



United Nations General Assembly

Welcome delegates to the 2nd annual Charger Model United Nations Conference. As your Dais, we are honored you are here to participate and grow as delegates, and we hope to pass onto you, our own experiences that we have acquired with the Model United Nations program at the University of New Haven.

Your Chair will be Doug Gordon, a sophomore National Security Major at the University of New Haven who has participated in the University's Model United Nations program for two semesters. Your Co-Chair will be Shannon Miller, a junior Criminal Justice major at the University who participated in the Model UN program for a semester. We encourage friendly participation and appropriate interaction amongst delegates who are willing to learn from one another, collaborate, and build off of one another's ideas.

The topic before the General Assembly is:

Addressing the Influence of Social Media on Human Rights

It is important to remember that being a delegate means being able to accurately represent the actions of the United Nations: to remain in character and embody the delegates who represent the country that you have been assigned. This means you should focus on national policies that are key to the structure of your country. Before the conference begins, be sure to research these policies as well as to research partnerships your country shares with other Member States. While the United Nations encourages collaboration between all nations, it is important to understand what your country strongly believes and the actions that your country is a part of. Please also remember to remain diplomatic and inclusive of other delegates you work together throughout the conference. We look forward to leading you in the General Assembly and are excited to see the ideas you come up with.

This conference will take place on December 9th, 2018 and will be run with two types of sessions: Moderated Caucus and Unmoderated Caucus. We suggest that you make yourself familiar with the rules and procedures of the conference prior to attending. We ask that you remain professional through the duration of this conference and that you all remain cooperative and energetic through the ongoing debate. Once again, we are excited to have you all here and look forward to seeing the extraordinary work you present.

Committee Overview

The General Assembly was founded as one of the primary organs of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 in New York City. The General Assembly is of utmost importance because it is the main organ where deliberation and policy-making happen within the United Nations. It is the representative organ of the United Nations, which is made up of 193 Member States. The overarching goal for the General Assembly is to provide a forum that allows multilateral discussion on international issues, which include topics such as peace and security. Decisions on important questions regarding peace and security, the admission of new members, and budgetary matters require a vote of two-thirds while other decisions are met by a simple majority. Each country has one vote during voting bloc. The General Assembly has accomplished a great amount since its creation in 1945. While there has not been much accomplished in the area of social media due to its recent rise to prominence, this leaves a great deal of room for creativity on the subject matter.



Statement of the Problem

The topic we will be focusing on is addressing the influence of social media on human rights. Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have become essential to free expression in the digital age. Freedom of expression is a human right which is of the utmost importance, however, there has been censorship of these social media networks. This is problematic considering that all global citizens should have the opportunity to express themselves in a way where they will not be punished. If this problem is not addressed now, it will only continue to worsen as the number of people on social media continues to increase each year. As the social media population increases, the number of people who lack the ability to express themselves will continue to rise. With the lack of current frameworks dealing with this situation, it is imperative that the General Assembly works to create solutions to successfully deal with this problem.

History of the Issue

With the rise in popularity of social media, this issue has only arisen in the past decade. In the summer of 2016, the UN declared that the internet is a human right. An addition was made to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." Prior to the release of Article 19, an initial UN report on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression was released to prevent certain Member States from blocking copyright infringers from using the internet. The UN has highlighted its stance condoning Member States who attempt to block internet access in retaliation to political unrest. However, there have been multiple instances where Member States went ahead and initiated an internet shutdown to prevent social media coverage of what is happening.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is a national organization that works daily in courts, legislatures, and communities to defend the individual cases of clients whose rights have been violated. Our legislative advocates are a constant presence in federal and state government, working with policymakers to ensure the necessary laws exist to protect our civil rights. The ACLU is concerned that the federal government in the name of counterterrorism-is pressuring social media companies to limit content on platforms that hundreds of millions of people use every day. The public deserves to know more about this pressure and whether it amounts to de facto censorship. That's the disturbing pattern that seems to be emerging. The government has held multiple closed-door meetings with social media executives and has suggested that services take steps to create government friendly content, monitor activity, and even tweak algorithms to change the availability of certain posts and users.

