



# Surf City XVIII

Huntington Beach High School



3rd SOCHUM

Mass Detention of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang  
&  
Humanitarian Situation in the Gaza Strip

Brandon Schmidt  
Leyna Vu  
Rachel Carr



## Welcome Letter

Dear Delegates,

On behalf of the Huntington Beach High School Model United Nations Program, we would like to welcome you to our virtual Surf City XVIII advanced conference!

Our annual Surf City conference upholds the principles and intended purpose of the United Nations. Delegates can expect to partake in a professional, well-run debate that simulates the very issues that those at the United Nations discuss every day. Both novel and traditional ideas will be shared, challenged, and improved.

It is our hope that all delegates will receive the opportunity to enhance their research, public speaking, and communication skills as they explore the intricacies of global concerns through various perspectives, some of which may be very different from their own. We hope their experiences here give them new insight and values that they can apply outside of the realm of Model UN for the betterment of the world community.

Although we will be entertaining a new style of a virtual conference, we hope all delegates will experience a fruitful and enhancing debate. Please do not hesitate to approach our Secretariat or Staff Members with any questions or concerns that you may have throughout the day. We wish the best to all our participants and hope that they may share a fulfilling experience with us! Enjoy the conference.

Sincerely,

Summer Balentine  
*Secretary-General*

Jenna Ali  
*Secretary-General*

Kayla Hayashi  
*Secretary-General*

Hailey Holcomb  
*Secretary-General*



## Meet the Dias

### Brandon Schmidt

Hello, delegates! My name is Brandon Schmidt, and I look forward to being your head chair for this conference. In addition to being a senior at HBHS, I am currently the Chief Financial Officer of our school's Green Team Environmental Club and a College Board Opportunity Ambassador. When not laboring over an exponential amount of homework, I enjoy sailing, spending time with friends (social distancing this year), and going to the beach. Additionally, I have always loved scuba diving and am currently planning on obtaining my PADI certification in the latter half of 2021. Last but certainly not least, I am a large fan of the jazz/pop genre and can often be found listening to artists like Duke Ellington, Four80East, and L'Impératrice. As your chair, I am excited to see your proposed solutions for the following topics combined with an intrinsic adherence to country policy. Overall, I wish you good luck, and feel free to contact us by email if you have any further inquiries about the conference!

### Leyna Vu

What's up, guys? My name is Leyna Vu, and I will be one of your chairs for this committee! As a senior here at HBHS, I love being involved on campus and hold leadership positions in clubs, such as Link Crew. Additionally, I am the co-District Rep of HBUHSD DiversifyOurNarrative, where our proposal to formally incorporate the voices of BIPOC into our curriculum will be voted on by the school board this December! Outside of school, I am a campaign intern for Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris, who was just re-elected to represent the 74th Assembly District in our State Assembly. Recently, I was nominated for Homecoming Court (after texting people for six hours to put me on the ballot) and am looking to run for Winter Formal, as it has always been an irrational dream of mine to win the crown. In my spare time, I run the HBHS Uno Club as founder and co-President, where we play Uno every other week to destress; feel free to join our Discord: <https://discord.com/invite/AmkUy9u>. Good luck with your papers, and see you all in January!

### Rachel Carr

Hello delegates! Welcome to Surf City MUN. My name is Rachel Carr and I am beyond excited to hear from each and every one of you. I am a Junior at Huntington Beach High School and have been in MUN for three years. A bit about myself is that I love music, especially playing the piano, singing and guitar (although I'm still learning how to play it). I've gone to many music festivals with my mom and we both love all different genres of music. My favorite artists at the current moment are Frank Ocean, Joji and Tyler, the Creator. I also try to make time to compose and write my own music as well. During quarantine I've developed a love for nature and I really enjoy walking to the flower fields near my house to enjoy the outdoors and to watch the sunset. Over the Summer, I love going to the beach to swim in the ocean and surf with my friends; although we might look like total kooks, we have a great time just enjoying the ocean and spending time together. I also enjoy cooking and love to bake desserts for my friends and family. I think you will enjoy researching and learning about our committee topics. We took time and consideration into making them of interest to our delegates, so we hope you enjoy! Happy researching everyone.

