



TARBUTMUN 2022

General Assembly

Topic A: Regulation of the Internet and Social Media

Topic B: Safety of Journalists

Participating Countries

1. Canada
2. Commonwealth of Australia
3. Democratic People's Republic of Korea
4. Federal Republic of Germany
5. Federative Republic of Brazil
6. French Republic
7. Japan
8. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
9. People's Republic of China
10. Republic of India
11. Republic of Korea
12. Republic of Singapore
13. Russian Federation
14. State of Israel
15. United Arab Emirates
16. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
17. United Mexican States
18. United States of America



Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 11th edition of Tarbut MUN. This year, we expect to have an amazing working process and debate in one of the most important committees in the UN. In this year's model, we would like to hear the different solutions that the next generation of young students are willing to propose.

We consider it very important that you know that the participation of every country and delegate is essential for the debate to be successful.

We expect every delegate to research the two topics and their country's position to be prepared for the Model. We would also like to emphasize the need for every country to stay in their position at all times.

We would also like to ask you to debate in the most diplomatic way possible, using the TarbutMUN protocol.

We wish you very good luck, and please contact any of us if you have any question related to the debate and committee.

Sincerely,

General Assembly Committee.

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General Assembly

The United Nations General Assembly is one of the six main organs of the UN, it is one of the most important parts of the UN and every member represented in it is allowed to vote. The first session of the General Assembly was held on January 10, 1946, in London, with 51 countries represented. In 2006 there were already 192 members in the General Assembly.

The UN General Assembly has supervisory, financial, and, elective functions relating to any matter within the scope of all of its members. The main role of the UNGA is to discuss and debate the different issues and make recommendations, because it cannot impose any law or action on any country.

It also has a lot of other functions within the subdivisions of the committee, including admitting new members, selecting members of ECOSOC and Security Council, and supervising the activities of the other UN organs.

It is highly regarded as the most important unit in the UN, being the one with the most members and yearly resolutions; it also is always the main committee where matters of international security and worldwide issues are discussed.

Topic A: Regulation of the Internet and Social Media

Keywords ¹

Censorship: Censorship is the act of preventing some or all of a book, film, work of art, document, or other form of communication from being seen or made available to the general public.

Internet: The internet is a large system of connected devices around the world that allows people to share information and communicate with one another, generally used on electronic devices

Social Media: The websites, applications and computer programs that allow people to communicate and share information on the internet using a computer or a mobile phone.

Government: The organization in charge of controlling a country

Federal Communications Commission: US agency in charge of all communication methods

Pornography: “a form of content that includes sexual acts or naked people”

Free Speech: “The right to express your opinions publicly”

Information Leak: When private information that is revealed to the public

¹ Cambridge Dictionary. (2020, October 21). Retrieved October 26, 2020, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

Background

The internet was created in the middle of the Cold War by the United States government as an attempt to outsmart Russia. The World Wide Web's purpose was to better communicate between military bases without using physical letters.

The internet was available to the public in 1993, and people quickly started to make public websites available for anyone to read. When Chrome was first released in 2008, it was really easy for people to use the internet as a good source for information.

The internet has gained a lot of popularity over the years, and many social media programs have become increasingly popular as well. Right now, social media applications are something we use on a daily basis, and governments and politicians have realized this.

The first government to use social media as a resource was the United States parks department in early 2010 to notify the citizens of an emergency. Other governments caught onto that and started using social media for announcements.

Then everything changed when governments started to interfere in the usage of social media. For example, they started to delete and censor pages that talked negatively of the government or someone that spread dangerous information. This quickly became an issue when people took notice and started to say that it was a violation of the first amendment.

Conflict

The Internet and social media have gradually become a necessity in our regular lives. While we might believe that we have it under control, the reality of the matter is very different. Big corporations like Facebook and Google have been the most important companies in this issue. As of 2021, Google has control over 92% of the search engine market, and Facebook holds control over four of the most influential social media platforms.

As of right now, Google and Facebook regulate and can look at everything that is posted on their platforms, and with nearly 4.39 billion users, they control more than half of the world's internet presence. The other social media platform with a big presence is Twitter, with over 396 million users.

Another thing that should be mentioned is the political power that social media holds, for example, the Twitter account of President Donald Trump and the influence that it had on voters' decisions and, ultimately, on the election's result. Another great example of the power of social media is how extremist groups can use Facebook to communicate and plan things, like what happened in January of 2021 in the US Capitol.

With the internet being controlled by so few corporations with so much power, with their objective being a business and making money; this leads to the next problem. Who should have control over the internet?

