TARBUTMUN 2023

General Assembly

GA

.

Topic A: The Role of Social Media in Human Rights Violations

Topic B: Violent Suppression of Protests by Governments

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to 2023's TarbutMUN General Assembly. It is a great honor and a really exciting opportunity for us to be presidents of this fantastic committee. You all play extremely important roles in this debate. As a committee, it is our duty to maintain safety, peacemaking, and create a positive change in the society we live in.

Each and every one of you has the responsibility of attempting to find a solution to our committee's topics while debating in favor of your respective nations. If you work hard and truly engage with the debate, we sincerely believe you will all make an outstanding performance. We wish you all the best of luck and success.

"With realization of one's own potential and self-confidence in one's ability, one can build a better world." - Dalai Lama.

Sincerely,
Alex Miklos and Alexandra Grinstein

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- Republic of the Union of Myanmar
- Russian Federation
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- United States of America

General Assembly

Since 1945 the General Assembly committee has been one of the key segments of the United Nations, major topics regarding world peace, worldwide security, and the global economy are addressed in this Assembly. Although throughout the years, many milestones have been accomplished, nowadays the Assembly is prioritizing “building back a better world” focusing on essential topics which have a consequential impact on humanity and the planet.

This year during the 77th session, member states must demonstrate that they are committed to addressing controversial topics leaving a huge impact on our world. The Assembly is required to meet between the months of September and December, and each of the 193 members has an equal vote. The first session was held on January 10, 1946, in London with 51 countries involved. Since then, major changes have been accomplished thanks to all the effort and dedication that the Assembly does.

As mentioned before, the Assembly is prioritizing “building back a better world.” The General Assembly is the main organ of the United Nations Organization. This committee occupies an essential position as the head policy-making deliberative and representative committee of the United Nations. It is segmented into the six Main Sub Committees, these include: “the Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee); the Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee); the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (Third Committee); the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee); the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee); and the Legal Committee (Sixth Committee).” [1]

[1] United Nations, main body, main organs, General Assembly. (n.d.). Retrieved October 27, 2022, from https://www.un.org/en/ga/about/background.shtml

Topic A: The Role of Social Media in Human Rights Violations

Key Words

Genocide: International destruction of a racial, religious, national, or ethnic group.

Hate crimes: Any attempted or criminal act directed against a group or person based on their race, sexual orientation, gender, or religion.

Digital Dictatorship: Governments controlling or manipulating citizens via technology.

Social Media: Interactive websites in which a person can create, share and spread information using a computer or a mobile phone.

Human rights: Basic rights and freedoms to guarantee a life of dignity to every human being. They apply to anyone, no matter their gender, beliefs, nationality, etc.

Freedom of expression: The liberty to share or receive opinions or information, without a person´s security being at risk.

Censorship: The prohibition of books, plays, films, or reports.

Cyberviolence: Harming or petrifying another person or group via the internet.

Information Leakage: When delicate data gets revealed.

Pornography: Visual material which contains sexual content.

Internet shutdowns: Measures taken by governments in which there's a complete block of the internet, normally due to elections, excessive use of force by law enforcement, etc.

Net Neutrality: Internet service companies or governments providing free access to any sites, applications, etc. without any terms or conditions.

Encryption: Protecting the confidentiality of digital communications.