**All Papers are due on January 2, 2020 by 11:59pm  
to [surfcity.3rdsch@gmail.com](mailto:surfcity.3rdsch@gmail.com)**



# TOPIC 1: Mass Detention of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang

## BACKGROUND

Over one million Uyghur Muslims within China have been sent to “re-education camps” by the Chinese government, often being sent late at night and without choice.<sup>1</sup> With no media coverage or reporters allowed near these facilities, some have stated they are eerily similar to modern-day concentration camps. The Chinese government has stated that the sole purpose of these camps is to provide new job training and to limit extremism and terrorism, but recently, leaked reports show otherwise. The majority of the population within China is Han, making up for 90% of all Chinese citizens, with the minority being Uyghur Muslims.<sup>2</sup> The Chinese government has a track record of opposing minorities and religion as it may be seen to undermine their communist regime. The Chinese government has been trying to paint the image of these re-education camps as being positive training centers; however, U.S. department reports have classified them as “concentration facilities.”<sup>3</sup> When questioned on the ethics of these facilities, the Chinese government has been sure to emphasize that they are for the unity of China and the greater good. Journalists have not been allowed access to these re-education facilities, and those who do speak to journalists can be sent to prison. Additionally, within the city of Xinjiang, police surveillance is heightened and reporters and locals have not been able to discuss the matter. Serious humanitarian issues claims have risen out of these re-education facilities such as forced abortions, being subject to solitary confinement for months at a time, being shackled, tortured, and much more.<sup>4</sup> It is believed within much of the Xinjiang region that the Uyghur Muslims are linked to Islamic terrorists, statements that have little evidence to be supported.

The Uyghur Muslim people of China have been reported to “disappear” in the night, as they are rounded up by police and taken to camps with no set deadline of when to be released. It is not uncommon for children of parents who have been sent away to these “re-education” camps to be placed in the control of the government and attend kindergartens that children live in, some for years at a time. All these measures are taken with an end goal in the eyes of the Chinese government: a more unified and communist China. In 2017, the number of kindergartens run by the Chinese government more than doubled, during the same time more Uyghur Muslims had begun getting sent to reeducation facilities.<sup>5</sup> Children taken to these facilities do not leave and are to be told their family members were criminals if asked why they cannot return home. All of these protective and secretive measures imposed by the Chinese government, such as not allowing journalists near any of these facilities, poses the question of just how trustworthy China’s claims about the legitimacy of their claims are. As of 2020, the Chinese government has claimed that they are reducing the number of people being sent to these re-education camps; however, monitoring of these facilities has shown they are at a current all-time high.<sup>6</sup> Investigations from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute has shown that it is likely many Uyghur Muslims who have been sent to these re-education facilities were not integrated back into society as promised. Likely, a majority of these Muslims have instead gone to further prison or other facilities.<sup>7</sup>

It has been nearly impossible for reporters to fully investigate many claims and come to a conclusion about what is truly happening in China due to the government officials locking down



areas where these camps are and even harassing and threatening reporters along with deleting footage all as means to limit the amount of information out about these detention facilities.<sup>8</sup> Recently, reports have shown that Uyghur people are being bussed out of their main region of Xinjiang to the east to work in factory towns such as Qingdao, Fuzhou, and Guangzhou—all cities hundreds of miles away with little contact on how to return.<sup>9</sup> It is seemingly clear that Uyghur people within China are also being forced to work labor jobs with no choice of declining. With Xinjiang being one of the heaviest surveillance areas of China with security cameras and advanced monitoring, nations such as the United States have placed sanctions upon certain Chinese companies such as Huawei for committing human rights violations of privacy and using this information to monitor Uyghur people.<sup>10</sup> Huawei denies all claims made against them, stating that they are a third party company.

China recently has allowed a few journalists and reporters to access these vocational education camps due to international pressure. Visitors can see Uyghur people singing and dancing, and when interviewed, stating that they came by choice and are happy to be there.<sup>11</sup> However, this is unlikely as Uyghur people who have fled China after being in these camps have stated that they were threatened if they were to not comply and tell reporters what the Chinese government wanted them to say. The Chinese government advocates for Uyghur people to marry traditional Han people and become more obedient members of their communist society.<sup>12</sup> Many reports of abuse, force, torture, exploitation of labor, and intimidation have emerged out of these facilities, some even classifying the actions of China as a modern-day genocide.

