

BACKGROUND GUIDE

PRESS COMMITTEE



MEDMUN 2019

Chaired by John Sakr

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MEDMUN
Mediterranean Model United Nations

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the MEDMUN 2018 Press Committee. Your role as a delegate of the Press Committee is to report on, write, and publish articles concerning the events that take place during the conference. Your main objective is to play the role of the news director, producer, editor, correspondent, or freelancer to which you have been assigned to the best of your abilities and in as close to real-life circumstances as possible. This document will serve as an in-depth explanation of the framework, goals, and objectives of the Press Committee. As members of the Press Committee you will be reporting on the crisis simulations and non-crisis committees as well as other events during the conference and thus need to be familiar with the simulation situation during the conference. It is therefore necessary that you not only understand your role as a press delegate, but that you also are familiar with the roles, limitations, liberties, powers, and backgrounds of all the other crisis committees and their delegates. Please refer to the topic guides of other crisis councils for this purpose.

Reporting on the Middle East has always been delicate topic. Restrictive press freedom laws, dangerous scenarios, an aversion to western press, politically biased reporting as well as the influence of governmental and international organizations are just a few of the difficulties any reporting on the Middle East involves. With respect to the conflicts we are facing today, it is imperative for our reporters to understand the situation they are delving into before going out into the field. Reporters might face and report on terrorist attacks, coups, drone strikes, military invasions etc. Like any good reporter, delegates in this committee are expected to have a comprehensive understanding of the conflict that is taking place during the conference. This can be done by thoroughly reading the crisis background guides and brushing up on the General Assembly committee specific background guides before going to report on any specific committee. That being said, there are a few key points specific to the press' relation to firstly the crisis simulation and secondly the non-crisis committees at MEDMUN. First, reporters on the ground will be entering very dangerous situations. It is indeed not unheard of for reporters for Reuters and other news agencies to be kidnapped, detained, or even killed while reporting. Discretion is advised while working undercover in certain regions of the conflict. Of course, this is not to deter undercover reporting, as the bravest among you will surely engage in it, but rather to advise caution while reporting. The second key point is an understanding of the political impact reporting on certain situations will have on the committee sessions. Often times, releasing reports on events on the ground can endanger the success of ongoing military actions or even put innocent civilian lives at risk. It is therefore at the discretion of the editors and reporters of each respective news agency to

self-filter their publications with ethical and moral considerations. This requires a keen understanding of the events taking place on the ground.

As a final point, it must be noted that key to any success in the world of reporting in the Middle East is an understanding of how to play the game. Reporting in Egypt and Syria is not the same as reporting in the US or Europe. For successful reporting in the Middle East, one must always have an ear to the ground, be constantly checking the statements of political actors with facts, and often use off-the-record sources in the field. In contrast to the West, in many cases people in the Middle East, whether they be political actors or civilians, have an aversion to Western Media and are thus weary to talk to them. In order to work efficiently in this region, one must build a network of trustworthy people and reliable sources. Being a reporter during a conflict is not the same as broadcasting for the local nightly news. It takes vigour, morals, and a keen understanding of the situation at hand. As a member of the Reuters and NAM News Network press corps or as a freelancer you will face danger, rejection, and moral quandaries. But as any good reporter knows, this is in pursuit of the greater good: Objectivity and knowledge on a global level. Good luck to all.

Yours truly,

Renata Canini, MEDMUN 2018 Press Semi-Crisis Coordinator and Press Committee Chair



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Framework

Our Press Committee is an innovative crisis subset that provides delegates with a unique opportunity to engage with our simulation by reporting live on events. As a crucial reporting mechanism between committees, members of the press explore the interests and points of view of news outlets and implicated parties, creating a lively real-time crisis.

In this year's press committee, delegates will have the opportunity to act as representatives of international news agencies in the committee room and as agents of the press outside of the committee setting. Delegates will debate issues such as press freedom, censorship, the future of print media in a digital world, "Fake News" and conflicts of interest between journalistic standards and economic pressure. Delegates will also be able to spend time in other committees where they will investigate the processes of debate, analyse developing international opinion, and express their insights through articles.