Introduction

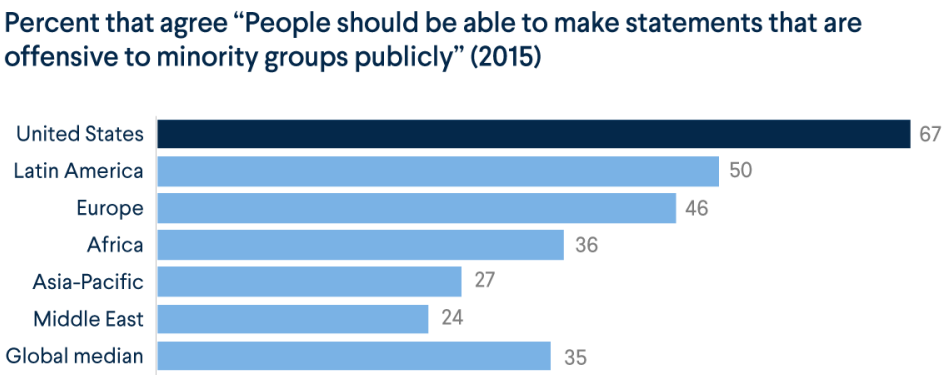
Social media is a term collectively referred to as websites and programs that emphasize collaboration, sharing of content, engagement, and community-based feedback. Social media is significant because it enables people to connect, engage, and nurture their target audience wherever they may be, however, this can also influence the thoughts of society and ultimately change their minds. The use of social media has influenced the growth of hate speech, abuse, and cyber violence, as well as physical violence attacks.

Social media has been influential regarding hate-oriented groups and organizations. The use of free speech through social media has been used on many levels, therefore, offensive, harmful and threatening content has been displayed through these different platforms. During the debate, the committee's main objective is to eradicate these online movements that promote cruel and violent mindsets that ultimately influence other people's opinions.

In the modern era, social media has been playing an important role involving human rights violations. For example, in 2016, in Myanmar, a genocide took place. According to *LAWFARE,* Myanmar´s Military, systematically utilized the

Facebook platform to campaign for the ethnic cleansing of the Myanmar Rohingya Muslim Minorities.[2]

On another note, in Iran, the government purposely banned the internet from stopping the expansion of support for Iranian women's rights. This was caused by the recent protests against the set of actions the Iranian police has committed against women's rights. It is important to limit the exposure of hostile comments on the internet and social media platforms, to further eradicate hate crimes across the globe.



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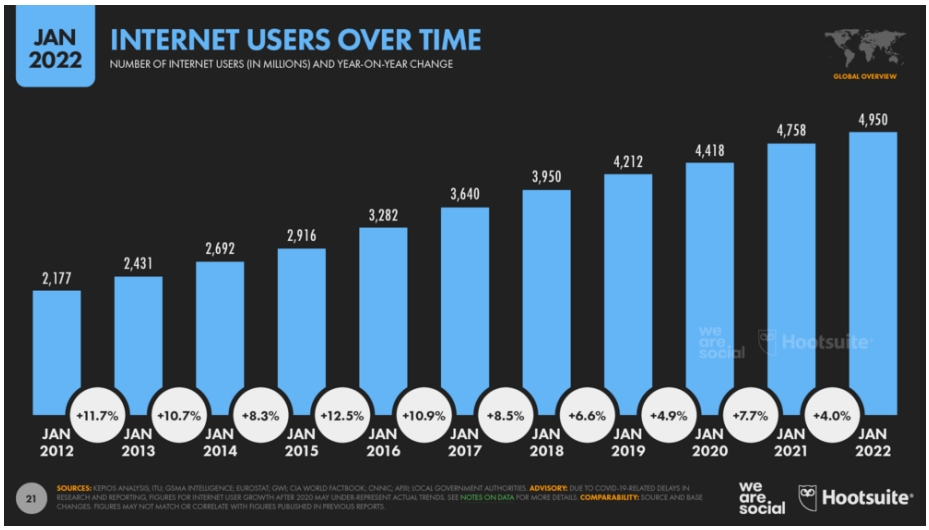
[3] *Hate speech on Social Media: Global Comparisons* (no date) *Council on Foreign Relations*. Council on Foreign Relations. Available at: https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/hate-speech-social-media-global-comparisons (Accessed: October 26, 2022).

