

BACKGROUND GUIDE

UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE



MEDMUN 2019

TOPIC 1

Obtaining peace and disarming the enduring conflict in Yemen

TOPIC 2

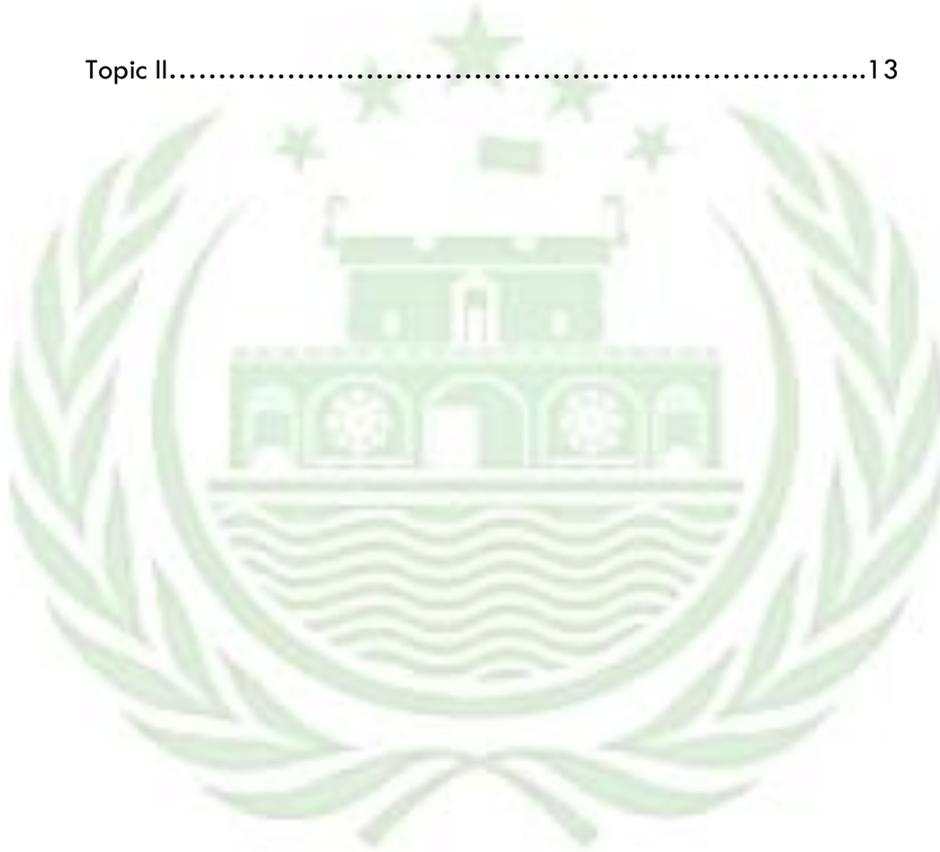
Terrorism, state-sponsored torture, and intercommunal violence in Mali

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1. Presenting the Committee

The Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) or the United Nations General Assembly First Committee is one of the six main committees under the auspices of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Initially created following the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, its main purpose is avoiding, containing and banning the devastating power of destructive weapons, which can largely disrupt global peace. It addresses, through the lenses of the UN Charter, issues such as armed conflicts, threats to global peace and international security matters and seeks solutions to these with the goal of protecting the international community.

2. Issues and Objectives of the Committee

The situation in Yemen is currently at the heart of the United Nations' concerns. With thousands of deaths annually, internal security in Yemen is nearly nonexistent and neither the citizens nor the children are spared. As the media are constantly relaying shocking images of the conflict, the indignation of the international community is increasing daily, adding on the already existing pressure on the United Nations' leaders to solve the crisis and put a term to the civil war. Thus, Yemen became gradually a field for the religious and political tensions between the Middle East's rising powers but also terrorist groups who seized this war as an opportunity to extend their influence network. In this committee, the delegates are asked to find a common ground to obtain peace, by disarming the conflict, in such chaotic situations.



