

## **OFFICIAL WELCOME**

Dear General Assembly 3<sup>rd</sup> Delegates,

On behalf of everyone at the 2007 National Model United Nations – DC Conference, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the General Assembly 3<sup>rd</sup>: Human Rights. I look forward to working with each of you, and plan for this committee to be a great learning experience for all.

This research guide has been prepared to assist in your preparations for the Conference, but is by no means an exhaustive list of the questions and resources applicable to our committee's topics. One of the primary goals of Model United Nations is education, and this guide should help as you learn more in your preparations for the Conference.

Cooperation and negotiation are critical to the operation of any Model United Nations committee. It is my hope that you keep these themes in mind as you prepare to participate in the General Assembly 3<sup>rd</sup>: Human Rights. I look forward to working with you in making this an outstanding educational experience.

## **HISTORY OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY 3<sup>RD</sup>: SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND CULTURAL COMMITTEE (SOCHUM)**

The Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee, also known as the General Assembly 3<sup>rd</sup> Committee, is one of the six major bodies of the General Assembly, the United Nations' main deliberative organ. All UN member states are entitled to representation and a vote in each of the GA's committees. Unfortunately, decisions of the SOCHUM have no legally-binding force and though they "carry the weight of world opinion" on major international issues, few nations take the decisions seriously.

According to the UN Charter, the functions the 3<sup>rd</sup> Committee (and other General Assembly bodies) include:

- Considering and making recommendations towards the maintenance of international peace and security
- Discussing any questions relations to international peace and security
- Initiate studies and commissions to promote international political cooperation, develop and codify international law, promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, and encourage international collaboration in economic, social, cultural, educational, and health fields.

Since the foundation of the United Nations in 1945, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Committee of the General Assembly has proven to be one of the most important bodies in the organization. In the past, it has addressed a multitude of topics, as nearly every international conflict has a corresponding "social" component. Past agenda items have included family relations, gender discrimination, child labor, child pornography, cultural imperialism, torture, infanticide, national self-discrimination, and rights of migrant workers.

## **TOPIC #1: The Use of Torture in the War on Terror**

- What role, if any, may torture play in the War on Terror?

Since the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, the United States has declared a “War on Terror.” It has been alleged that torture is being used tactically on individuals while this war is carried out – it is your job as delegates to discuss if such methods allegedly employed by the United States and other countries (for example Pakistan and Afghanistan) are appropriate. Are there any applicable international laws that allow or disallow these alleged torture tactics? If you find that torture is being used in the War on Terror, what stance, if any, should this committee take on these actions?

### **TOPIC #2: Chinese Humanitarian Crisis**

- Identity vs. development in Tibet – are recent Chinese infrastructure developments in the Tibetan region being used to undermine Tibetan cultural heritage?

A new railroad, named the Qinghai-Tibet Railway, constructed by the Chinese government is the first to connect China and Tibet. The Chinese government states that the railway, launched in July 2006, will bring economic prosperity to the Tibetan region; opponents of the railway claim that it will allow increased Chinese presence in the region and will further socially marginalize the Tibetans. This situation is one in a long history which some say shows Chinese oppression of Tibetan humanitarian and cultural rights. Construction of the railway presents several questions for the Council to consider – what threats, if any, does the railway present to Tibetan human rights? How can these rights be balanced with the potential economic benefits of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway? If this committee finds there to be potential threats to Tibetan culture through the railway, what actions should be taken to protect rights of the Tibetans, without infringing on Chinese sovereignty?

### **TOPIC #3: Crisis in Zimbabwe**

- What may be done to alleviate current levels famine, poverty, and displacement of citizens in Zimbabwe?

Present in Zimbabwe today are extreme levels of unemployment, oppression by government officials, and millions of people starving. Under the rule of the ZANU-PF party and the current president, Robert Mugabe, many of the country’s citizens are starving, being displaced, and killed, all while the government’s elite continues to prosper. Opponents of the current government regime are allegedly tortured and killed; many Zimbabwean citizens are losing their jobs; those who fought for Zimbabwe’s freedom are watching it fall into a state of oppression. What, if anything, should be done to aid the citizens of Zimbabwe? What, if anything, should be done about the country’s current leadership regime? If this committee finds it to be necessary, what recommendations should be made to the General Assembly, in order to support the citizens of Zimbabwe?