Background

The Internet began in the 1950s in the United States of America when the Cold War was at its peak and tension between North America, and the Soviet Union was rising. Both nations had deadly nuclear weapons, and people lived with the fear of a surprise attack. The United States needed a system of communication that could not be affected nor intervened by a nuclear attack made by the Soviet Union.
Even though it emerged during the Cold War, the Internet became visible to the general public in the early 1990s when the United States Ministry of Commerce liberated its use. Since then, it has spread worldwide at an extraordinary speed and has become a crucial part of society's communication and interaction.

As of 2020, it was estimated that approximately 4.5 billion people, more than half of the world's population, had access to the Internet. It has been one of the main instruments that have promoted a social change in our modern world; the Internet has changed commerce, education, health, and even how we create affectionate relationships.



Since Chrome was first released in 2008, it became almost an effortless act to look up information.

Finding information became available to nearly anyone, causing the beginning of the internet era; since then, it has become a fundamental tool in media and is recurrent in our daily lives.

People use social media to obtain information and entertainment since the Internet offers a space in which all sorts of creators can upload content and express themselves freely.

The popularity of the Internet, especially social media, grew rapidly, becoming an essential tool used by many people. Governments worldwide became aware of this phenomenon and quickly joined the Internet, trying to use this platform in their favor. However, upon entering the online world, they realized that much of the information that came to light did not benefit governments, or put the integrity of their citizens at risk, so they had to opt to regulate and censor the content shown. Many times, this went against the rules of social networks since these are private companies and can create their own rules. Also, they choose the content that is worth censoring, regardless of how the laws of each country work, and how the content on the Internet affects them.

There has been a great debate on how a healthy and recreational environment can be achieved on the Internet while respecting the laws of all countries, thus reaching a midpoint in which nobody is harmed.