3. Historical background: from Yemen's birth to the civil War

Yemen, throughout history, has always been a coveted region. As an unavoidable step to link Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa through the sea, its geographic location makes it a valuable asset and trade partner. Concisely, the control of the Yemeni territory also meant the control of Bab al Mandab, a priceless strategic location for the British Crown's commercial ambitions as it already had a hand in Egypt and the Suez Canal. Back in the twentieth century, the Ottoman Empire seized Yemen as a part of its huge territory. After the dissolution of the latter in 1917, the Imam Yahya, a Zaidi Shiite religious leader, founded the Kingdom of Yemen in the northern part of the territory while the south fell under British rule. Over time, the kingdom eventually became a republic in the early sixties before merging with the south in 1990 to become the contemporary Republic of Yemen.



For years, the Sunni branch of Islam ruled over Yemen, having a majority of seats in the House of Representatives. Taking its incentives at the roots of Islam, the Sunni-Shiite conflict started disrupting the fragile and newly born Republic of Yemen as the Shiite minority accused the government of discrimination in 2004. Under the lead of Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, the Zaidi Shia sect took on the weapons and engaged in an armed rebellion against the government in place. Moreover, authoritarian President Ali Abdullah Saleh supported the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Houthi rebels started their movement from the Northwestern region of Sa'da, quickly advancing toward Sanaa, the siege of the government and the largest city of the country. When the government retaliated, the fight rapidly escalated, leading to the death of hundreds of Yemenis, including the Houthi leader. Until 2006, the fight continued, taking the form of violent uprisings and skirmishes essentially. Then, in February 2006, president Saleh negotiated a ceasefire with the Houthi leaders. Both sides

had already tied strong alliances. The government, precisely, had made agreements with Sunni extremist groups, which ignited the fights one more time.

Starting from 2009, Yemen truly became the theater of the war between the two major branches of Islam: the Shia and the Sunni. Operation Scorched Earth in August 2009 involved most countries of the Arab world from Morocco in the west to Iran in the east, passing through Saudi Arabia. With help from other Sunni countries (mainly Morocco and Saudi Arabia), Saleh's army intended to eradicate the Houthi Rebels permanently. Saudi Arabia feared the birth of a Shia country on its borders, which would give to Iran, its greatest enemy, a highly valuable asset. Iran, however, tried to take advantage of the situation to seize control of the region, through Hezbollah and by arming rebel groups. The operation turned to massacre as the government's armies started rampaging around, killing both the rebels and the noncombatants. For the first time, the international community understood the seriousness of the situation in Yemen. The death toll had risen to 40,000 Houthi rebels and hundreds of citizens. However, more importantly, as the operation failed to exterminate the rebels, it led to a quick escalation of the conflict in the following months until the number of displaced people reached over 250,000.

In 2011, the wind of insurrection, blowing on the Eastern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, gave a new breath to the Yemen conflict and fueled the tensions between the government and the rebels. Meanwhile, the war of influence between Saudi Arabia and Iran was escalating everywhere else on the Arabian Peninsula, each one of the two belligerents trying to install its own sect of Islam in fragile and unstable countries like Yemen and Lebanon. In January 2011, the Arab Spring, which sparked in the streets of Tunisia, reached Yemen in a context of political instability and social deprivation. The protests in Yemen complained about unemployment, lack of freedom, poverty and corruption. They asked for the abdication of President Saleh, who held his position for 23 years, and the reform of the old constitution. For ten months, violence drastically increased in the streets of Yemen as Saleh fought for his place until he surrendered in November 2011, lending his powers to his vice president Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi. Although both the government and the opposition agreed upon this decision, the people of the country were still claiming their basic rights (food, water, security, freedom...). What we call today the 'Yemeni Civil War', begins the moment president Hadi failed to give the people what they asked for, as soon as separatist terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda took a step into the conflict and when some of Saleh's old men opposed president Hadi, pledging loyalty to their old chief.

4. The current situation in Yemen

In February 2012, President Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi easily won the democratic elections, becoming the first elected president in the history of the country. His top priority was changing the constitution to meet the needs of the people but it was a total failure and the uprisings sparked again. The disappointed citizens saw radical groups like the Houthis or Al-Qaeda as a glimmer of hope to fulfill their needs. The Houthi movement gradually took control of the northwestern part of the country while terrorist groups gained in strength and influence, especially among the youth. After the elections, the Houthis sought to increase their political influence by enrolling in the Yemeni National Dialogue Conference and placed themselves as defenders of the people, adopting a populist position. This pushed the movement from the rank of simple guerilla rebels to one of political leaders.



