Head Chair: Brian Kim

Vice Chair: Carolyn Wang

Hello delegates!

I've been a part of Model UN for almost four years, or as long as I've been in high school, and to this day, I'm glad I joined. It has helped me grow in my public speaking skills, in my interpersonal skills, and in my understanding of the world that I live in. This year, I have the honor of serving as your head chair, where I hope to pass on the lessons I have learned. Outside of MUN, you can see me working in the Space Settlement Design team, the *Sword and Shield*, or in Future Business Leaders of America. In my spare time, I like to code, write, or read just about anything. I wish you luck in your research, and please contact us if you have any questions!

- Brian Kim, Head Chair

Welcome delegates!

My name is Carolyn and I'm excited to be serving as your vice chair. Out of the many lovely clubs at Uni (go JCL!), what makes MUN so exceptional is how it allows for all different types of individuals to discover their own potential. MUN can give you a new perspective on global events, help you discover a cause that you're passionate about; or, it can just teach you how to be a human being who's capable of creating change. These are the most valuable life skills that you can learn. Outside of MUN, I like to spend my free time making art, listening to music, and scrolling through pointless websites on the internet. I'm in constant search of new music, so if you have any good song suggestions (or worthy memes) I'd love for you to share them with me. I can't wait to meet you all during committee! Best of luck.

- Carolyn Wang, Vice Chair

Reminder: Position papers are due by October 7th at 11:59PM to bsk945@gmail.com.

Feel free to email us if you have any questions.

Committee: SPECPOL

Topic: Palestinian Refugees

Delegates will be asked to consider their countries' positions on both refugees and the 1948 Israeli-Palestinian conflict that produced these refugees. Delegates must understand the reasons behind their nations' actions and act accordingly, presenting a clear, well thought-out plan to confront and settle this issue in a manner satisfactory to the nations they represent. (Note: It is important to emphasize that the purpose of committee is for you to advocate for and stay true to your country's policy, NOT just to pass another resolution.)

Background:

Officially, the United Nations defines Palestinian refugees as people who historically lived in Palestine from 1946 to 1948, and who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict. This 1948 conflict refers to the Arab-Israeli War, which in itself was caused by years of building ethnic and nationalistic tension. Since then, continued violence and hostility have only worsened the situation, propelling to the world stage what is known today as the Palestinian refugee crisis.

At the root of the refugee crisis lies the Israeli-Palestine conflict. This conflict, fought primarily over land, can be traced back to the late nineteenth century with the establishment of a Jewish nationalist movement called Zionism. Zionists advocated for the creation of a Jewish national state in Palestine because it had been the ancient homeland of the Jews. At the time, this land was settled by Muslim Arabs. The single combined state, rather than separate Jewish and Arab states, led to an internal violence between the two groups

After World War II, the United Nations was confronted with another escalation in violence between the Arabs and Jews. The UN General Assembly ultimately vote to split the region into two states to appease the two opposing nationalist groups and passed a resolution outlining the creation of an Arab-Palestinian state and a Jewish state, Israel. The resolution was publicly supported by the Zionist leaders but bitterly resented by many Palestinian Arabs and the surrounding Arab states, who felt that the Jews had settled in their territory against the wishes of the Arab majority.

Shortly after the adoption of this resolution in 1948, the surrounding Arab states invaded Israel in an attempt to destroy the newly created Jewish state. These series of military conflicts became known as the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, from which Israel ultimately rose victorious. During this time, over 700,000 Palestinians were forced out of their homes. The majority of Palestinians fled to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, two much smaller pieces of land, while the remainder to Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. These Arab nations, however, refused to absorb these Palestinians into their societies and they were instead settled into refugee camps. In 1949, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) was created with the goal of integrating these refugees into the surrounding Arab countries. Only about 150,000 Palestinians remained in Israel, becoming, in effect, second-class citizens in Israel. The Arab state of Palestine planned by the UN was never formed.

Clashes between Arab and Israeli forces continued to grow with constant wars and military invasions, but tensions reached their peak in the Six-Day War of 1967. The outcome of the 1967 war was disastrous for the invading Arab countries. The conflict created an estimated 250,000 refugees and brought more than one million Palestinians in the occupied territories

under Israeli rule.

In recent years, Israel's policies against Palestinian refugees, including settlement on the West Bank and the blockade on the Gaza Strip, have drawn increasing international criticism. However, Israel still has strong support from the United States. In August of 2018, the U.S. withdrew support from Palestinian refugees by cutting 200 million dollars in aid for the UNRWA, which provides aid to the over 1.5 million Palestinian refugees. The United States criticized the agency for its supposed inefficiency and for placing a majority of its financial burden on the U.S.

Possible Solutions:

One of the major points of dispute in the Palestinian refugee crisis is the "right of return." Defined by a UN resolution in 1948, it declares that refugees should be free to return to their homes in Israel and reclaim lost property. Removal of Palestinian refugees' refugee status would effectively strip them of their "right of return". Palestinians, as well as their supporters, have argued that the right of return is necessary to easing hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians. However, any solution that incorporates the right of return for Palestinian refugees in Israeli territory would face immense backlash and strenuous opposition from Israeli authorities, who fear that allowing such movements would make Jews a minority in Israel.

Considering the controversy of a "right of return" resolution, another possible solution could rely on the creation of a new Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Countries implementing this solution must consider methods for the proper resettlement of Palestinian refugees as well as compensation for those who lost territory and property. But any such action

would require that at least a majority of Palestinians agree to give up their claims to land occupied by Israel, something they are unlikely to do as they have refused such offers in the past.

Countries have also considered relocating of Palestinian refugees in areas outside Israel or the current Palestinian-occupied territories. Such a solution should include plans to compensate countries that host refugees, as these countries would bear the cost of maintaining the refugee population until they became productive and educating a new generation, while likely facing controversy from within their nations.

The ultimate goal should be to find a way for Palestinian refugees to permanently settle and form safe, stable communities. These solutions are just a starting point to stimulate some ideas, but remember--be creative, strategic, and original in your solutions. Good luck!

Questions to Consider:

1. How has the nation you represent historically demonstrated support for either Israel or Palestine?

2. What stance has your nation taken on Palestinian refugees? Do they support their eventual return to the territories they occupied before 1947 or other means of resolving the issue?

3. How closely is your nation linked to major actors in this issue (i.e. the United States, Egypt, etc.)? Has your nation ever criticized or praised that country's behavior on this issue?

4. What role do the major international contributors, like the United States and host countries, play in resolving the refugee crisis? How great of a responsibility do they have in funding and implementing change?

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