Topics for debate:

1. Conflicts of interest between ethics and economic/political pressure
2. The future of verification and fact-checking in light of "fake news"
3. The change in news consumption with the growing trend of AI
4. Visual journalism in the social media era

The press committee is divided into three subcategories: Two news agencies (Reuters and NAM News Network) as well as freelance journalists. Each of the two news agencies will have their own website, where they can publish their articles and reports. Common to all subcategories is an operative role during the conference. Delegates will gather information by attending press conferences, striking deals with stakeholders from other committees who can reveal information, and conducting on-site research. Thus, they are allowed to be present in committees officially upon crisis staff and/or chair permission, or they may try to conduct undercover research as well. Delegates will then use the information they have gathered to write and publish articles on their respective websites. The two news agencies, Reuters and NAM News Network, will be competing for coverage of the most significant events and ultimately the highest number of readers for their published articles.

Sources

A source, or any person, organization or publication that aims to give a reporter information, is a crucial part of news gathering and journalism. Journalists are expected to strive to cultivate as many reliable and beneficial sources as possible since this will make the content of news more reliable and hence competitive. Be aware of the fact that sometimes politicians or other actors may lie, intimidate, strongly deny or try to use the news to shape the image or the conversation of events to benefit or damage some party and even you or your organization. Someone may want to buy or offer something in exchange for a public relations piece and even if you are a news agency, you have to consider the benefits and damage this may cause. Be aware of the image your news shape about you as a news organization because this will affect your popularity, ratings and credibility.

Important Terms

"On the record" – Information can be subject to quoting and attribution.

"Unattributable" – No attribution to a specific source possible, i.e. anonymous source

"Off the record" – Confidential information

Media Utilization

In addition to collecting information through interviews and research, reporters are expected to use the full breadth of media available to them. This means audio recordings of interviews, which can be published alongside articles on the website, photos accompanying articles, and even video reports in order to catch the eye of the readers and lead them to read the full article. Delegates will be allowed to use their phones, cameras, and any other resources they have to collect multimedia material that can be then published online on their respective websites. Additionally, agencies will have the opportunity to compile their news for the day into a "daily broadcast" recapping the day's events for the delegates of other committees at the end of each session day.

Liberties and Limitations

Both news agencies enjoy the same liberties and limitations to collect, report on, write about, and publish pieces of information throughout the conference. Besides the limitations of the roles of each individual delegate regarding their assigned role within the news agency, both Reuters and NAM News Network are competing through collection and publication of as many good quality articles as possible. Reporters are allowed into committees during the conference with the permission of the chair of this committee if “officially present” or similarly without direct permission from the chair if the reporters choose to conduct an undercover investigation. They have full liberty to interview and report on any delegates in the conference. Similarly, the press may as well be contacted directly by the crisis staff with “insider scoops” or other information.

In order to ensure accuracy and quality, delegates are expected to comply with certain ethical rules of journalism according to the SPJ Code of Ethics: <https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

Goals

The goals of all members of the press committee is to collect and report on information throughout the conference. Best agency will be awarded to either Reuters or NAM News Network based on their capacity to publish consistently and with good quality on the events that are taking place in the crisis committees, but also during non-crisis simulations, social events and the rest of the weekend. Best delegate will be awarded to the freelance reporter who “sells” the most number of stories to the two news agencies or to a member of the news agency teams who shows exceptional teamwork qualities.

Assessment criteria:

Evaluation will equally take into account the following:

- Quality: Relevance, accuracy and language
- Quantity: Continuous coverage of important events and number of clicks
- Time: Who publishes relevant pieces of information first?
- Balance:
 - a) between reports on crisis and non-crisis simulations as well as any other relevant events during the conference,
 - b) between short news articles, reports and interviews
- Appropriate use of media

- Adequate reaction to crises
- Teamwork
- Individual performance during debates

A collection of the best articles will be published at the end of the conference.