Present Situation

Nowadays, Facebook has been regulating and keeping control of the social network. It is concerned with avoiding misconduct, mainly fake news and hate speech. However, in the Facebook Papers, it was found that Frances Hauen, the former administrator, has given 17 organizations access to internal document pages; and it was discovered that Facebook prioritizes commerce over safety.

Facebook is ranked as the third most used social network in the world, 52% of American adults get their news from Facebook, as well as 15% of social media users, make purchases on the platform. Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook CEO, went to the US to apologize after the Cambridge Analytical scandal, in which people demanded the right to privacy over the platform.

Social networks have become sites promoting violence or misinformation, an example is the attack on the Capitol on January 6, 2021, on which it is proven that it was mostly fomented on many social media platforms.

In other countries, social media has become a place to judge and cause religious and ethnic violence, for example, Muslims in India and Rohingyas in Myanmar.

During the year of the pandemic, it also caused controversy for posting fake facts and information related to COVID 19 disease.

Especially Twitter and Facebook have taken power over countries, preventing governments from regulating them. The most popular platforms, which the most are run by US companies, have content moderation privacy, which prevents any kind of hate speech, sex posts, violent content, fake news and even political propaganda. In addition, many platforms such as Youtube, Instagram, and Tik Tok that are owned by Google, comply with the laws of the countries in which they operate.

Donald J. Trump, the former President of the United States, had his Twitter account taken away after violating many rules, and it closed his account after tweeting incorrect information.

Social media has a lot of influence during presidential elections, children's development, and people's point of view.

Most countries are sure that it is not their responsibility to supervise social networks, however, social media companies have argued that it's very difficult to enforce their policies. Based on that, the world is searching for new regulations and new laws to make the Internet and social media a safer place.

Most Important Countries

1. The United States of America

Social media corporations in the U.S are largely self-regulating, have support from the government, and have liability protection. All citizens are dealing with their privacy violations and the facility of spreading false information and hate speech over freedom of expression. The Capitol attack during Trump's exit caused a lot of controversies, and it became much bigger thanks to social media. The trade war between USA and China is affecting social media for the initiative of creating 5G which will allow the creation of the infrastructure of a new type of technology.

2. People's Republic of China:

The Chinese government has laws and rules which prohibit inappropriate content; their government is more focused on controlling political ideologies, it has zero tolerance for criticism of the ruling Communist Party. Mainly the taboos, for example, the "Three Ts": Taiwan, Tibet, and Tiananmen. The government can block access to social networks and new sites, causing people to only access those platforms with VPN (Virtual Private Network). Also, when Donald Trump was president, he said that all Americans should not use the Tik Tok platform, since China could spy on them.

3. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland :

The UK government announced plans which supervise companies such as Facebook and Twitter of illegal, terrorist, and child abuse; also, it seeks to enforce a mandatory age check for online pornography. The government ensures that new social media rules will be beneficial and will help absolutely everyone.

4. Russian Federation:

Russian authorities force people to censor online content by not complying with their supposed "guidelines," which speak against government corruption. At least 10,000 people were arrested for protesting on social media in a peaceful way, abusing their freedom of online speech, and controlling their posts and comments on the network. On January 27, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, and YouTube received fines for deleting around 170 posts that went against Russian law. On December 30th, a new law was promulgated, which will take 2 years in prison for online defamation. Russia has a cyber espionage group called The Dukes, and some people believe that the Russian government used it to intervene in the United States presidential elections between Trump and Hillary in 2016.

5. French Republic:

The French parliament passed a law that required social media platforms to delete illegal content in less than 24 hours; also, sexual harassment, child abuse, terrorist, disability, or religious posts will be removed even in an hour. This new law is causing controversy around the EU for not being able to identify which content is considered "illegal" within the freedom of expression.

6. Republic of Germany:

Germany has a law called Network Enforcement which requires social media platforms to remove content that includes fake news and hate speech within 24 hours after posting. Also, they have to send reports every 6 months reporting how much illegal content they have received. Companies can also face penalties of up to €60 million for violating their rules on the network. Last year the republic of Germany discovered the inaccurate report of the amount of illegal content that Facebook has on its platform, and as a consequence, they fined Facebook \$2 million.

Past UN Actions

Since this is a very contemporary and controversial topic, the United Nations has not yet applied any policy or resolution to regulate or stop the regulation of social media worldwide. The UN recognizes the benefits that social media can bring, but also acknowledges the risks and problems that it implies relating to human rights.