In 2014, the Houthis and the Pro-Saleh troops captured all of the northwestern territories and went as far as to take Saana. This move forced Saudi Arabia, backed up by the United States, to launch devastating air attacks to protect Sunni president Hadi's position, killing more than 10,000 people. The campaign failed to regain territory from the Rebels but participated in increasing even more the international community's indignation toward the conflict. Later in March 2015, following a similar pattern, Hadi was forced into fleeing to the south despite American and Saudi Arabian air campaigns and bombings. After taking Sanaa,

the Houthis popularity declined especially in the south while it remained strong in the northwest, dividing once more the country. In the meanwhile, Iran claims that it supports the internationally recognized Hadi government while American intelligence revealed that it had spotted Rebel supplies coming from Iran.

Saudi Arabia and the United States of America have been intervening in Yemen since 2009 Scorched Earth Operation. In 2015, they launched Operation Decisive Storm, leading a coalition of nine other Middle Eastern countries. After a month of permanent bombings on Houthi Rebels positions, the Kingdom claimed that they had successfully pushed back the Houthis, yet, President Hadi was not restored and the country was still engaged in an internal war. Operation Restoring Hope and many others followed Operation Decisive Storm.



In recent years, use of violence dramatically increased especially against terrorist groups. Daily, Saudi and American warships and planes bomb places they consider terrorist nests, ignoring the consequences on the noncombatants. In May 2018, the United Arab Emirates deployed three hundred soldiers in Socotra and seized control of the airport and seaport but Saudi Arabia answered back with a greater troop deployment and negotiated that the Island returned to Yemen. Later in December, the United Nations put in place a ceasefire in Hodeida but the two sides are still accusing each other of repeated violence and fights are continuing. As of today, many countries, including but not limited to Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Egypt, Qatar and the United States are supporting Hadi's government. On the other side, the Pro-Saleh and the Houthis sealed alliances to take control of the remaining part of the Yemeni territory as they now call themselves the Houthi government. Apart from that, Al-Qaeda in the Arabic Peninsula (AQAP) and other secessionist groups are taking control of the southern regions, adding a third dimension to the conflict. In addition, in the recent years, we saw the emergence of a new powerful entity: the Southern Transitional Council (STC). Initially

a faction of another separatist movement called the Southern Movement, the STC was declared on May 2017 and now rules over most of southern Yemen as they also seek to control the whole country, under the command of president Aidarus al-Zoubaidi.

To wrap up, Yemen is today a theater for regional, national and international conflicts as various actors took part in the civil war, making it impossible for any side to control the whole country.