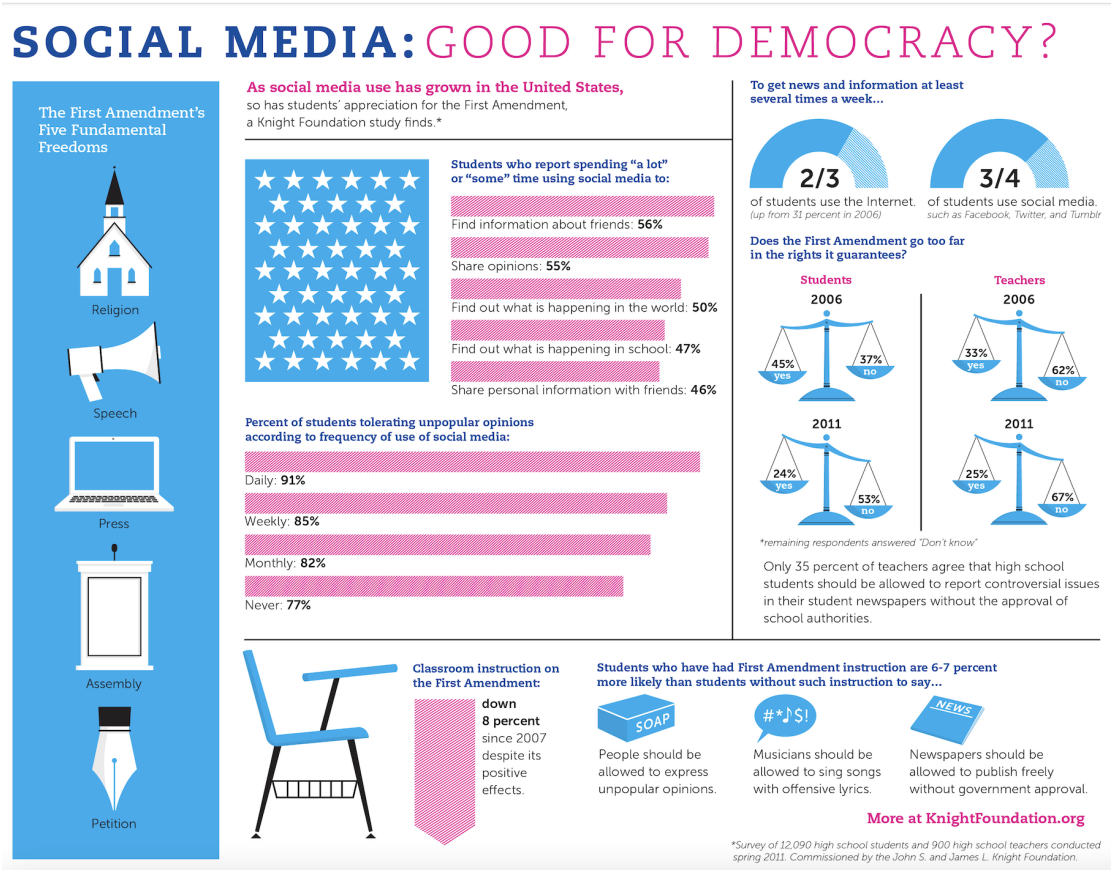
Present Situation

Social Media allows engaging with individuals undergoing human rights crises directly and broadcasts education and knowledge that makes individuals form their own political opinions. Governments currently use social media to promote their propaganda and create masses of support for their party.

During the past years, the population has used social media as their preferred way to find information as it communicates incidents of injustice which traditional media often

omits. Websites and programs where every individual is free to post whatever content they like, offer a sincere point of view on worldwide issues, which, often, is not welcomed by governments.

Social media platforms are private companies and can censor what people post as they desire, which has caused controversy in some countries, for example, the United States. The First Amendment states that individuals must be protected from government censorship, which was constantly violated during President Donald Trump's time in office when he blocked individuals on his Twitter because they were critical of his beliefs. President Trump was silencing his opposition by blocking Twitter accounts and taking away their right to free speech.



Regulating social media to prevent certain opinions from getting out to the world has not been something done only by the US but by many other countries, justified by the fact that Social Media foments civil attacks and ethnic violence. For example, in the US capitol attack that took place on January 6, 2021, after Trump's defeat in the 2020 presidential election, a multitude of his supporters attacked the Capitol Building in hopes of preventing a joint session of congress to count the electoral college votes that would formalize the victory of President-elect Joe Biden.

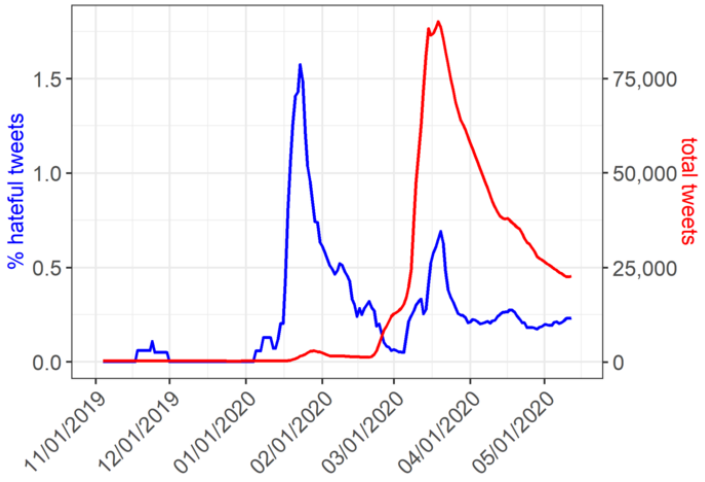
Another example is the violence against Muslims in Rohingya in Myanmar. Myanmar held an ethnic cleanse for Muslim individuals, which at first, extreme violence was unleashed by its military. Still, the event was carried out thanks to the collaboration of Buddhists and xenophobic Monks via Facebook. Experts state that Facebook has undoubtedly played a significant role in enabling the spread of hate speech and fear and stirring up hate in communities at an incredible speed.

An additional case in which social networks have been guilty of spreading misinformation and encouraging hatred was during the COVID-19 pandemic, which sprouted in Wuhan, a province of Hubei, China, in December 2019, and then spread throughout the world, reaching a number of 629 million infected and 6.58 million dead. Different theories were created on social media about how coronavirus started to

spread, which all were demeaning towards Chinese culture and its society.

