



# NOVICE 43

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## HUNTINGTON BEACH HIGH SCHOOL



**1st DISEC**  
Airstrikes in the Middle East

Sophie Jin-Ngo  
Jake Alvarez  
Noah Salama

# Welcome Letter

Dear Delegates,

On behalf of the Huntington Beach High School Model United Nations Program, we would like to welcome you to our Novice 43 conference!

Our annual Novice 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.

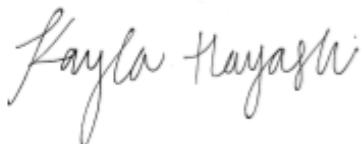
Although we will be entertaining a new style of a virtual conference, we hope all delegates will experience a fruitful and enhancing debate. Please do not hesitate to approach our Secretariat or Staff Members with any questions or concerns that you may have throughout the day. We wish the best to all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

Sincerely,



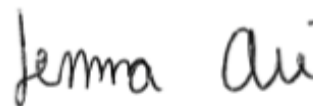
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**Summer Balentine**  
*Secretary-General*



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**Kayla Hayashi**  
*Secretary-General*



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**Jenna Ali**  
*Secretary-General*



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**Hailey Holcomb**  
*Secretary-General*

## Meet the Dias

### Sophie Jin-Ngo

Hi all! My name is Sophie and I am honored to serve as one of your chairs for Novice! I am currently a junior at Huntington and I have been in the MUN program for all three years. I can't wait to hear all your policy proposals and speeches. Remembering one of my first conferences freshman year, I met so many incredible delegates from a variety of neighboring schools. What was most fascinating was the plethora of unique ideas, specifically tailored to each representative's nation. Think debate but on a global stage. I am so thrilled you will all have a chance to experience this. Beyond Model UN, I play doubles for the girls HBHS tennis team, my favorite show is Criminal Minds, and I love rocky road ice cream. Hope to see you all there! :)

### Jake Alvarez

Hello delegates! My name is Jake Alvarez and I'm thrilled to be one of your chairs for HBHS Novice 2021. This is my third year in MUN at HBHS, and it has provided me with valuable skills and confidence that I wouldn't be able to acquire from any other activity. I attended HBHS Novice during my freshman year and had a blast debating and collaborating with other delegates, and I am so excited for you guys to have that same experience, even though we'll be taking part in the conference from home. Aside from MUN, I am a goalkeeper on the HBHS soccer team, and also enjoy binge-watching Survivor and Modern Family during my free time. I'm excited to see everyone's faces via Zoom and hear some great debate about this topic. See you there!

### Noah Salama

Hello Delegates, My name is Noah Salama and I cannot wait to see you all in committee. This is also my third year in HBHS MUN and it quickly became my favorite class at school my Freshman year. My favorite MUN experience was attending the National High School MUN Conference just less than a month ago, although it was unfortunately online. Outside of high school and MUN, I love to play bass guitar and eat Raising Cane's. I love cats and actually have four of them, of which you will see suddenly jump onto my desk in front of the camera during committee. I look forward to hearing the solutions you all bring to the table!

**All Papers are due on April 18th, 2021 by 11:59pm to**  
**[1stdisecnovice@gmail.com](mailto:1stdisecnovice@gmail.com)**

# Airstrikes in the Middle East

## BACKGROUND

Airstrikes are a military technique in which aircrafts are used to conduct combat operations in order to fulfill a military objective. Aircrafts used in airstrikes consist of fighter jets, bombers, helicopters, and most recently, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), which deploy missiles, explosives, and firearms to conduct their operations. In recent years, the development of UAVs for military purposes has had an immense effect on airstrikes, particularly within the Middle East. The MQ-9 Reaper, for example, is a military UAV that is completely remotely-operated (via humans or artificial intelligence) and can launch AGM-144 Hellfire missiles, which can cause large amounts of property damage and casualties. Even though these drones can cost up to \$1.4 million according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, the MQ-9 Reaper is incredibly advantageous because no human lives are at risk during the operations. Due to the rapid advancement of technology, particularly within the UAV industry, airstrikes have become methods of warfare that are highly debated by the international community because they inflict large amounts of damage and casualties with few repercussions.