The actions of China have been classified as an attempt of ethnic cleansing due to the sterilization of women, forced re-education camps, and increased surveillance of Uyghur people.<sup>13</sup> This prompted a UN investigation stating there was substantial evidence to support the claims of human rights violations occurring in Xinjiang.<sup>14</sup> As a result, several nations have called upon the UN to place sanctions against China for their actions. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, Uyghur people have been used, possibly by force, to create PPE at Chinese based textile factories that ship worldwide to nations such as the U.S. The Chinese government has been using this forced labor of the Uyghur people without consent.<sup>15</sup>

Approximately 11 million Uyghur people live in Xinjiang, who have historically had difficulties with Beijing. They speak a different language, have different cultural practices, and look physically different than traditional Han Chinese people. The Chinese government has also encouraged Han people to move into Xining and to be favored for competitive jobs. Xinjiang has become one of the most heavily policed areas in the world. With surveillance cameras monitoring homes, having guests over, going out different doors, and even storing/buying more food than usual can all be flagged as suspicious behaviors that are linked to extremism. In just a week of surveillance, the Chinese government flagged over 24,000 Uyghur people, 15,000 of which were sent to re-education camps.<sup>16</sup> The goal of the Chinese government is to stop potential terrorist threats and crime from happening before it occurs; however, this logic has been questioned for good reason, stating that it is discriminatory and inaccurate. This information is concerning as people in Xinjiang have been arrested and thrown into camps despite having committed no crimes. A leaked document from the Chinese government has stated camp workers should limit students' contact with the outside world and monitor activities to limit escapes, leading to questions about the ethics and legitimacy of these facilities.<sup>17</sup>



## UNITED NATIONS INVOLVEMENT

Being at the forefront of humanitarian affairs since its creation, the United Nations has extensively involved itself in the protection of standard freedoms with many bodies and resolutions pertaining to this specific issue. Established in 1993 as a product of resolution A/RES/48/141, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) works to ensure international adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as government cooperation with the UN.<sup>18</sup> Since its creation, the OHCHR has helped to extend the rights of migrants in foreign countries as well as individuals suffering from domestic oppression. Working jointly with the OHCHR, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) has conducted periodic reports upon China, affirming that Uyghur Muslims were “being treated as enemies of the State based on nothing more than their ethno-religious identity.”<sup>19</sup>

Complementary to the OHCHR, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is another body intended to preserve human rights within the global sphere. Operating on the basis of institution-building, the UNHRC conducts periodic reviews of all UN member states to ensure full compliance with humanitarian protocol and the lack of oppressive governmental procedure.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, many international demands urge the immediate UNHRC analysis of Uyghur Muslim mistreatment, something that has been apparent given a diminishing support of China within the UN. Through its recent Resolution 37/23, the HRC promoted future capacity-building and human rights exercises within its member states—a document met with Chinese demand for ‘mutual respect.’<sup>21</sup>

A specialized body of the United Nations boasting 187 member states, the International Labor Organization (ILO) aims to standardize global labor regulations with assistance from national governments and employers.<sup>22</sup> Through its respective 111th and 115th conventions, the ILO banned the discrimination of workers and assured safe laboring environments, both standards that have been ratified by a number of countries. As a UN-based organization, the ILO also promotes Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, detailing justice and humanitarian working conditions for all human beings. Since 2017, a reform protocol has brought significant change to the Organization, with more emphasis upon cooperation with the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDS) in order to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>23</sup> Given the ILO obligation to combat instances of forced labor, many have called upon its assistance in Xinjiang, which has yet to occur. With that being said, China’s ratification of the aforementioned Conventions 111 and 115 indicates the country’s baseline acceptance of ILO provisions.

Last but certainly not least, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has historically persecuted national crimes against humanity, an important factor given how China’s current abuse of Uyghur Muslims is in direct violation of international legislation. Given recent allegations of mass surveillance and possible genocide within Xinjiang presently backed by 14 countries, the ICC has been pressured by the collective international community for the immediate prosecution of China.<sup>24</sup> While yet not confirmed by the ICC, leaked Chinese evidence and mounting international discord over the discriminatory policies against Uyghur Muslims both serve as prime testaments for change in the countries.