One of the most heard and famous theories was that the Chinese ate bats and that these animals contained the virus, which led to humans getting infected; thus conducting the spread of a narrative in which it was said that Chinese people have dirty and unhygienic eating habits. The lack of information during the pandemic led to Chinese culture being blamed for bringing the virus to the world. Social media was a crucial place that fostered hatred and discrimination against Asian communities.

Rise of posts on twitter about the asian community once the pandemic started:



Social media has paved the way for inciting abomination and intolerance while highlighting differences between people, due to its accessibility, every person can share and find information on any topic, even if it is misleading; although it has also served as an excellent source of communication, which has been able to promote important information that goes out to the world while creating international relations.

Social media has opened a space for individuals and organizations to express their beliefs, but occasionally it is misused, causing misunderstandings, violence, and even genocides.

Past Global and UN Actions

Social media platforms act as an essential unit for several kinds of people. As a result, it's evident to expect consequences coming out of this, so global actions have been taken to control the current situation, for instance:

- Regarding the UN, the organization recognizes all the benefits that social media has, yet acknowledges the risks that it involves. The goal is to take advantage of all the benefits and reduce the risks. To do so, the following actions have been taken:

- The establishment of a new resolution in the Human Rights Council on July 13, 2021, regarding the preservation and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet guided by the United States of America, Nigeria, Brazil, Tunisia, and Sweden, the central topics were: Internet shutdowns, The Digital Divide, Net-neutrality and Encryption. The resolution's final purpose is to ensure that the same rights that people have offline must be respected and protected online.

- On July 15, 2021, Peggy Hicks, a member of the UN Human Rights Office mentioned how social media is commonly unsafe for people attempting to exercise their human rights. She mentioned how governments usually make the situation more unfavorable and how the world urges a change starting by regulating laws in social media worldwide, that's why in the past years, more than 40 new laws have been implemented by the UN.

Block Analysis

Nations that have banned/restricted social media:

Multiple nations across the globe have banned social media due to various purposes. For example, one popular reason is to forbid protesters from raising their voices on social media against their government's actions. These nations are usually against free speech and only ban social media to eliminate any controversy against the president or government of the country, instead of banning social media for a peaceful purpose.

Some other nations have restrictions and governmental supervised access towards what each user is viewing or engaging in. For example, a country has banned social media apps like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Youtube, and many others. And they are forced to use local apps, so the government can control each user's movements which could invade their privacy.

Nations that allow freedom of speech in social media:

This includes nations that have no restrictions or censorship towards comments, whether they may be positive or hateful. For example, countries in which freedom of speech is a powerful factor in their constitution. These countries do not have legal prohibitions, nevertheless, some social media platforms have attempted to censor hateful comments.

Nations that have had hate groups in their counties due to social media:

Throughout history, different hate-oriented groups have been initiated due to social media in various countries across the globe. These hate groups have been caused by hateful comments and speeches that turn into violent groups and even genocides. In 2016, there was a major genocide that was caused due to the lack of Facebook's restrictions. This can also apply to antisemitic, sexist, racist, or homophobic hate groups that started on social media as a consequence of discriminatory comments.

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Topic B: Violent Suppression of Protests by Governments

Key Words

Repression: Using force or violence to control a group of individuals.

Protest: A group of people expressing disapproval or objection to something, usually towards the government or country.

Suppression: Putting an end to something by force.

Tear gas: Eye-burning chemical gas, often used as arms during protests.

Demand: A very insistent request.

Riots: Disturbance of the peace by a group of people.

Escalation: An increase or raise of something, in this case, of an issue.

Civil War: A war between citizens of the same country

Freedom of Speech: The right of expressing any opinions or demanding something without punishment.

Riots: A violent public disorder caused by a crowd.

Austerity: A situation where people's living standards are reduced due to difficulties.

