turkey

Introduction

The UN recognises that human rights apply equally online and offline. Therefore, organisations such as UNESCO are engaged in examining issues of freedom of expression and privacy, access, and ethics on the Internet.

Freedom of expression and information are pillars of a healthy democratic society and for social and economic growth, allowing for the free flow of ideas necessary for innovation and bolstering accountability and transparency. “Journalism thrives when media is free and independent, when journalists are safe to report, when impunity is the exception,” according to UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova.

Freedom of expression affects a significant part of other rights and freedoms safeguarded in the Constitution and the European Court of Human Rights and is therefore a crucial element of a pluralistic democratic order for imparting all kinds of views including those that are against the majority.

Freedom of expression, as safeguarded under Article 26 of the Turkish Constitution and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights covers not only the freedom to ‘hold thoughts and opinions’ but also ‘the freedom to impart and disseminate ideas and opinions’ as well as the ‘freedom to receive and impart news’.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been the ruling party in Turkey since 2002. After initially passing some liberalising reforms, the government has shown growing contempt for political rights and civil liberties in recent years.

While concerns about press freedom in Turkey are not new, the situation has worsened in the past two to three years. Currently, there is no common ground on the definition and description of the problem, or on its existence. Turkey’s image has suffered deeply as a result.

The Media of Turkey

The media of Turkey includes a wide variety of domestic and foreign periodicals expressing disparate views, and domestic newspapers are extremely competitive. However, media ownership is concentrated in the hands of a few large private media groups controlled by wealthy individuals, which limits the views that are presented. In addition, the companies are willing to use their influence to support their owners’ wider business interests, including trying to maintain friendly relations with the government. The media exerts a strong influence on public opinion.

Censorship in Turkey is also an issue, and in the 2000s Turkey has seen many journalists arrested and writers prosecuted. On Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index it has fallen from being ranked around 100 in 2005 to around 150 in 2013.

In reaction to the failed coup d'état on 15 July 2016, over 150 media organisations, including newspapers, television and radio channels, news agencies, magazines and publishing houses, have been closed by the government of Turkey, and 160 journalists have been jailed.

The most popular daily newspapers are *Hürriyet*, *Sabah*, *Posta*, *Sözcü* and *Habertürk*. The broadcast media have a very high penetration as satellite dishes and cable systems are widely available. The "Radio and Television Supreme Council" (RTÜK) is the government body overseeing the broadcast media. Turkish consumers represent the second-most media illiterate group when compared to other countries in Europe.

UNESCO's Involvement

At the core of UNESCO's mandate is freedom of the press and freedom of expression. UNESCO believes that these freedoms allow for mutual understanding to build a sustainable peace.

Every year, 3 May is a date which celebrates the fundamental principles of press freedom, to evaluate press freedom around the world, to defend the media from attacks on their independence and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession. World Press Freedom Day was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1993 following a Recommendation adopted at the 26th session of UNESCO's General Conference in 1991.

It serves as an occasion to inform citizens of violations of press freedom—a reminder that in dozens of countries around the world, publications are censored, fined, suspended and closed down, while journalists, editors and publishers are harassed, attacked, detained and even murdered.

It is a date to encourage and develop initiatives in favour of press freedom, and to assess the state of press freedom worldwide.

As the United Nations has a specific mandate to promote "the free flow of ideas by word and image", UNESCO works to foster a free, independent and pluralistic media and the safety of journalists. UNESCO actively promotes the safety of journalists, believing they have the right to work free from the threat of violence to ensure the right to freedom of opinion and expression for all. The organisation has championed the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity (UN Plan), which is the first concerted effort within the UN family to address these issues via a multi-stakeholder and holistic approach. It is now a global reference point that has been highlighted by the UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, and the European Union's resolutions and policies.

Definition of Key Terms

Freedom of expression: Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right (Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Freedom of expression serves as an enabler for freedom of information and press freedom.

Freedom: the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants. It's the absence of subjection to foreign domination or despotic government.

The press: The people such as reporters and photographers who work for online or offline newspapers and magazines and is viewed collectively.

Journalist: A person who writes for newspapers, magazines, or websites, or prepares news to be broadcasted.

Timeline of Events

November 2015: Can Dündar, editor of the Turkish newspaper Cumhuriyet, and Erdem Gül, the newspaper's capital correspondent in Ankara, were jailed for an article published with the headline "Here are the weapons Erdoğan claims to not exist" on May 29, 2015. They were arrested for procuring information as to state security, and for political and military espionage with declaring confidential information and propagandising a terror organisation.

26 February 2016: release of Can Dündar and Erdem Gül after the Turkish Constitutional Court ruled that their rights were violated during the pre-trial detention.