Matrix

- Reuters (staff of 4 people)
 - **Executive Producer**
 - *Role:* Overall director of team, link with team and outside world, deals with ratings, clicks, and overall stance of the agency toward a given issue, directs overarching views of agency, publishes media.
 - *Powers:* Hire/Fire reporters, veto any articles from publication, final say on all edits and stories going to publication, directs overall conduct of team, writes editorial team pieces “letter from the editor,” contact with Reuters Director
 - *Limitations:* Cannot report on the ground, limited ability to leave press room
 - **Senior Manager of News**
 - *Role:* Manage news staff team directly, right-hand man/woman to the Executive producer, assign tasks to associate editors and news associates.
 - *Powers:* Edition, In the field reporting (limited), direct control over field reporters’ actions, first edit/read through of stories, send to producer for approval
 - *Limitations:* Enter a war zone on the ground, hire/fire reporters
 - **Associate Editor**
 - *Role:* Write/publish stories with info gathered from News Associates, generally do not go out into the field to do reporting but rather write more in-depth stories with info gathered by news associates
 - *Powers:* Write stories to send to News Manager for editing, assist in publication, go into the field on the record
 - *Limitations:* No undercover reporting
 - **News Associate**
 - *Role:* Go out in the field and report, interview, take pictures, gather quotes, liken to a field reporter or photojournalist
 - *Powers:* Full access to in the field reporting, undercover or not, power to write and publish Op-Eds and small reports independently, Photojournalism, undercover reporting

- *Limitations:* Write full in-depth stories alone without support of higher-up staff.
- **Non-Aligned Movement News Network (NNN, staff of 4 people)**
 - **Global News Director**
 - *Role:* coming up with strategic plans and solutions to make the agency and news outlet more competitive, have better coverage and a specific agenda. He or she will be also overseeing the whole of the work at the HQs. Aims to get more readers and direct overall stance, conduct of the team
 - *Powers:* Hire/Fire reporters, veto any articles from publication, final say on all edits and stories going to publication, directs overall conduct of team, writes editorial team pieces “letter from the editor,” contact with NNN Executive Producer
 - *Limitations:* Cannot report on the ground, limited ability to leave press room
 - **Deputy News Director**
 - *Role:* Subordinate to the director of the news division, this person will be the brains behind outlining the exact work of all the other people under him/her and coming up with specific stories, investigative journalism themes or such to cover. He/she will also be proofreading the work of those below in rank to insure the best quality.
 - *Powers:* Editing, In the field reporting (limited), direct control over field reporters’ actions, first edit/read through of stories, send to director for approval
 - *Limitations:* Enter a war zone on the ground, hire/fire reporters
 - **News editor**
 - *Role:* This person will be mostly located at the HQs and do news desk-related work such as publishing breaking news from the committees. He/she may also leave the office to do some original on-the-field work.
 - *Powers:* Write stories to send to News Manager for editing, assist in publication, go into the field on the record
 - *Limitations:* No undercover reporting
 - **Correspondent**
 - *Role:* News producers and correspondents will spend most of their time in committees reporting to the office, however, they may also choose to come back to write some original work.
 - *Powers:* Full access to in the field reporting, undercover or not, power to publish Op-Eds independently, Photojournalism, undercover reporting
 - *Limitations:* Write full stories alone without support of higher-up staff

- Freelancers

- Sayed Torky, Al Manassa
- Kais Zriba, inkyfada
- Liz Sly, Washington Post
- Zeina Khodr, Al Jazeera English
- Zaina Erhaim, The Guardian
- Rania Abouzeid, Time Magazine
- Ben Hubbard, New York Times
- Tulin Daloglu, Halimiz
- Gideon Levy, Haaretz
- Michael Hudson, Associated Press
- Li Xia, Hinhua