### **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## The Use of Torture in the War on Terror

American Bar Association. (2006). "Washington's "War Against Terrorism" and Human Rights: The View from Abroad." Retrieved July 2, 2007 from <http://www.abanet.org/irr/hr/winter06/cassel.html>

This article discusses the position the United States has taken about its alleged torture tactics. Gives specific examples of alleged torture tactics.

Amnesty International USA. (2005). "Pakistan: Human rights ignored in the 'war on terror'." Retrieved July 2, 2007 from <http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?lang=e&id=ENGASA330362006>

This article alleges that Pakistan has committed, or allowed to be committed, violations of human rights in its role in the war on terror. While this article does emphasize Pakistan's role in allegedly perpetrating acts of torture in carrying out the war on terror, it provides recommendations that Amnesty International USA has made to both Pakistan and the United States.

Asian Human Rights Commission. (2006). 'War on terror' threatens 'war on torture.' Retrieved July 2, 2007 from <http://www.hrea.org/lists/hr-headlines/markup/msg02905.html>

This statement from the Asian Human Rights Commission presents the argument that the current war on terror undermines the longer-waged war on torture. This statement mentions one approach being used to address torture throughout the world – the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT). Brief summaries are provided for several Asian countries of their history regarding torture, and the approaches they have taken.

## Chinese Humanitarian Crisis

China Internet Information Center. (2006). "Qinghai-Tibet Railway."

Retrieved July 18, 2007 from <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/Tibet/171193.htm>

This site presents China's position on the benefits from the railway. Specifically this site mentions the economic and social benefits that will occur in the areas that the railway reaches. You will also find maps of the cities and regions connected by the railway, and a history of its construction.

International Herald Tribune. (2006). "China-Tibet: Railroad to [P]erdition."

Retrieved July 18, 2007 from <http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/07/17/opinion/edgere.php>

This opinion article mentions the achievement that the Qinghai-Tibet Railway represents for the Chinese government, but primarily focuses on the threat the railway poses to Tibet's identity. This article argues that because of the railway, Tibetan land has been seized for its construction, Chinese military presence will be increased in Tibet, and Tibetans will not see the economic benefits from the railway.

Students for a Free Tibet. (2006). "Tibetans Worldwide Reject China's Railway to Tibet."

Retrieved July 17, 2007 from <http://studentsforafreetibet.org/article.php?id=888>

Here you will find a summary of the arguments against the newly constructed railway between China and Tibet. This site emphasizes how important Tibetan human rights are to many people worldwide. Brief mention is made of China's rationale for construction of the railway.

## Crisis in Zimbabwe

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition. (2007). "A Time to Act."

Retrieved July 21, 2007 from <http://www.crisiszimbabwe.org/news.php>

This organization and its site give statistics and details of the crisis in Zimbabwe. Here you will also find recommendations and demands that the Coalition has developed. Pictures, videos, and statements give the reader an understanding of the crisis facing Zimbabwe.

International Crisis Group. (2006). *“Conflict History: Zimbabwe.”*

Retrieved July 21, 2007 from

[http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?action=conflict\\_search&l=1&t=1&country=119](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?action=conflict_search&l=1&t=1&country=119)

Here you will find a history of the conflict in Zimbabwe, and of President Mugabe’s rise to power. Gives reasons for the dismal state of Zimbabwe’s economy, and how Mugabe’s regime has violated the rights of Zimbabwean citizens.

United States Department of State. (2003). *“Zimbabwe’s Manmade Crisis.”*

Retrieved July 21, 2007 from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/16501.htm>

This is the U.S. Department of State’s summary of the current status of society in Zimbabwe. It emphasizes that political figures rule by dividing the society into supporters and non-supporters of the ZANU-PF. Much detail is given about the decline in quality of life after President Mugabe came into power.