6 May 2016: Istanbul's 14th Court for Serious Crimes convicted both Dündar and Gül for revealing state secrets that posed a threat to state security or to Turkey's domestic or foreign interests. Dündar was sentenced to seven years in prison, reduced to five years and 10 months; Gül to six years, reduced to five, under Article 329 of the Turkish Penal Code.

March 2016: Authorities put Turkey's biggest newspaper, *Zaman*—closely linked to Erdoğan's rival Fethullah Gülen—,under state control.

15 July 2016: a group of military officials affiliated with the Gülen movement attempt a coup to overthrow the government. Numerous public buildings, including the Parliament and the presidential building were bombed. 248 civilians were killed and many were injured. After the attempted coup was suppressed, a large number of people were arrested and detained. The licenses of 24 radio and television channels and the press cards of 34 journalists accused of being linked to Gülen were revoked. Two people were arrested for praising the coup attempt.

20 July 2016: the Council of Ministers, headed by the President, declared a State of Emergency. On 21-22 July 2016, Turkey communicated a notice to the United Nations and the Council of Europe declaring its derogation from obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights and the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

27 July 2016: President Erdoğan shuts down 16 television channels, 23 radio stations, 45 daily newspapers, 15 magazines and 29 publishing houses in another emergency decree under the newly adopted emergency legislation. The closed outlets notably include Gülen-affiliated *Cihan News Agency*, *Samanyolu TV* and the previously leading newspaper *Zaman* (including its English-language version *Today's Zaman*), but also the opposition daily newspaper *Taraf* which was known to be in close relations with the Gülen Movement.

October 2016: Turkish authorities shut down 15 media outlets and detain the editor-in-chief of the prominent secularist Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, on accusations that they committed crimes on behalf of Kurdish militants and a network linked to the US-based cleric Fethullah Gülen.

Background Information

Turkey has a competitive multiparty system, with four parties represented in parliament. However, the rise of new parties is inhibited by the 10 per cent vote threshold for parliamentary representation. Erdoğan became the country's first popularly elected president in 2014, winning a once-renewable five-year term with 51.8 percent of the vote (presidents were previously chosen by the parliament). This constitutional change was proposed by the government with the stated aim of making Turkey more democratic. Some domestic and international observers, such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), pointed to irregularities in the election campaign, including media bias and censorship.

The Constitution of Turkey, under Article 28, states that the press is free and shall not be censored. But Criminal Procedure Code, and anti-terrorism laws, effectively leave prosecutors and judges with ample discretion to repress ordinary journalistic activities.

The Turkish judiciary can censor media outlets under other constitutional provisions such as protecting basic characteristics of the Republic and safeguarding the indivisible integrity of the State with its territory and nation.

Freedom of information principles have been introduced with the April 2004 Right to Information Act, affording to citizens and legal persons the right to request information from public institutions and private organisations.

The 2007 Press Law was coupled with a "Regulation of Publications on the Internet and Suppression of Crimes Committed Through Such Publications", authorising the Telecommunications Communication Presidency (TIB) to execute court orders to block websites and to issue blocking orders for the content providers in or outside Turkey for committing crimes such as child pornography, encouraging drug use and, especially, crimes against

Atatürk. Between 2007 and 2010 around 3,700 websites and platforms including YouTube, MySpace, and GeoCities had been blocked.

Independent newspapers and websites continue to operate, but they face political pressure and are routinely targeted for prosecution. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, a total of 73 journalists were behind bars as of December 2017, making Turkey the world's worst jailer of journalists for the second year in a row.

Government attempts to block news sites and other online information sources continued in 2017, most notably with a nationwide block on Wikipedia beginning in late April. The mainstream media, especially television, reflects government positions and routinely carries identical headlines.

Freedom of the press by country

Argentina: Argentina has a robust media sector that represents a plurality of views. Under the Macri Administration, which took power in December 2015, relations between the government and the private media have improved. The previous government, led by former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, had engaged in secretive and hostile behaviour toward the press, including numerous verbal attacks on outlets and individual journalists. Despite the changed political climate, the news industry continues to suffer from ownership concentration.

Canada: Conditions for media in Canada are free and stable, and outlets are generally able to operate and exercise editorial independence without interference. However, laws permitting surveillance under certain circumstances have led to concern about respect for freedom of expression, and recent police actions have prompted concern about the ability of journalists to protect their sources.

China: China is home to one of the world's most restrictive media environments and its most sophisticated system of censorship. The ruling Chinese Communist Party maintains control over news reporting via direct ownership, accreditation of journalists, harsh penalties for online criticism, and daily directives to media outlets and websites that guide coverage of breaking news stories.