### **CASE STUDY: Heavy Surveillance in Xinjiang**

China has been developing one of the most advanced and highly efficient monitoring and surveillance programs in the world.<sup>25</sup> Cameras used by the Chinese government can see up to 4,000 feet away and in towns, such as Xinjiang, have been used to monitor Uyghur people outside of their own homes.<sup>26</sup> This system works by creating a so-called “digital catalog” of the faces of residents to mark and identify civilians and monitor civilian activity within Xinjiang. Such monitoring techniques have been criticized as a form of intimidation, abuse of human rights, and a means to force minorities into compliance with authority.<sup>27</sup>

Throughout China, artificial intelligence cameras are common practice. They are in nearly every building and street, some being able to identify age, gender, person, and most importantly: ethnicity.<sup>28</sup> The company Dahua Technology has distributed over one million of these facial recognition cameras to the Chinese government. Such heavy surveillance can lead to monitoring of where one went and who one was in contact with.<sup>29</sup> The goal of the Chinese government is not only to monitor the public but to also prevent future crimes. This is a problem for Uyghur people in Xinjiang because, with heightened security and surveillance levels, more people are being sent to “re-education camps” for crimes they never committed.<sup>30</sup> There is little evidence to support the accuracy of these claims, and in 2017, 15,000 Uyghur people were forced to attend re-education camps as a result of partaking in suspicious behaviors.<sup>31</sup> With these cameras being able to monitor ethnicity as well, there is more leeway and room for discrimination of minorities and religious individuals to be targeted by the Chinese government.

Additionally, Xinjiang is one of the most heavily policed areas in China.<sup>32</sup> While Xinjiang only counts for 1.5 percent of China’s population, one in every five arrests is made there. This along with the over 1 million residents who have forcefully been sent to “re-education camps” by the Chinese government show clear insight into the situation of heavy surveillance within the region.<sup>33</sup> Surveillance of Uyghur homes along with updated AI technologies, such as face scanning and other forms of surveillance, that have been implemented within Xinjiang have been used to target minority groups such as the Uyghur Muslims, conducting over 500,000 facial scans of this minority group in one month alone.<sup>34</sup> A broad list of activities created by the Chinese government, such as meeting with new people or fasting for religious reasons, can be classified as a sign of terrorist extremism and lead to being sent to a camp.

Another concerning fact is that with new Chinese identification tactics, Uyghur and Han people have been required to enter stores by scanning and identification cards that can be flagged by the government for being an unsafe individual.<sup>35</sup> Monitoring people in such a manner allows for unequal mistreatment and prejudice against minority groups, such as the Uygur Muslims. By using heavy policing within this region, reporting on the “re-education camps” in Xinjiang has been difficult due to excessive checkpoints for drivers and additional screening to travel.<sup>36</sup> Uyghur people have pulled aside at these checkpoints at a drastically higher rate than traditional Han Chinese people. This form of consistent monitoring has been used as a form of intimidation and threat to the Uyghur Muslims to silence them on the occurrences within these “re-education camps” and to limit any question of authority.<sup>37</sup>

Some have called the over-policing and monitoring of Xinjiang, China as an abuse of human rights. The presence of police within Xinjiang is unlike any other region of China.<sup>38</sup> China has invested billions of dollars annually into the further development of facial recognition and surveillance technologies. With cameras being able to monitor every person’s activity for up to a week prior, a basic checkpoint stop can alert guards of a person’s recent activities, family



ties, and previous actions in a matter of seconds.<sup>39</sup> This heightened surveillance has sparked concern from many nations due to the potential of expanding this technology worldwide—with nations such as the United States arguing they need to put a stop to it and increase the ongoing trade war.<sup>40</sup>

The Chinese police have been known to question and interrogate children within the region to get information out of the area. Additionally, mosques are monitored by consistent policing, and security cameras line every street with multiple angles at a time.<sup>41</sup> The Chinese government has its own manufacturing company for proliferating the development of such surveillance technologies known as the China Electronics Technology Corporation.<sup>42</sup> This corporation ran by the government has been used to monitor Uyghur people and other Muslims within China at a much higher rate than traditional Han people, making this surveillance another form of discrimination.<sup>43</sup> The prevalence systems can monitor residence and their exact location while tracking their every step. By simply inserting an image of a resident's face or someone who has recently been in the area, their exact location can be located along with the trail they took to get there and their previous actions.<sup>44</sup>

With the increase of Uyghur Muslims being sent to “re-education camps” the Chinese government can use these salience systems to monitor and keep track of Uyghur people after they have been released from these facilities.<sup>45</sup> This can make the spread of information to reporters and foreign investigators not being able to fully understand the actions of the Chinese government.<sup>46</sup> With the consistent threat of being sent to another “re-education camp” or even governmental prison for talking to reporters on such a topic, victims often remain silent about the injustices that have occurred to them. Reporters have been susceptible to having a majority of their footage deleted, and it is illegal for residents to speak to reports in many parts of Xinjiang without consent from the Chinese government.<sup>47</sup> All these actions combined have made understanding this issue on an international level more difficult to conceptualize. By doing so, the Chinese government had been able to keep much of the situation with Xinjiang, China behind closed doors.