News Agencies Information

Reuters

When Baron Julius de Reuter in 1828 thought of sending pigeons to carry economic intelligence faster than the mail train from Brussels to Aachen, he could not imagine that less than 140 years later his successors in the Reuters office in London would be using computers to hook investment brokers into stock market prices. British news agency Reuters is the world's largest international multimedia news agency. With over 2,500 journalists around the globe they aim to deliver an unparalleled international and national news coverage in multiple languages for maximum international reach. Reuters believes in three main core principals in their work: speed, impartiality and insight. Reuters serves and gives insight to broadcasters, publishers, brands, agencies, or direct to consumers via their website and social media. Reuters provides award-winning coverage of the day's most important topics, including: business, finance, politics, sports, entertainment, technology, health, and environment. They employ over 2500 journalists, 600 photojournalists, and have offices in over 200 locations all around the world. In their own words, "Reuters provides society with the news it needs to be free, prosperous and informed. We strive to preserve independence, integrity and freedom from bias in the gathering and dissemination of information and news." For guidelines on how to be a Reuters writer, and reflect "fair presentation and disclosure of relevant interests, to maintain the values of integrity and freedom upon which reputation for reliability, accuracy, speed and exclusivity relies" visit the [link](#).

Non-Aligned Movement News Network

On a warm April day in 1973 two Yugoslav journalists and their colleagues from Arab news agencies met over breakfast in a Baghdad coffee house. Concerned that the flow of information from Third World countries was being controlled by a few Western news agencies, they came up with the idea of a Third World News Pool. Today, 50 of the 92 non-aligned countries are participating and the volume of news handled by the Pool's exchange system is estimated at 50,000 words a day, distributed in English, French, Spanish and Arabic. The project is self financing with each broadcaster footing its own transmission bill. Its main goal is to provide news agencies from the third world with their own mass media channels with news which would be unbiased - or, at most, biased with their own worldview - offering a counter-hegemonical report on world news concerning developing nations. Some of the active agencies in the Non-Aligned Pool were the Maghreb Arabe Presse, Tunisian TAP, Iraq's INA and Iranian IRNA, the former having led it officially until the mid-90s, as it became more of a propaganda apparatus for INA and IRNA. That changed when a ministerial conference of information by the Non-Aligned Movement called on the creation of a Non-Aligned News Network; established at the initiative of Malaysia, its secretariat is still located in Kuala Lumpur. According to the agency's website, "the NNN sees itself as an alternative source of information rather than being in competition with other major news services. Essentially it would serve as a conduit for NAM member countries to tell their story and use it as a yet another tool of communication for them".

Freelancers

Freelance journalists work on their own during the conference. They will both serve as field reporters and as staff writers/photographers. They will have complete creative control over their stories and be given more freedom and access to certain areas of the conference than the press agencies. These staff writers will then sell their stories to either Reuters or NNN. As they will have more info available to them than the agencies themselves will have to compete to publish the stories of the staff writers. This aspect of the press committee adds to the competition between the agencies. Additionally, the freelancers will be portraying actual real-life reporters and thus have to write within the bounds of the reporters they portray.

Al Manassa, Sayed Torky

Sayed Torky, investigated ISIS's accessibility to sophisticated weapons in Egypt, executive director in chief of Al Manassa (Arabic for The Platform), an online collaborative investigative Pan-Arab, digital-first, Arabic-language news publication that emphasizes reporting that is collaborative, investigative, and sustainable.

Freelance, Kais Zriba

Kais Zriba, tunisian journalist and co-founder of inkyfada, a webzine created by journalists, graphic designers and dedicated to interviews and long-formats, investigated the death of a tunisian prison official by a member of the tunisian army,

Washington Post, Liz Sly

Liz Sly, a foreign correspondent for The Washington Post, based in Beirut, and finds herself in Syria reporting the war time and time again. Liz finds that at the war front, women's voices are the most powerful as “men are fighting this war, but women are writing it.”