In the Middle East, there are several prominent international conflicts that contribute to the use of airstrikes in the region. Conflict between the United States and Iranian militias has caused the deployment of airstrikes as recently as February 25, 2021, where American President Joe Biden approved the deployment of seven 500-pound bombs by F-15 fighter jets in Syria, killing 17 individuals and destroying several facilities used by Iran-backed militias<sup>1</sup>. These airstrikes were a violent response to missile attacks in Erbil, Iraq on February 15, 2021, which were initiated by Iranian-backed militias and killed several U.S. service members and civilians<sup>2</sup>. These airstrikes are a prime example of how airstrikes in the Middle East contribute to ongoing conflict within the region, as airstrikes often incite more airstrikes from the opposition. Another international conflict that contributes to the use of airstrikes in the Middle East is the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, which was launched in 2014 by the United States, and has since gained support from 82 U.N. member states. The Global Coalition has conducted over 24,000 airstrikes in the Middle East, with airstrikes occurring as recently as January 2021, when an American airstrike killed Abu Yasser, the commander of ISIS, in response to an ISIS suicide bombing in Baghdad several days prior<sup>3</sup>. Airstrikes conducted by the Global Coalition are an example of airstrikes aimed at reducing terrorist influence in the Middle East, as members of the Global Coalition such as the United States, France, and the United Kingdom conduct airstrikes in the Middle East in order to prevent ISIS from conducting terrorist attacks in the region. In Syria, airstrikes are caused because of the Syrian Civil War, a conflict involving the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. In Douma in 2018, Assad used fighter jets to dump chemical weapons on Syrian citizens living in Douma, causing 50 civilian casualties<sup>4</sup>. Assad's deliberate violations of international law incited responses from the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, who sent aircrafts to launch missiles aimed at destroying Syrian chemical weapons production facilities. The airstrikes in response to the Douma airstrikes are a prime example of airstrikes that can be used for beneficial purposes, as the missiles caused no casualties, yet aimed to limit Assad's ability to conduct violent attacks on Syrian citizens. In Yemen, over 20,100 airstrikes have been conducted since 2014 by a Saudi-led coalition that is aiming to restore the

government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, who was overthrown by Houthi rebels in 2015<sup>5</sup>. Deescalating the negative impact of these airstrikes is of extreme importance, as approximately 6,800 innocent civilians have been killed as a result of these airstrikes<sup>6</sup>. Airstrikes in Yemen display one example of the political motives of nations that conduct airstrikes in the Middle East, as the nations in the coalition conduct airstrikes because they desire the government of the previous Yemeni President to be restored. These international conflicts display the various motives of nations that conduct airstrikes in the Middle East, and what incentives may be necessary in order to reduce the negative impact of airstrikes conducted in the Middle East.

In order to properly mitigate airstrikes in the Middle East, the effectiveness of international law must be taken into consideration. Widely considered a failure by the international community, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 2013, with the aim of regulating the international trade of dangerous weapons. However, in regards to airstrikes, the ATT failed to recognize UAVs as one of the categories of weapons regulated by the treaty in Article 2.1 of the ATT, which allows nations to maneuver around the ambiguous drone-related regulations of the ATT. Another aspect of international law that must be addressed is the loopholes by which nations avoid punishments for unlawful airstrikes. One example of these loopholes is Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, which states that an act of force is not a violation of international law if it is a legitimate act of self-defense. This ambiguity results in many nations claiming that their airstrikes were an act of self-defense, as was successfully used by the United States to avoid punishment after conducting an airstrike in Baghdad during 2020 that killed 10 individuals. In order to effectively mitigate airstrikes in the Middle East, nations must address the current state of international law, and how it can be improved upon in order to better regulate airstrike usage internationally.

Another prominent issue regarding airstrikes in the Middle East is civilian casualties. Between 2010-2020, approximately 2,200 civilians have been killed due to U.S. airstrikes in Pakistan<sup>7</sup>. Airstrikes are commonly used to target political figures, military leaders, and military facilities of opposing nations, however, many civilian casualties often result from the airstrikes. This is largely due to the type of weapons used in the airstrike, as rockets and other types of explosives deal lethal damage within a large radius, which increases the probability of civilians being injured or killed. For example, in a January 2019 airstrike by the Global Coalition in Syria, 11 civilians were killed and much property was destroyed. Considering that the Global Coalition's airstrikes have killed approximately 7,000 civilians in Iraq and Syria since 2014, the issue of civilian casualties must be addressed by the international community in order to protect the human rights of civilians in accordance with international human rights law<sup>8</sup>.

Considering the global market for military UAVs is expected to reach \$21.8 billion by 2026, the global demand for military drones is rapidly increasing, and the market must be regulated in order to ensure that these dangerous weapons do not end up in the wrong hands. In 2010, only 60 nations had access to military UAV technology, while in 2019, that number rose to approximately 100 nations<sup>9</sup>. Several international alliances have attempted to address this issue, such as the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), which is an alliance formed between nations whose main goal is to control the exports of dangerous military technologies such as military UAVs, missiles, and explosives, that may be used to conduct airstrikes. While alliances like the MTCR have shown success, there is still a need for effective, comprehensive measures to regulate the sale of dangerous weapons internationally.

## UNITED NATIONS ACTION

Calling for a de-escalation in airstrikes across all regions of the Middle East, the United Nations condemns all acts of ongoing violence that have targeted healthcare facilities and workers. As civilian casualties add up due to the coalition of the US-led military fighting groups such as ISIS, the army takes all the essential precautions to minimize and avoid casualties; a requirement under the international humanitarian law<sup>10</sup>. Within the past year, various branches of the United Nations, primarily the Disarmament and International Security, as well as the Arab League have met a total of 41 times in order to address the conflicts in Syria and Yemen<sup>11</sup>, which are escalated by the relentless bombing of foreign nations with ulterior motives<sup>12</sup>. Firstly, by establishing the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF), the UN has attempted to coordinate military efforts with other countries who have been administering military personnel and operations in Syria<sup>13</sup>. While efforts like these were made to decrease the amount of airstrikes through the Middle East, a program that ultimately started an escalation was the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) which served to implement more airstrikes throughout the region - significantly increasing bombing in the area. Citizens around the area applauded the fact that many of these strikes hit ISIS fighters or bases, causing relatively little to no civilian harm.