The overwhelming amount of heightened surveillance and monitoring of Uyghur Muslims within Xinjiang has been classified as a human rights violation and has been used as leverage into threatening minority people into complying with authorities.<sup>48</sup> Mosques which once operated freely are kept under 24/7 security watch, homes are under surveillance, crimes are predicted before committed, and human rights violations continue to proliferate. As a means of intimidation and coercion into compliance within the region of Xinjiang, the Chinese government has converted the once-bustling town into a deserted prison state with constant monitoring, policing, and checkpoints, all as a form of discrimination and oppression towards the beliefs and experiences of Uyghur Chinese people. By spending billions of dollars annually on improving this tracing and surveillance technology, the Chinese government has successfully created one of the most advanced security systems in the world within Xinjiang, with Uyghur Muslims and other minorities often paying the price for it.



### QUESTIONS

1. Does your nation classify the re-education camps in Xinjiang as an ethnic cleansing?
2. How much surveillance and policing should be accepted before it is considered an infringement on human rights?
3. What is your nation's existing trade relationship with China, and how might this influence its policy toward Chinese actions?
4. In what way does your nation regard refugees and their assimilation into cultural norms?
5. How can nations work to provide justice to the Uyghur people and hold their fellow nations accountable for blatant violations of human rights in the future?
6. How can nations work to combat rampant islamophobia prevalent within government systems?



## TOPIC 2: Humanitarian Situation in the Gaza Strip

### BACKGROUND

Following the Ottoman Empire's collapse, the League of Nations commissioned British rule of the Palestine region (which included the West Bank and Gaza Strip) until 1948. During this period, the United Nations issued its controversial Resolution 181, which would effectively divide the territory into separate Arab and Israeli states while also ensuring the creation of a Jewish 'home,' a topic outlined in Britain's 1917 Balfour Declaration.<sup>49</sup> While held in high regard by Israelis, the plan outraged surrounding Arab nations, who promptly argued that self-determination should play a role in the decision. Such disdain ultimately led to the instigation of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, pitting the nations of Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan against the newly-created Israel. Following the conflict's conclusion in 1949, a 25-mile expanse of land (presently known as the Gaza Strip) was granted to Egypt, who would continue to possess it for approximately seven more years.<sup>50</sup>

While in control of the Gaza Strip, Egypt did not consider the region's inhabitants eligible for citizenship or immigration, leading to a long period of neglect. Sustained by UNRWA aid, these individuals began to develop a particular hatred for Israel and would ultimately be considered Fedayees (Arab guerilla forces).<sup>51</sup> During the Second Arab-Israeli war in 1956, Israel was able to momentarily seize the strip before returning it to Egypt following UN disapproval. After a decade of Arab attacks and further escalation, the 1967 Six-Day war ensued, in which Israel once again asserted control of the Gaza Strip. Despite Israel's establishment of control in the area, continual hostility by both Fedayees and Palestinian refugees led to many disturbances. Soon, significant Palestinian uprisings and violence led to what has been considered the intifadah ('shaking off') of Israeli rule.<sup>52</sup>

Many years later, pressure from UN Security Council Resolution 242 (detailing Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory) ultimately led to a peaceful transition of the Gaza Strip from Israeli governance to the Palestinian National Authority (PA) in 1994, a body governed entirely by the Palestinian population.<sup>53</sup> While attempts for peace between Israel and the PA persisted, a second intifada occurred just six years later, followed by Israeli forces' permanent departure from the area. During 2006, elections deemed Hamas as the victorious political party over the Fatah-led PA, which had historically held influence over the Gaza Strip. Being classified as a terrorist organization by the European Union and the U.S., Hamas quickly expelled Fatah from the strip. This event soon resulted in a number of sanctions upon Hamas as well as the complete shutdown of Israel's borders near the region. While a truce between Hamas and Israel was attempted in 2008, mutual accusations and Hamas rocket launch quickly deteriorated any hopes of longstanding peace.