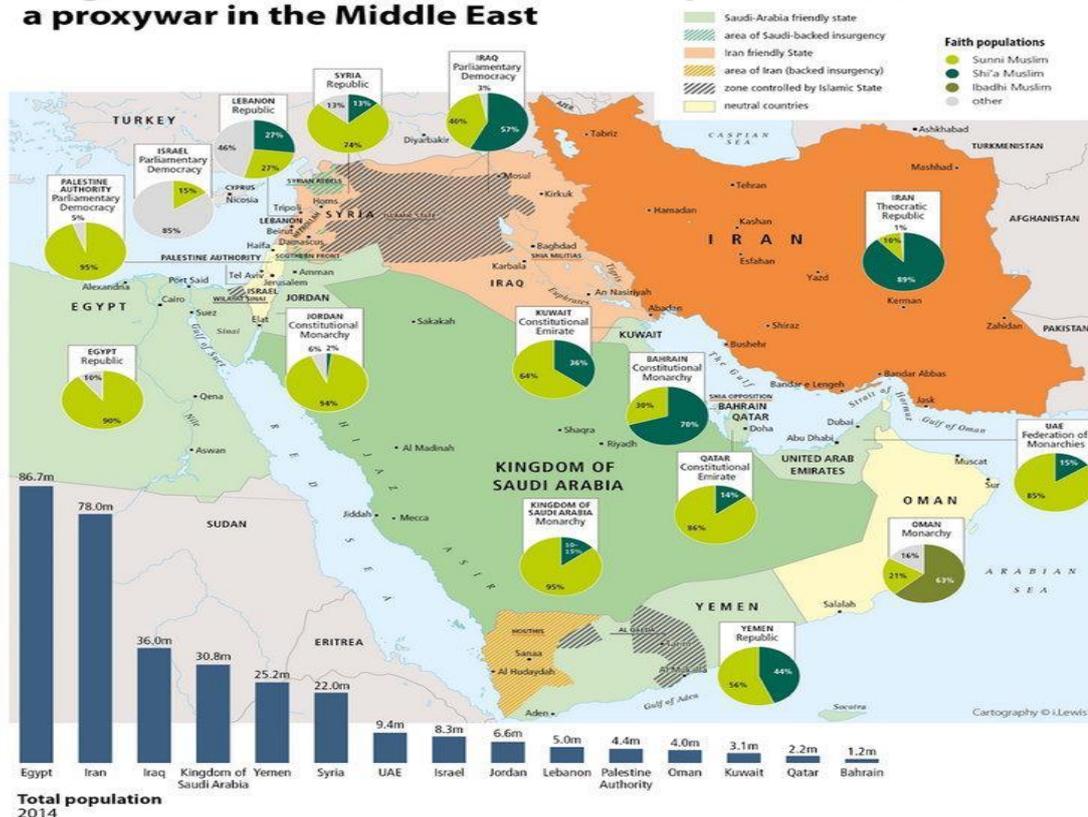
5. Main countries and blocks positions

Yemen: The internationally recognized government is Hadi's government. For them, disarming the conflict is the best solution to solve the crisis and regain control of the territory. However, as a large number of Yemeni citizens joined the Rebels and the secessionist groups, including terrorists, the Yemeni government needs to find a common ground with the other major actors of the region if they want to end the civil war.

The Saudi Arabian-Iranian proxy war:

The Alagheb and Orient Courier

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia vs Islamic Republic of Iran : a proxywar in the Middle East



The Saudi Arabian-Iranian proxy war is similar to the Cold War. The two main differences are that it has a religious rather than political purpose and a regional instead of international scale. This conflict has currently two main battlefields in which Iran and Saudi Arabia are both financing the belligerents from opposing sides: Yemen and Syria. In the latter, Iran supported Bashar Al Assad's government while Saudi Arabia firmly opposed him by financing various rebel groups.

Saudi Arabia: Giant and influential Sunni bastion in the region, Saudi Arabia feels concerned more than anyone else about the war taking place on its borders. The kingdom is constantly trying to install its sect of Islam in Yemen, by supporting President Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi.

Iran: Officially, Iran is supporting Hadi's government. However, the international community and especially the Gulf States accused Iran of backing the Houthi rebels. On the international scene, Iran's foreign policy about the situation in Yemen is vague and unclear. While they claim to support Hadi, they openly condemned the Operation Decisive Storm led by Saudi Arabia on rebel positions. Hence, we do not truly know how involved Iran is in this war nor how much influence it has on the Houthi movement.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): This regional intergovernmental diplomatic and economic union is constituted of all the Persian Gulf States, except Iraq. The member states are a group of monarchies led by Saudi Arabia. This six-member association's real purpose is to counterbalance the Iranian Shiite influence in the Middle East. In Yemen, the GCC took part in different operations against the Houthi movement and denied the creation of the Southern Transitional Council (STC) in southern Yemen in May 2017.

The West: France, the United Kingdom and the United States mainly support the Saudi campaign against the Houthis, not only financially but also militarily. Although not officially involved in the war, they are the three greatest weapons providers in the region. The international community completely opposed their policy and urged them to stop selling arms in Yemen. Currently, they are held responsible by the international community for the human rights violations, massacres and bombings of school and children in the area. The United States, precisely, has sold weapons for nearly 23 Billion US Dollars since November 2015.

The United Nations: Extremely concerned by the situation, the United Nations initiated talks with the GCC and the transitional government since 2011. Recently in December 2018, backed up by the United States, they started new peace negotiations about the strategic port of Hodeidah and in December 18, they declared a ceasefire.