Egypt: The efforts of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's government to shutter critical news sources have produced a media environment in which most public and private outlets are firmly supportive of the regime. Government officials have directly pressured media owners regarding content, and managers cancel programmes or withdraw articles that could draw reprisals from the authorities.

France: France has a strong tradition of independent journalism and a generally free media environment. However, in recent years, defamation cases, intrusive new security laws, and editorial pressure on journalists by owners have contributed to concerns about decreasing media freedom.

Iraq: Legal protections for press freedom in Iraq are undermined in practise by decades-old restrictions in the penal code and the unstable security situation. Ongoing violence and impunity for past crimes encourage self-censorship and impair journalists' ability to operate. Iraq remained one of the world's deadliest countries for the press, with at least six journalists and one media worker killed in connection with their work during the year, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

Saudi Arabia: Multiple forms of media are censored and the government closely monitors media and restricts it under official state law. On October 2, 2018, Saudi journalist and Washington Post writer Jamal Khashoggi was killed in the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul. It has been widely alleged that he was killed by the Saudi government, including Erdogan, although he has refrained from criticising Saudi Arabia directly and has instead suggested the blame lies with Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman. Almost a month after Khashoggi's death, Erdogan directly accused the Saudi government of murdering the journalist.

Russia: Russia remains a country with a large array of media outlets, but limited access to critical or independent coverage and diverse political viewpoints. Television, which is still the leading source of news and information, often functions as a propaganda tool for the government.

The United Kingdom: The UK is home to a largely open and pluralistic media environment where journalists may operate freely, without fear of attack or serious extralegal harassment. The country has a strong tradition of editorially independent public broadcasting. But The UK has one of the worst environments for press freedom in western Europe, according to a global ranking that places Britain below the likes of Uruguay, Samoa, and Chile for restrictions on reporters as they seek to hold power. Reporters Without Borders, which campaigns for journalistic freedoms, said the UK ranked 40th out of 180 countries on its annual World Press Freedom Index.

The United States: The United States is home to one the world's largest and most dynamic media sectors, including many outlets with substantial international reach. The country's traditionally high level of press freedom can be attributed in part to robust constitutional safeguards that have been repeatedly upheld by independent courts. In recent years, the federal government has been involved in a series of controversies over its attempts to identify the sources of leaked information by extending surveillance and legal pressure to the journalists who reported on it.

Possible Solutions

- Reinforcing national media accountability mechanisms: to support the long-term sustainability, visibility and functioning of press councils in the region. UNESCO sponsors existing press councils to organise advocacy actions for ethical journalism, to adapt to the Digital Era, to participate in regional and international meetings related to media ethics, and self-regulations.
- Increasing media internal governance: to increase the commitment of media decision-makers in the region to editorial and ethical codes. The planned activities include the creation of a Labour Rights

Expert Group for Turkey (training on the implementation of labour rights standards, and the conducting of internal audits on ethical practices of chosen media outlets).

- **Strengthening media and information literacy:** aims to increase the public demand and support in the region of quality media by empowering people through Media and Information Literacy. To achieve that, Unesco is conducting National MIL consultations in the region, and setting up a Southeastern Europe Association of Viewers and Readers Interest, organising training on MIL and creating awareness-raising campaigns.



MEDMUN
Mediterranean Model United Nations

Chairs:



Noon Khalil was born and raised in Sudan in Northeast Africa. However, she is currently residing in the United Kingdom, as she is doing her International Baccalaureate. He is looking into going into Law or Legal Studies, as she is particularly interested in politics and the art and science of justice. On the other hand, she also loves traveling, meeting new people and learning about the diverse cultures and languages around the world. She has been doing MUN since she was in Grade 6, she has gone from being an admin to chairing councils and winning official MUN awards. MUN immersed her into the world of global

politics and allowed her to form a political identity and develop an interest in Law. She is very excited to be a part of MEDMUN 2019, which she is sure will be an enticing and unique experience.

Ekin Tug is currently studying philosophy at Panthéon Sorbonne. She is 21 years old and was born in Brussels but she is Turkish. She grew up as a child in Beijing, Ankara, Strasbourg and Kuala Lumpur. After graduating from an international French high school, she moved to Paris. She loves organizing and participating in MUNs and she is particularly proud to be part of the Secretariat of PIMUN (Paris International MUN) two years in a row. She also loves to write, literally anything from poems to articles and she recently started writing articles for MyMUN website. Aside from MUNs, she is passionate about



yoga and can't imagine starting a day without her morning yoga session that definitely helps her with the big city life. She is very excited to chair the General Assembly during MEDMUN 2019 and can't wait to meet everyone.