Although there has been a lack of actions from the UN relating to this matter, the United Nations has promoted Human Rights and free expression in almost every conflict that has related to social media regulation. The UN has expressed the following statements during these different problems:

- In April 2018, there was a scandal relating to the breach of the personal data of 87 million Facebook users. In response to that, Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's CEO, attended the Congress to answer questions and was fined with a record \$5 billion fine by the Federal Trade Commission. The UN has expressed the risk of Human Rights in this specific topic and insisted on the importance of the following: "Laws that authorize surveillance must be both "necessary and proportionate." All United Nations Member States are tasked with upholding fundamental human rights, online and off—and in this digital era, privacy is a cornerstone of these rights."²
- In March 2018, UN investigators stated their concern on how social media, especially Facebook, had a very harmful role relating to the spread of hate towards the Rohingya during the Myanmar crisis.
- In January 2021, UN chief Antonio Guterres said he was worried about the power that social media companies like Facebook and Twitter have nowadays. He also stated how mechanisms like the example of banning President Trump from different social media platforms make these companies

² Necessary & Proportionate. (2013). Retrieved November 5, 2021, from Necessary & Proportionate website: <https://necessaryandproportionate.org/principles/>

too powerful and that there should be “a regulatory framework with rules that allow for that to be done in line with law.”³

- In April 2021, The UN backed down from a deal made with Tencent Holdings for its 75th Anniversary, Tencent Holdings is a Chinese social media and video game giant that has been part of the violation of privacy and human rights in China. The UN backed down from the deal because of the criticism of human rights groups and the backlash they received after making the deal.
- In July 2021, Peggy Hicks of the UN Rights Office in Geneva talked about how social media regulation is threatening human rights. She talked about the implementation of laws relating to social media and human rights, how the internet needs to be safer, and how actual people, not algorithms, should make important social media decisions. She also added, "Virtually every country that has adopted laws relating to online content has jeopardized human rights in doing so,"⁴ This statement clearly explains the UN's position on this topic.

The UN will always continue to defend Human Rights on this topic, but it will be very hard for there to be any actual actions relating to this matter.

³ Nichols, M. (2021, January 28). U.N. chief worried by power of social media companies. Retrieved November 8, 2021, from U.S. website: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-un-guterres-socialmedia-idUSKBN29X2PU>

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Topic B: Safety of Journalists

Keywords

Threats: When someone expresses their intention or capability to inflict pain or prevent it from happening.

Safety: To be protected from someone or from our surroundings.

Freedom of expression: To be able and free to give any opinion without being threatened or getting a consequence.

Incarceration: Putting someone in prison, being locked up, and without any rights.

Insecurity: Feeling uncertain and fearful of not being fully cared for.

Journalists: People who collect information and write news stories or articles.

Background

During the past years, journalists have been threatened, censored, even killed for practicing freedom of expression.

CPJ (Committee to Protect Journalists) was created in 1981, New York City. It is an independent organization managed by the famous journalist Joel Simon, which is responsible for protecting and defending journalists all around the world.

Around 30 states around the world have passed shield laws which give journalists the right to not reveal sources and keep secret information. Every year the CPJ publishes an annual study showing the number of press attacks they receive accumulated throughout the whole year.

Since 1992, 850 journalists have died, and every year, they commemorate them as well as the people who have been imprisoned for exercising freedom of expression.

The organization has worked to demonstrate as a safe place, and, by not obtaining donations from the government, it shows us that the organization cannot be manipulated or corrupted.

It has been nominated several times for the Nobel Prize, as it is considered one of the most important organizations in the world, and more than anything, a refuge for absolutely all journalists on our planet.

Conflict

Sadly in many countries, being honest or expressing your thoughts and ideas can be more harmful than beneficial. In all countries, journalists have to work most of the time to publish content about the government (not necessarily judging it), which causes a lot of controversy and conflicts within the citizens. This causes many people to prefer to hide the truth and get rid of it quickly, as a result avoiding different points of view and discussions.

Since they existed, journalists have been persecuted and even killed for speaking out against many situations. Their human rights are being violated just for expressing their opinions and ideas.

There is a study that shows that on average, every 5 days, a journalist is killed for spreading information on their platforms.

Mexico may seem like a place where freedom of expression exists; however, it is the third country in which 100 journalists have been murdered since 2000, behind Iraq and Syria, countries where the largest number of journalists die every year.

The UN has been working on creating a safer place for journalists to live. Sadly many people are in charge of spying and violating their right to privacy; journalists are threatened, punished, and even sent to jails, just for disclosing information and making use of their freedom of expression right, which is recognized by the UN.

Disinformation and Safety of Journalists are related, understanding that once the freedom of expression right of a journalist is violated, your own right to be informed is restricted, knowing that the whole truth is probably not published for fear of affecting others people's interests and getting consequences.