The Pro-Saleh forces: They are the followers of the old president Salah killed in December 2017 in the capital city of Sanaa. Since his ousting in 2011, Saleh has been trying to regain influence in Yemen. He offered to mediate peace talks between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis. On a hand, he helped the Houthis against Hadi's government, especially during the

seizing of the capital Sanaa. On the other hand, he was of great help to Saudi Arabia and the coalition in fighting the Rebels in northern Yemen during the air strikes. Thus, Saleh's position was unclear but we know that his ultimate purpose was to regain control of the political scene in Yemen. After his death, his son Ahmed Abdullah Saleh became the new leader of the movement.

Terrorist groups and organizations: The two main terrorist organizations in Yemen are Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). While AQAP is far more active and dangerous than ISIL, they still both caused a lot of damages to infrastructures, killed a lot of civilians and increased the climate of insecurity in Yemen. Founded in 2009, AQAP is considered the most dangerous branch of Al Qaeda.

6. Possible solutions

Many believe that peace in Yemen can only be achieved if one of the two main sides –the Houthis and the Hadi government- wins the battle against the other. However, we now have much more entities involved in this conflict, which makes it impossible to determine who will seize control of the Yemeni territory. The first possible solution for the UN is to engage in peace talks with the two main sides and to work on a general ceasefire. The priority is to address the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and to end the armed conflict. Therefore, it becomes necessary for the UN to impose more severe sanctions on the belligerents.

Yet, other think that the war will only end if we put a term to the external intrusion in the conflict. The solution would be to put a limit to the involvement of other countries (Iran, Saudi Arabia, the US, France...) in the Yemeni civil war by forcing them to retreat, despite the great economic and geopolitical advantages they can have there. Although it seems utopic, the social media's constant relying of shocking pictures raised the indignation of the international community. With time, the public opinion could force the countries' leaders to stop selling weapons and intervening in Yemen in a pattern similar to what happened to the United States during the Vietnam War.

7. Guiding questions to address the crisis

- Is it possible to reach a consensus in which every side partly gets what it wants?
- Are external interventions really helping Yemen?
- How can we increase religious freedom in Yemen?
- How can we address the humanitarian crisis and make sure that the humanitarian aids truly reach the populations in need?
- What delegations could be ready to compromise in order to find a solution?
- What sanctions can the UN impose on the belligerents?
- Who, from the many sides fighting in this war, deserves sanctions?
- How to address terrorism in Yemen without bombing innocent civilians and destroying infrastructure?



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TOPIC 2 : TERRORISM, STATE-SPONSORED TORTURE, AND INTERCOMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN MALI

1. Introduction to the topic

1.1 Terrorism

According to Walter Laqueur, terrorism is “the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective by targeting innocent people”.

The United Nations has established the Office of Counter-Terrorism after the settlement of the General Assembly resolution 71/291 on the 15th of June 2017: “Strengthening the capability of the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy”.

1.2 State-sponsored torture

Torture is considered the most inhumane, cruel or mortifying treatment. It's the fundamental principle of international law. State-sponsored torture has been used by ancient civilizations the same way it's being used in some cultures today in order to obtain certain information, or penalize lawbreakers. According to article 2 from the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, torture should never be employed under any set of conditions not even in a state of war nor of emergency, even if it's an order from a superior authority. It also states that each State Party is charged with preventing the exploit of torture and proceed with judicial initiatives within the boundaries of the territory it's responsible for.

1.3 Intercommunal violence

Intercommunal violence is the central issue of international political relations. It embodies conflicts of various aspects such as religion, culture and many more between ethnic groups or communities. Intercommunal violence leads to the murder of unarmed civilians due to their ethnic community or beliefs. This matter has

widespread internationally but especially in Africa and cannot be avoided anymore. Usually, intercommunal violence is endorsed by governments through discrimination when it fails to provide protection for vulnerable communities, or when the government persists on a certain race, religion or ethnicity.

2. Terrorism in Africa

For decades, Africa has been the center of attention of terrorist groups. Many countries of the continent such as Libya, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Mali have encountered several terrorist attacks in which thousands of civilians have died. The groups executing these strikes all have one dominant common characteristic: they all assert extremist Islamic tendencies.

In the 1990s attacks were limited to only a few countries but the blooming of several parties such as Boko Haram definitely has left an impact on the African peoples. Since then, terrorism has been defined as an unquestionable threat.