Introduction

Suppression refers to the different methods of hindering, undermining, and disrupting with or without using force, which leads to censorship and hiding information. Suppression, in protesting manners, means using power to go against different groups

of people; this includes arrests, imprisonment, beatings, torture, and even assassination.

Suppression has been used as a structural feature in most societies to hinder and disrupt protests of all kinds, even if violence does not bring an active and beneficial response.

In recent years we have seen some of the most significant movements in history that achieved such popularity and enormous impact thanks to the massive protests that were established, such as Black Lives Matter, Me Too, and even the fight against climate change.

With the rise of massive protests with the capability of attracting masses of people to create a change, which on several occasions went against the ideals of the government, countries felt the obligation to stop or suppress protests with the belief that these actions would be beneficial for their citizens.

State authorities have been implementing as many measures as possible to suppress protests. Protesters have been facing resistance due to the growing number of laws restricting the right to protest.

Governments have opted to use violent and brutal manners as it is an effective way to silence individuals as it promotes intimidation and fear.

UN experts have stated that human rights violations have increased in the context of protests because governments all around the world are starting to securitize their approach to aggravating crises.

Often, governments resort to repression to suppress protests of all types and silence their citizen's voices rather than seeing

protests as an opportunity to peacefully participate and engage with the population, hear their complaints, and work on developing a safer environment for all.

Countries have started to opt to Militarize protests as a way of management, resulting in an escalation of violence, abuse, and impunity, because of the intimidating effect that works as a weapon to silence people.

In past years, we have seen governments act brutally against peaceful protests.

One of which has stood out the most is the case of the murder of George Floyd by the Minneapolis Police, which resulted in the Black Lives Matter movement in which millions of people came out to protest to demand an end to the discrimination against black people by the government.

Some believe that the US government attempted to confront the movement by criminalizing protests and using violent methods to stop protesters from taking to the streets in order to draw attention elsewhere to the issues affecting the black community in America.

This event became a worldwide movement due to great propaganda provided in the media with every detail about the situation. People everywhere were able to witness the flaws in political systems that tended to hurt racial minorities and many found this an

opportunity to manifest to make a change while being able to realize the violence and brutality that the government imposes.

There have been other protests, such as women in Iran who have battled against the regime to be able to remove the hijab without repercussions, which the government has been entirely against. That has caused damage to women that even has led to deaths.

However, thanks to the forum given to the situation, Iran has received sanctions restricting foreign trade, financial services, energy sectors, technologies, etc.

Several organizations, such as the UN, have noted the crimes and violations of human rights committed by the government. For that reason, an attempt has been made to find a way to stop this situation, but a solution has yet to be achieved.

The United Nations is aware of the ongoing violence held by governments in protesting manners and has held meetings in hopes of putting an end to the matter. Currently, a solution is being sought to end this since protesting is a human right that should be protected by law.

Background

Ever since the 1940's every human being, regardless of their race, sex, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, or any other status, has been granted a series of rights that include the right to life, freedom of speech and expression, the right to work and education, etc. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948. It sets out for the universal protection of human rights under any circumstances. Along with this declaration, there is also the International Human Rights Law, which requires governments to treat their citizens a certain way as well as hold back from particular acts. The United Nations has a series of

internationally recognized rights, including civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights. Along with this, it created mechanisms to protect as well as promote the correct use of these rights and to assist states in fulfilling their responsibilities.

Throughout history to the present day, there have been a series of movements that have changed the outcome of our reality. These movements are more commonly known as protests. A protest is a public expression of objection, disapproval, or opposition, usually to a political idea or action. Protests can be viewed as collective acts in which large numbers of people cooperate through their participation and share in potential costs and risks. Sometimes, these movements can also be used to spread awareness of a specific problem in hopes of causing a change. Although protests normally maintain political opposition, the purpose of these movements can vary a lot. Protests range from March for Science, the Iraq War Protests, or the more current Black Lives Matter protests sparked by George Floyd's assassination.