During 2014, conflict further inflamed when three teenagers were kidnapped from Israel, prompting the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) to initiate a raid upon the Gaza Strip. As one would expect, this measure was met with hostility from Hamas, who began to fire rockets at the attackers. In addition to inflicting a combined 2170 deaths, this event garnered further Palestinian support of Hamas and prolonged the emergence of conflict in the region.<sup>54</sup> Violence between both Israel and Palestine remains utterly rampant to this day, contributing to numerous civilian casualties from both sides as well as a rift in the international community.



Due to the sheer number of people living in the Gaza Strip, Hamas is known to intentionally store rockets in densely populated civilian centers, making it impossible for Israeli forces to conduct an aerial strike without causing egregious civilian casualties. The humanitarian crisis within Gaza stems from the blockade enforced by Israel since 2007 limiting access to basic provisions, such as water and electricity. The rationale behind this blockade is to prevent Hamas from constructing rockets and mortars used to launch projectiles into Israel. Although this was the intended purpose of the blockade, Israel's tight regulation of products entering Gaza is recently meant to undermine the political presence of Hamas in Gaza, as the nation expected civilians to plead with Hamas to yield to Israel or lose interest in the faction and side with a more moderate one willing to cooperate with them. Using the civilians themselves as pawns in a much broader political game of chess, the humanitarian situation that has resulted from being unable to leave the region, stalling economic prosperity, and ultimately separating the Palestinians from uniting in light of these trying times has caused immense suffering for those trapped within Gaza. Due to the lack of building materials being accepted into the region, key industries, such as construction, are declining with very little currently being done to reverse this alarming trend. The transfer of agricultural goods from Gaza, such as strawberries and miscellaneous vegetables, to the West Bank and Israel is also completely banned, diminishing exports to less than three percent of pre-blockade levels. The severity of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza has left 80 percent of the region dependent on humanitarian aid administered by the international community with 42 percent of the population unemployed.<sup>55</sup> In addition to the lack of control those living in Gaza have over their economy, the blockade has made it nearly impossible for healthcare practitioners to administer quality care to their patients. Education in Gaza has also severely declined with the restriction of movement not only in and out of the region but within.

In response to this blockade in Gaza, Hamas dug tunnels beneath the region and into Egypt to bypass confrontation with Israeli border guards. Through these tunnels, not only was Hamas able to source weapons and materials for rockets but citizens of Gaza were able to support themselves with items that normally wouldn't have made it through the blockade. Due to control of the Egyptian government shifting from the Muslim Brotherhood to Egyptian military forces, however, major tunnels were rendered unusable, leaving Hamas unsupplied and civilians in Gaza to suffer. Hearing of this new development, Israel is considering a ground attack to close the smaller tunnels still used by Hamas and Gaza civilians. While pathways controlled by Israel and tunnels allowing for passage to and from Egypt are more reliable passageways used to secure provisions into Gaza, the Rafah, an off-ground crossing heavily monitored by the Egyptian government due to general indifference in happenings within the Gaza Strip, has become so instrumental to Hamas to the point where they were unwilling to accept the terms stated in a ceasefire agreement proposed by the Egyptian government, which had no mention of enabling usage of the Rafah.<sup>56</sup>

If everlasting peace is to be achieved, one must also account for Israel's complaints of unequal treatment within the United Nations. As the country argues, many IDF campaigns are simply measures of self-defense following Palestinian instigations of conflict. With an average of 20 annual General Assembly resolutions being targeted at Israel, the subject of alleged UN discrimination and their continued occurrence requires a clear analysis from the international community.<sup>57</sup>



### UNITED NATIONS INVOLVEMENT

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) focuses on improving the quality of education, access to healthcare (including the screening and treatment of non-communicable diseases), and the building of infrastructure (such as schools and shelters) within the Gaza Strip.<sup>58</sup> While also working to ensure food security and cash assistance within the region, the UNRWA is unique in the sense it has been immensely successful in promoting gender equality and the fundamental rights of both Israeli and Palestinian refugees in the past 71 years since it was founded.<sup>59</sup> There are currently 22 UNRWA health centers in Gaza, where staff are trained to not only counsel and provide psychosocial support to Palestinian refugees but improve the effectiveness of equitable healthcare in Gaza through eHealth, an electronic database storing the health records of patients based on a model issued by the Family Health Team prioritizing patients.<sup>60</sup> Critics of the UNRWA may argue the body prioritizes short-term as opposed to long-term relief for civilians of the Gaza Strip, citing instances such as how their School for Excellence program providing educational opportunities and meals for students has become so popular to the point where teachers now have to work 16-25 hour shifts in an overcrowded classroom environment.<sup>61</sup> The lack of viable long-term solutions regarding this issue is also highlighted in the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza, where state actors convened to discuss short-term economic solutions with a focus on Palestinian inhabitants of the Gaza Strip.<sup>62</sup>