3. State-sponsored torture in Africa

In Africa, 13 out of 54 countries have imposed anti-torture legislation, while article 5 of the African Charter on Human Rights outlaws and restrains torture. South Africans suffer the most from state-sponsored torture, especially those in prison cells or detention centers where freedom is restricted, as well as within people's private areas. It affects the community with mental and social consequences. When torture is established by the government, the victim is automatically considered helpless and unprotected; therefore, an entire society becomes corrupt and fearful of its own government.

In May 1964, the African Commission on Human and People's rights was instituted. Its primary goals are the promotion and protection of human rights. The Charter of the Commission strongly highlights the dignity of each human being and the prohibition of torture in African countries.

4. Intercommunal violence in Africa

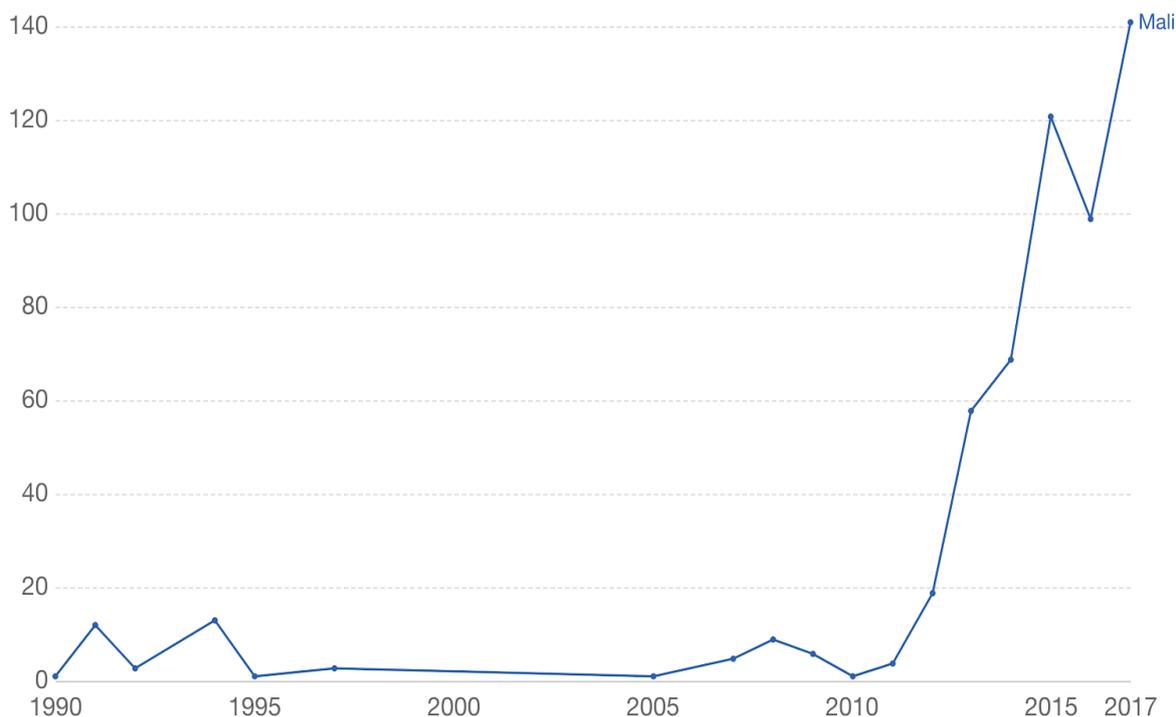
Intercommunal violence in Africa has become an epidemic since 2014. It's a common crisis, especially in both Mali and Nigeria. Moreover, the unresolved crisis in Darfur has been ongoing for almost two decades now which terrorized innocent civilians and cut all delivery of aid such as medical supplies and food to the region. In Nigeria, the government still did not provide fairness to the victims of the current matter and their families. Therefore, the lack of importance the authorities of the nation gave to the issue is leading to a cycle of intercommunal violence.