Furthermore, with Syria's capability of chemical airstrikes and weapons, the Security Council as well as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) rejected a proposition by the Russian Federation to castigate such acts of aggression by countries such as the United States and its allies with the suspected use of chemical-air weapons, even with provocation from the Secretary General to stand by the principle of the international law. A proposed but failed resolution document prohibited the United States from using any force or violations of international law such as airstrikes. A successful resolution the UN has called into action is Resolution 2401 which targeted ground offensives, shelling, and airstrikes<sup>14</sup>. Calling a council meeting on the implementation of a ceasefire throughout Syria, as well as urging parties in the conflict to "fulfil their obligation to end the fighting<sup>15</sup>." Additionally, having the responsibility and obligation to guarantee public wellbeing, the UN created the The Arms Trade Treaty, which offers governments advancements to the residents of the country as well as supplying them with human security. With this in mind, it guarantees that arms in private possession are prohibited from entering illegal circuits and utilizes the scope of weaponry; obtained through public creation or import.

In addressing the parallel crisis in Yemen<sup>16</sup>, the United Nations security council met on September of 2019, in which two resolutions were submitted by the collaborating nations of Belgium, Germany, and Kuwait as well as collaborators China and the Russian Federation<sup>17</sup>, both of these resolution documents sought to extend the six month ceasefire from foreign affairs occurring in Yemen against the Houthi militia and terrorist organization. A critical weakness was exposed in the composition of both of these resolution drafts, seeing as neither of them provided any resource or solution to quell the conflict and widespread terrorism in Yemen<sup>18</sup>. Through the rejection of these two resolution documents, the United Nations has made it evident that the decrease of bombing of Middle Eastern nations cannot occur until there is a sufficient solution to suppressing terrorism in the subject region.

## CASE STUDY: Assassination of Qasem Soleimani

On January 3, 2020, the United States conducted an airstrike at the Baghdad International Airport in Iraq. The airstrike killed 10 Iranian military officials, the most prominent of which being Qasem Soleimani, an Iranian military general and leader of Iran's Quds Force, which was deemed to be a terrorist organization by the United States in 2019<sup>19</sup>. The airstrike involved the use of an American MQ-9 Reaper drone, which launched Hellfire missiles onto Qasem Soleimani and the other Iranian officials, causing 10 casualties in total. Following the bombing of Iran, the United States was subjected to the laws of the United Nations Charter.

Article 51 of the UN Charter<sup>20</sup> in regards to international law vividly defends the "inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs" against another member of the United Nations. The question that posed controversial in trial was whether the airstrike against Iranian officials was enacted in self defense. Many nations in the Arab League<sup>21</sup> and allies of Iran deemed the strike illegal and a violation of article 41 of the UN Charter pertaining to war crimes. The United States used the excuse that they were acting in self defense of potential future conflicts, by striking first, which raises controversy as to whether it was an instigator of war, or genuinely a ploy to defend their sovereign nation.

The bombing of Qasem Soleimani and 9 other military/government officials surfaces the concern for more pertinent and unyielding international laws within the United Nations, seeing as the previous right to "self defense" in Article 51 only serves the purpose of being consistently ambiguous. Whether the drone strike against Iran is justifiable by the international community, it is doubtedly necessary that laws pertaining to drone and bombing strikes within the Middle East must be reconstructed in their inherent nature and application in the case that it is violated.

## QUESTIONS

1. How have recent technological developments such as autonomous and artificial intelligence (AI) weapons affected airstrikes in the Middle East?
2. Has there been a rise in terrorist attacks proportional to the rise in drone strikes?
3. What specific actions has the United Nations taken in regards to airstrikes in the Middle East? Have these actions been successful?
4. What are the motives of nations that conduct airstrikes in the Middle East? How can these ulterior international motives be quelled in order to reduce the amount of airstrikes conducted?
5. What is your nation's stance on airstrikes in the Middle East? Has your nation been involved in any airstrikes?
6. Does your nation have any specific policies or national law regarding airstrikes or the use of weapons involved in airstrikes? Have they shown success? Can similar policies be implemented in the Middle East in order to reduce the adverse effects of airstrikes?

7. How can existing forms of international law be amended, and new forms of international law be created, in order to better regulate the sale and use of weapons (such as military UAVs) that may be used to conduct airstrikes?
8. What can be done in order to reduce the amount of civilian casualties caused by airstrikes? Are there any forms of international law that specifically address civilian casualties?
9. What can be done on an international level in order to ensure that nations that conduct unlawful airstrikes are brought to justice?
10. What can be done in order to protect nations from unlawful airstrikes, such as those conducted by terrorist organizations? How can nations prevent terrorist organizations from gaining access to these dangerous weapons in the first place?

### ENDNOTES

1. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/25/us/politics/biden-syria-airstrike-iran.html>
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