The public deserves to know whether, and to what extent the government is seeking to influence online speech and exploit social media companies' rules for its own ends. Companies should take additional steps to include additional information in their transparency reports about the demands they receive from government agencies to remove content. These are the services we rely on to communicate with loved ones, debate political issues, and discuss important issues of the day.



Current Situation

A global and open internet is crucial to achieving the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs strive to create partnerships between Member States, and the protection and promotion of the internet allow for a pathway for governments and citizens to communicate and unite the various stakeholders which are needed to reach such cooperation. With the frightening fact that the occurrence of internet shutdowns increases annually, it is important that the right steps are taken to improve the relationship between governments and their citizens and to uphold all human rights. If this issue isn't dealt with, governments, where an internet shutdown can be achieved, will continue to strip their citizens of this invaluable human right when they seek to censor their population. This cannot be allowed to occur and it is necessary that the General Assembly creates solutions to prevent this from regularly occurring in the future. With only 32 countries that are resilient to the possibility of an internet shutdown, it becomes a problem of development so that countries where there is only a single internet provider have various options to prevent said shutdowns in the future.

The idea that social media has evolved for purposes beyond social use is an understatement. The power of social media has long surpassed its original objective, despite the general posts of birthdays, evening sunsets, etc. Social media is not largely used in business to market products, promote brands, and connect to current customers. On a larger scale, social media has been used as a weapon to spread causes for social struggles of freedom, justice, and equality. Civil rights movements have capitalized social media's influence, making cause's values and ideas unavoidable to everyday users. A study conducted by the Pew Research Center called, "Social Media Conversations About Race," was performed to analyze how and why social media users use the hashtags #BlackLivesMatter and #AllLivesMatter within their posts. For some users, the hashtag serves the purpose of the cause. For others, the hashtag has been used to do just the opposite. According to the study, the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter was used roughly 12 million times on Twitter from July 12, 2013, to March 31, 2016. Researchers found that while 38 percent of #BlackLivesMatter tweets were in support of the movement, 11 percent of tweets compiled of opposition.

For more than a decade, the Venezuelan government has expanded and abused its power to regulate the media and worked aggressively to reduce the number of dissenting media outlets. Existing laws grant the government power to suspend or revoke concessions to private media if "convenient for the interests of the nation," allow for shuttering of websites for the vaguely defined offense of "incitement," and criminalize the expression of "disrespect" for high government officials. Given the increasing difficulty independent media outlets face in operating, Venezuelans are turning to the Internet for news. The state-owned company CANTV-the main internet provider in Venezuela-has in recent months repeatedly blocked access to key news outlets. The government's grip is making it harder for the millions who remain in Venezuela to know what is happening in their country.



Additional Research

As part of your research, we highly recommend all delegates to remember to completely understand and utilize the policies and practices that their Member State already has in place. However, research should not be limited to just your own Member State. It is your duty to understand the actions and policies taken by Member States, their agreements or similar viewpoints. By directing your focus to these areas of research you will be able to identify more innovative and creative solutions to the issue of addressing the influence of social media on human rights.

Adding to the research mentioned earlier make sure you are directing research to what the United Nations has already done or implemented. One area that you can look at is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR is a milestone document in the history of human rights. It was drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris, on December 10th, 1948, as a common standard of achievements of all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected and it has been translated into over 500 different languages. It will give you a better understanding of how social media influences human rights.

Another place to find solutions or more information is the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Global Internet Freedom Consortium (GIFC) and the Global Network Initiative (GNI). Though we have given you a few ideas on where to direct your research, it is crucial that you dig further than what we have highlighted in this background guide. The more information you know, the easier the conference will be! We wish you all the best in your research and we look forward to meeting you in December. Most importantly, have fun and make the most out of this experience!

Additional Sources of Information:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/InternetFreedom.aspx>

<https://www.accessnow.org/13503-2/>

<http://fundamentalrightsforum.eu/en/frf/blog/finding-your-voice-role-social-media-communicating-human-rights>

<https://unama.unmissions.org/media%E2%80%99s-role-protecting-human-rights-spotlighted-un-backed-radio-series>

https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/app_c_2.pdf