5. Terrorism in Mali

After almost 200 people have been harmed (of which around 20 were killed) when two Islamists attacked the country, the government declared a state of emergency in November 2015. Mali has pursued such attacks; hence, authorities decided on October 2018 to extend the state of emergency until October 2019. The Malian government was not able to keep the situation under control, so Malian authorities appealed to France who provided ongoing military support to the nation's troops as a part of 'Operation Serval' that was launched in January of 2013. A year before, in January 2012, the Tuareg separatist movement for the liberations of Azawad started to carry out strikes in Mali with the determination of forming an independent state. As powerful Islamist groups like al-Qaeda and al-Jihad joined the movement against the Malian forces, Mali eventually declared Azawad as an independent. However, as soon as they reached their goal, the Islamist groups banned the Tuareg separatist movement for the liberation of Azawad from the area and took charge over 10% of Mali's population and over half of its territory. Nowadays, Islamist groups are recruiting citizens by highlighting regional and ethnic divisions within Mali or by presuming to be righteous defenders of Islam.

Number of terrorist incidents

The total number of terrorism-related incidents per year. The source defines a terrorist attack as: "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation." The perpetrators of the incidents must be sub-national actors; data does not include acts of state terrorism.



Source: Global Terrorism Database (2018)

OurWorldInData.org/terrorism/ • CC BY-SA

6. State-sponsored torture in Mali

In a period of only three months in 2018, 27 men died in custody and two others were severely tortured. This is just a sample of what's been going on in Mali for years. The Malian government still did not conduct credible investigations into assaults against suspects its troops confined during a major military operation against Islamist groups. In September 2007, the residents of Mali witnessed the existence of four common graves in which the army would bury bodies of innocent tortured villagers.

7. Intercommunal violence in Mali

Approximately 300 civilians have been murdered due to intercommunal violence in Mali in 2018. Most attacks are carried out by Dozos against the Fula people, a conflict that's

been raging for years. The Fulani groups have been suspected of being linked to al-Qaeda; which aimed at Dogon and Bambara civilians. Furthermore, the misuse of the ethnic tensions of the country by al-Qaeda is a system of recruitment of new fighters to launch strikes into neighboring countries such as Niger. These events alarmed France and the United States of America and caused the deployment of military troops into the region. The United Nations is deeply concerned about the rising matter in Mali as the violence has been increasing for three years now.

8. Recommendations:

- **Delegates have to take advantage of the time given in order to focus on the topic and try to form blocks.**
- **Delegates are expected to show their research skills and the knowledge they have taking into consideration the different oppositions that are present and highlighting their diplomatic skills by being patient and listening to different points of views in the same block they're in.**
- **Delegates should recognize the main power of the DISEC committee considering that its a powerful committee and being aware of the powerful actions and decisions that it can take.**
- **Delegates must stay informed and updated about the various new events that have occurred recently in their countries, neighboring countries and committees in addition to the history of their country.**

9. Questions to Consider:

- **How has your country been an important part of this topic and what has your country done in with respect to this topic?**
- **How is the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) tackling the problem at hand?**
- **How can human rights be protected when talking about this topic?**
- **What is terrorism and how can it be prevented?**
- **Are terrorism, state sponsor torture and intercommunal violence related to each other?**
- **What are the principles, strategies, and tactics that should be taken into consideration in order to prevent terrorism, state-sponsored torture and intercommunal violence?**

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Chairs



Skander is a Tunisian senior student at the Pierre Mendès France French high school of Tunis. His passion for MUN has led him through many tough yet rewarding experiences. As a Medmun 2018 delegate within the African Union, he looks forward to coming back to Menton and to Sciences Po's campus to live another unforgettable conference. He firmly believes that MUN is first and foremost the opportunity to

unleash our inner creativity as it is the first step toward reaching pragmatic and concrete solutions to the world's main issues. Skander will be chairing the DISEC at MEDMUN 2019 and looks forward to welcoming all the delegates in the beautiful city of Menton.

Gaëlle Hamandi is an 18-year-old Lebanese high school senior student. She hopes to major in Political Science and International Affairs at the Lebanese American University next year. As for her MUN experience, she has been part of the program for five years now and is not willing to give it up anytime soon. As part of the DISEC dais, she will make sure that the delegates are all having a good time and



enjoying the art of conferencing. Many aspects seem to interest her, but politics has captivated her the most alongside her passion for makeup, negotiating and listening to rock music. She has mastered Arabic, English, and French. When she's not a part of any conference or perfecting her studies which she considers her main weapon in life she usually spends her time sharing the hobby of coloring with her close friends that share the same passion in the beautiful gardens of Beirut blasting "Aerosmith" music through her ears. She hopes to practice this hobby in the sunny city of Menton too.