Al Jazeera English, Zeina Khodr

Zeina Khodr, broadcast journalist for the Al Jazeera English channel, having worked for several news organizations, including: Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), Emirates Dubai Television, the BBC World Service, and CNN.

Guardian, Zaina Erhaim

Zaina Erhaim, a Syrian journalist, currently based in Turkey. Working with print, TV and film, she has reported on the Syrian civil war from within Syria. Erhaim is the recipient of the Peter Mackler Award for Courageous and Ethical Journalism and Index on Censorship's Freedom of Expression Journalism Award. She has contributed to The Economist, The Guardian, Newsweek, Middle East Eye, Orient TV, Al-Hayat and Syria-News.

Time, Rania Abouzeid

Rania Abouzeid, has reported out of the Middle East for the past decade, covering the second Iraq war and the Syrian civil war while reporting for Time Magazine, The New Yorker and Al Jazeera America.

New York Times, Ben Hubbard

Ben Hubbard is a Middle East correspondent for the New York Times. An Arabic speaker with more than a decade in the Middle East, he has covered coups, civil wars, protests, jihadist groups, rotten fish as cuisine, religion and pop culture from more than a dozen countries, including Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt and Yemen.

Halimiz, Tulin Daloglu

Tulin Daloglu, covers Turkish politics as well as the Syrian conflict since 2011. Tulin's reports offer a first-hand view as she regularly travels to borders, streets and anywhere she can to offer an eyewitness report. Publisher and chief editor of Halimiz, a Turkish weekly magazine.

Haaretz, Gideon Levy

English edition of Israel's moderate national daily, published in Tel Aviv in association with the International Herald Tribune. The longest running newspaper currently in print in Israel, and is now published in both Hebrew and English in the Berliner format. The English edition is published and sold together with the International New York Times.

Associated Press, Michael Hudson

Hudson, who shared the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for explanatory reporting for his work on the groundbreaking Panama Papers project, joins AP from the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. As AP's global investigations editor based in New York, Hudson will guide a team of reporters, editors and data journalists worldwide who have consistently produced impactful and award-winning work, such as the 2016 Pulitzer Prize-winning investigation that exposed labor abuses in the fishing industry in Southeast Asia.

Technicalities

The committee will alternate between committee sessions and reporting. Joint press committee consists of two competing news agencies. The two agencies are competing to see who will be more successful in providing useful and gripping coverage of the events during the crisis simulation. Proxies are used to measure interest in publications include clicks, comments, accuracy, and effect on the overall crisis simulation. The first and the last committee sessions will be committee sessions, and all of the others will be reporting sessions, with delegates free to come and go from the Press room as wanted, provided they are reporting when not present—logistically, this will be all day Saturday.

Committee sessions:

- During committee session, the press delegates are expected to use normal crisis procedures, though the extent of procedure enforced is at the discretion of the chairs. No position papers required.
- During committee session, delegates will seek to discuss how to improve coverage and outperform the other outlet. Delegates are encouraged to develop innovative techniques and strategies.
- The working language of this committee is English. Delegates are not allowed to use any other language inside the committee. For independent research and interviews, any language is permitted, but delegates should take into account that only English and – if the respective article is directly related to a French-speaking committee – French articles can be considered for assessment.
- Crisis events will also directly impact press members, e.g. kidnappings, injuries, libel, etc. Delegates are therefore expected to accept the scenarios stated by the chairs and/or semi-crisis staff and adequately respond to these crises.

Reporting sessions:

- Reporters will write articles, produce videos, record audio, etc based on crisis events.
- Content produced by delegates should be uploaded directly to the WordPress and will be scrutinized for accuracy and quality by a crisis member who may decide to adapt events in the crisis simulation based on the reporting.
- Delegates will not issue press releases on behalf of other crisis committee members who are instead expected to convey this information directly to crisis staff.
- Delegates may enter committees at the chairs' discretion. They are expected to be respectful and not to disrupt debate.

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