In an effort to rebuild the Gaza Strip, the UN has agreed on funding 20 building projects, but due to the strengthening of the blockade by Israel upon discovery of tunnels beneath the Gaza Strip, only one project remained: the construction of a bridge. In 2009, S/RES/1860 was passed in an effort to improve the circulation of goods to and from Gaza by negotiating an immediate ceasefire between Israeli forces and Hamas.<sup>63</sup> Resolution 1860 has generated plenty of controversy within Israel, as the nation is expected to lift the blockade on Gaza in exchange for protection from rocket attacks conducted by Hamas, which they felt should be a given since one shouldn't be forced to do something in exchange for protection from direct attacks.<sup>64</sup> The Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM) issued by the UN Office of Project Services (UNOPS), however, was successful in serving as a temporary peace agreement between Israel and Palestine to ensure the circulation of building materials for reconstruction. The GRM, however, neglects meaningful reconstruction of the Gaza Strip by essentially giving Israel full control over the reconstruction process, institutionalizing the existing blockade by making it so that Israel is in charge of approving suppliers of building materials for these projects.<sup>65</sup>

In September 2020, WHO has temporarily taken over the process of issuing travel permits to increase access to medical care. Travel permits are required by Palestinian inhabitants of the Gaza Strip and West Bank to receive medical help in either Israel or East Jerusalem due to how poor the medical infrastructure within Palestine is.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OCHA) is responsible for accumulating data on the current situation in the Gaza Strip to streamline the effectiveness of implementation that is to occur within the region.<sup>67</sup>



### **CASE STUDY: Food Insecurity**

Food insecurity stems from a variety of economic factors preventing consumers from using their purchasing power to obtain food from the market. The unemployment rate in Gaza, for example, has recently increased by three percent due to salaries being cut or distributed on an irregular basis as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, making it harder for consumers to generate the income necessary to support members of their respective households.<sup>68</sup> Although 69 percent of families in Gaza are reported to have received some form of food assistance according to the 2018 Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey, over 68 percent of families have also reported being severely or moderately food insecure.<sup>69</sup> Due to declining employment rates and poverty rampant in the Gaza Strip as % of Gaza inhabitants report to be living beneath the poverty line, sustainability in Gaza's agricultural industry is declining as well. Because farmers cannot sufficiently water their fields due to water deficiencies, farmers tend to produce lower crop yields, leading to lower incomes, and making it harder for them to realistically water all of their fields with the very little income they generate. Fields that remain vacant are known to harbor poor soil qualities, damaging future usage of the land.

Operation Cast Lead, a military offensive occurring from 2008 to 2009 resulting in 5,380 civilian deaths as well as the destruction of land and infrastructure, is also responsible for disrupting agricultural developments in Gaza. Operation Cast Lead is attributed to destroying 46 percent of agricultural infrastructure such as greenhouses, exacerbating food insecurity in Gaza from 56 percent of the population to 75 percent of the population as a result of the Israeli attack alone. In addition to the aforementioned issues, the Separation Wall is responsible for crippling agricultural activity and continuing to damage food production. The Separation Wall is 708 kilometers long and intended to separate the Gaza Strip from the West Bank and Israel, limiting farmer accessibility to land. In addition to limiting land access to farmers, Israel controls both aquifers in the West Bank and water sources within the Gaza Strip. Gazans are currently prohibited from constructing wells or water pipelines without permission from the Israeli Civil Administration, forcing farmers to use tanked water to cultivate their fields, thus raising the amount of money needed to produce agricultural surpluses.<sup>70</sup>