Present Situation

The safety of journalists is something that affects almost every journalist in the world, and although it is not a recent issue, people are now realizing the real danger that it is being a journalist. Journalists get murdered while working all of the time and it is now one of the most dangerous lines of work. For example, since 2006, it is estimated that around the world, over 1,200 journalists were murdered while they were doing their work and trying to inform the public, and of these murders, only less than 100 perpetrators have been caught.

In some countries like México, Iraq, Colombia, Pakistan, Somalia, etc. people get murdered simply by investigating corruption, narcotrafficking, or environmental issues that can put a journalist's life at risk. According to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), in the year 2020 alone, 63 journalists were murdered simply for doing their jobs. Besides getting killed, journalists receive countless threats to stop investigating; these threats range from detention, harassment, torture, kidnapping, and death.

The danger that journalists face is something that affects society as a whole, this is because journalists are scared to do their job and if they can't get the information to the public, we, as a society, cannot be well informed. This is a huge problem because it opens the door to misinformation, and information to be tampered with.

A great example of what is happening to journalists is something that is happening in Yemen. Since 2015 there have been a reported 20 deaths of journalists, with this being one of the highest numbers in the world. In November 2021, the CPJ passed a law that stated that as of November 10, 2021; all parties to the conflict in Yemen must strictly stop attacking the press, and all journalists' murders will be strictly investigated and those responsible will be prosecuted. This law was finally passed after journalist Rasha al-Harazi was assassinated in a car bomb attack on Tuesday, November 9, 2021.

Most Important Countries

1. United States of America:

In the United States of America, there have been 11 attacks on journalists since 2019. There is also a committee to protect journalists known as the CPJ; this organization was created by a group of people in New York in 1981 when they realized that they could not ignore the problems journalists face on a daily basis. Since the CPJ was created the year with more attacks on journalists was in 2018, this happened when journalists were reporting a car crash and one of the victims hit the reporters in the face with a metal baton, and others were killed when a series of bombs were sent to major news networks headquarters. Since those incidents in 2018, there have been 0 deaths reported in 2019, 2020, and 2021.

2. People's Republic of China:

China has always been a dangerous place for journalists because of the high censorship levels and aggressive government actions. There have been 5 reported murders of journalists since 2018, and in 2019 alone, there were over 48 arrested reporters. When the "Tank Man" incident occurred, which was when a man protested by standing in front of three tanks during the Tiananmen protests in 1989, any reporter who dared to talk about the incident, or post about it was severely punished, and even now the word "Tank Man" is censored on the internet.

3. United Mexican States:

Mexico has been one of the countries with the highest attack rates on journalists for the past few decades, with 60 journalists killed and many other journalists missing since 1992. In 2021 alone, there have been 15 journalists missing and 3 reported deaths, with these numbers making Mexico one of the most dangerous nations to be a reporter on. Most of these attacks are due to the high rates of narco-trafficking in Mexico and the corruption in politics.

4. India:

India is a very dangerous place for journalists since it ranks 14th on journalist attacks with 18 murders in the last decade. India's biggest problem is the prosecution, since it ranks at the bottom on prosecution rates and the perpetrators are rarely found, and when they are, they are rarely prosecuted. According to the CPJ database, India is one of the most censored countries worldwide with more than 40 attacks on

journalists and a lot of topics that cannot be published, like criticizing the government's actions.

5. Russian Federation

In Russia, over 15 journalists have died since 1999; the number of attacks on journalists has increased since President Vladimir Putin was elected. As of 2021, being a journalist in Russia is considered one of the most dangerous jobs you could have, a great example of this is Anna Politkovskaya, a journalist who mysteriously died while investigating the FSB (the successor of the KGB) connections with the government.

Past UN Actions

The United Nations acknowledges and is very concerned on the topic of the attacks and danger that journalists have faced over the past years. On average over the past decade, one journalist has lost their life every four days, according to UNESCO. Although these past two years, attacks on journalists have decreased a lot, the UN has promoted the importance that journalists face nowadays relating to democracy, freedom of expression, and freedom of speech.

Responding to this problem, the UN worked from 2010-2017 to create the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. The goal of this Plan of Action is to ensure a free and safe environment for journalists and anyone who works at the media. It also has the purpose of strengthening peace, democracy, and development in this conflict.

The UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity is one of the most important programs in the UN and has made a lot of impact. The Plan of Action has worked very closely with countries like Iraq, Nepal, Pakistan, and South Sudan, it has also worked and impacted countries in Latin America such as Mexico and Honduras.

This is definitely the most important action done by the UN relating to the safety of journalists. And the UN has shown its concern on this conflict several times and will continue to bring strategies and solutions to this problem.

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