As we know, these public demonstrations are a public expression of opinion in which protesters typically maintain a peaceful viewpoint in hopes of being heard. There have been many instances in which protests have gotten out of hand or turned violent. What this means is that demonstrators get aggressive, damage public property, or decide to turn to violence to cause a bigger impact since it draws more attention to the movement and causes a global impact. Although normally protesters are at fault, there are many

instances in which the government and police have been accountable for the violence caused during public movements. For example, this can be seen through Black Lives Matter, where a series of peaceful opinion demonstrations quickly turned to violent riots. A report by a nonprofit organization ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project), demonstrates how over 93% of the Black Lives Matter protests were peaceful. In this report, the ACLED also underlines how the handful of violent manifestations were normally triggered by government response or the utilization of force when it was not called for.

The main problem with the implementation of aggressive government force or mass arrests, the use of tear gas, rubber bullets, and stun guns, is that it violates many human rights, for example, the right to free speech. Freedom of speech and expression is often overlooked by governments during protests when they turn to aggressive acts because the government is essentially putting an end to their public demonstration of opposition. This can be seen through the recent protests in Iran, where the government violated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Human Rights Law.

Present Situation

There is an event currently happening in Iran regarding this topic. A woman called Mahsa Amini was murdered for not wearing her hijab correctly. A hijab is an item of religious clothing that Muslim women wear. The government of Iran is turning religious obligations into law and

murdering or condemning anyone who opposes using them.

As a result, this event caused many protesters to fight against the current Iranian regime in Iranian cities, such as Teheran (the capital) Yazd, and Kerman. The Iranian

government, through the police, completely suppressed these protests and took away the lives of more than 300 protesters and detained over 12,500 people. Currently, people around the world are raising money and awareness to help the 12,500 people who are now in jail. Most of the country is against the regime but due to the previous attacks that the government has made on anyone who opposes, many have remained quiet.

Also, China is currently in a complete lockdown due to the quick rise of covid cases in the country with more than 17,772 new Covid cases all around China. Nowadays, most countries have very minimal or even zero covid policies and no other country is facing a lockdown. Due to these events, very recently, thousands of people went to the streets of China's cities demanding an end to their “Zero-Covid” policy. China is a country with no tolerance to free speech, especially if it is against the government's actions.

Past Global And UN Actions

Using violence to suppress or put an end to a protest has become wildly common all around the world during the past few years, as governments have opted for violence to silence protestors who are trying to spread a message, whether it be beneficial or harmful to the country. As a result, individuals and organizations have been acting out against these scenarios, for instance:

- The UN Human Rights Council presented a report in June 2022, which stated that the world is lacking civic space and rising human rights violations. The report stated that by brutally ending protests, individuals' voices are being silenced and oppressed instead of bringing light and opening a space for citizens to express their demands.
- The United Kingdom has made an attempt to make strong community relations between citizens and the police, to prevent the mishandling of protests and keep them as passive as possible.
- The International Bar Association human rights institute has noted the violent suppression of protests by governments and urged for a call to action, such as in Iran.
- Iran was charged by The International people's tribunal (a tribunal that has been dealing with human rights violations since 1979) with crimes against humanity.

Block Analysis

<u>Countries in which the government maintains a neutral position:</u>

This includes countries in which the government normally does not act upon protests, whether that may be in favor or against the protest or the protestors. These countries typically allow these movements to be done and do not get involved in the protest.

Countries in which governments have participated in violent acts during a protest:

Involves countries that commonly have violent actions or extreme use of force/aggression against people participating in a protest. Because of the government involvement in these countries, many of the initially peaceful protests tend to get violent in response to the government's use of force.

Countries in which governments have not been involved in any violent acts on a protest:

This includes all countries in which the government has never attempted to suppress a protest using violent manners, even if the protests go against the government's political outlook, these are still held without the government getting involved in any sort.

Further Reading

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