Furthermore, the lack of electricity in Gaza prevents individuals from being able to refrigerate the foods they've obtained from the market, contributing to malnutrition due to the high composition of preservatives used to keep non-perishable and canned foods edible.<sup>71</sup> Beginning from 2008, 80 percent of Gazans reported having received 80 percent of their calories from cereals, sugars, and oils. Likewise, decreasing consumption of poultry has contributed to a 60 percent increase in underweight children and an 11 percent increase in anemia for infants between 9-12 months. In addition to the growing presence of medical conditions stemming from food insecurity, malnutrition is also known to affect mothers and increase the infant mortality rate in the Gaza Strip from 22.4 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2015 to 22.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2018.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, nutrient deficiencies during childhood (both permanent and temporary) are linked to permanently lowered cognitive processing in later years. Because malnutrition contributes to reduced cognitive development, youth in the Gaza Strip tend to receive lower grades and test scores in addition to increased behavioral problems, exacerbating both poverty rates and economic issues in Gaza. Food insecurity may also place further stress on the healthcare sector, contributing to overcrowding in medical centers and highlighting challenges to the existing quality of care administered by Gazan healthcare practitioners, such as fatigue.



Because of how Gaza tends to have a smaller private sector due to the prevalence of small businesses within the region, these businesses tend to be among the most impacted by the blockade and high animosity within the strip. As a result of these factors and the lack of economic independence Gazans have over their private sector, the bulk of food assistance in Gaza is sourced from external humanitarian aid. The cache of humanitarian aid allocated to help alleviate food insecurity in the Gaza Strip, however, is being depleted at an alarming rate and may continue to deplete due to the severity of the situation in the Gaza Strip. The World Food Programme (WFP) has established two categories of non-refugee food-insecure households: chronic poor and new poor. The chronic poor households are typically headed by mothers, the elderly, and the chronically ill due to how these households lack a male breadwinner and means to generate income while also relying on high levels of external humanitarian aid to feed their families. The new poor include farmers who are unable to generate their own income due to the aforementioned factors, including inaccessibility to markets and the loss of workers.

Adding onto the plight of both farmers and small businesses in providing access to food for Gazans, buffer zones restrict fishing to only three nautical miles offshore. According to the 1993 Oslo Accords attempting to build peace between Israel and Palestine by getting the two nations to recognize each other, fishermen are legally allowed to fish up to 20 nautical miles beyond the shoreline.<sup>73</sup> Fishing beyond 20 nautical miles will lead to one's inevitable arrest by the Israeli military. These buffer zones are typically situated along areas with high densities of Gazans, posing a direct danger to civilians due to constantly being shot at by Israeli military forces.<sup>74</sup> The presence of these buffer zones also limits agricultural activity in the region due to how land used for agricultural purposes is often situated within these buffer zones. Issues with the management of sewage, e.g. the inability of Gazans to construct facilities safely managing waste and runoff due to the lack of building materials entering the region, also make the waters outside Gaza highly polluted with nitrite and chlorides, rendering fishing a dangerous activity nonetheless. The Coastal Aquifer, the only source of freshwater in the Gaza Strip, is also contaminated with various chemicals and compounds due to the illegal use of pesticides and fertilizers by Israeli farms.<sup>75</sup>

Import regulations also contribute to limiting the circulation of food from external sources, heightening food insecurity in the strip. Because the Gaza Strip currently lacks access to airports or coastal ports, everything bound to enter the Gaza Strip must go through either Israel, Jordan, or Egypt. The Karni Terminal is the only entryway for deliveries going into Gaza, and UN trucks are not permitted in the region. Due to the blockade, all goods are inspected by Israeli border guards before they enter the region. These inspections tend to be expensive as well as time-consuming with how these containers tend to be stuck at Israeli ports and each container amounting to \$58 per inspection, not accounting for additional charges on top of the inspection fee. Additionally, Israel has enforced a policy of inspecting five containers per day with a maximum of 20 containers per week.<sup>76</sup>

To sufficiently address the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, nations must consider the state of food security in the region. Food security is a complex issue combining various economic and political factors while challenging Gazan healthcare systems to remedy the effects of a poor diet. With barriers preventing Gazans from locally sourcing their own food and humanitarian aid being unable to sufficiently feed the vast majority of households, it is only a matter of time before the Gaza Strip is uninhabitable.



## QUESTIONS

1. Does your country recognize Palestine as a nation?
2. What role should the international community play in the conflict of Gaza?
3. How does your country view Israel's military action towards Palestinian individuals?
4. Does your nation believe in the alleged UN discrimination of Israel? Why or why not?
5. In a historical context, has your country favored Hamas or Fatah (the PA) controlling the Gaza Strip?
6. What is your country's policy on the IDF and its justification of military campaigns?



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