# Special Political and Decolonization

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The Ivy League
Model United Nations Conference
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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the General Assembly of ILMUNC 2003! The GA is the largest deliberative organ of the United Nations, composed of representatives of all member states. This year, ILMUNC is simulating five GA committees with topics ranging from the regulation of chemical weapons to the prohibition of human cloning.

My name is Shanshan Cao, and I am the Under Secretary General of the General Assembly. This very long title basically means I will be in charge of the five GA committees – my responsibility is to make sure each committee runs smoothly and that delegates enjoy themselves and are engaged in productive debate and negotiation.

I am currently a sophomore at Wharton, University of Pennsylvania, and my concentration is Finance and Accounting. I have been involved with Model United Nations for five years, starting as a freshman in high-school. In my junior year, my school attended ILMUNC, and I enjoyed the conference so much that it became one of my main considerations when applying for college.

I hope you will enjoy ILMUNC as much as I did, and I encourage you to email me any questions you have concerning UPenn's Model United Nations program or just applying-to-college concerns in general.

See you at conference!

Sincerely,

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Delegates of SPECPOL:

Welcome to ILMUNC 2003! As the chair of this year's Special, Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL), I am looking forward to meeting all of you and having a great weekend at the conference.

First, I would like to introduce myself. I am a senior at PENN studying International Studies and Business. I have taken part in the International Affairs Association at PENN since I was a freshman and have chaired for various comittees at both ILMUNC and UPMUNC. As ILMUNC 2003 will be my last conference here at PENN, I hope to make it a memorable and enjoyable experience.

Nothing makes for good debate like a controversial topic, so the agenda of SPECPOL looks especially promising this year. All three of the issues slated for our committee have made worldwide headlines in recent months, and it is difficult to find two people—let alone 40 countries—who agree on the best ways to address them. Our discussion of UN peacekeeping in disputed territories, media coverage of terrorist acts, human rights in Palestine will almost certainly entail attempts to reconcile conflicting views of morality and philosophy, and you know what that means: lots of heated arguments, brilliant ideas, and pissing each other off to no end. Awesome.

If anyone has questions related to our committee, its topics, or anything else, feel free to email me. See you in January!

Sincerely,

Rohan Nirody
Chair, Special, Political and Decolonization
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## Special Political and Decolonization

At the advent of the United Nations, a system of committees was set up to deal with the many and varied issues before the General Assembly. The First Committee, originally called Political and Security, was formed to deal with the regulation of armaments and the admission, suspension and expulsion of United Nations members, as well as other political and security issues.

As the United Nations matured as an organization, the breadth of the jurisdiction of the first committee grew too great. The first committee would deal with the admission of Afghanistan into the United Nations one day, and the treatment of Indians in South Africa the next. As the burden of the committee grew too great, the need for a new committee became undeniable. In 1965, the Fourth Committee, Special Political, was created to deal with entirely political issues. Due to the existence of the Fourth Committee, the First Committee was restricted to dealing with issues of disarmament and international security; and, in 1993, it was renamed from Political and Security to Disarmament and International Security, to reflect its new, revised jurisdiction.

After its creation, the Fourth Committee dealt primarily with issues that also faced the Security Council. Since the descriptions of their issues are so similar, the Fourth Committee took on issues that the Security Council felt should be debated by the entire world community. While this was a very helpful function of the Fourth Committee, the committee seemed not to be using its assets and its mandate to the fullest. Soon, its jurisdiction expanded to its current state.

The Fourth Committee, now called the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, continues to find its niche within the General Assembly. Its role seems to be defining itself as we enter the twenty-first century. The constantly Fourth Committee works with issues of decolonization, and deals with issues pertaining to residents of parts of the world which made up former colonial possessions. It also works to emphasize the rights of those still under colonial rule, and attempts to push the world toward self-determination, which is stated in the UN Charter to be every people's right.

Recently, the Fourth Committee has dealt with the civil disputes in the Former Yugoslavia, attempting to put the pieces of that torn nation back together. Also, the committee has dealt with the problem relating to the Kurdish people in Iraq and in Turkey, and the Palestinian population under the rule of Israel. The Committee has also dealt with the development of Africa as the continent struggles with self-determination and attempts to put its governments to positive use.

TOPIC ONE

# Peacekeeping Operations in Current and Former Colonies

## Introduction

Peacekeeping and military observation operations are some of the most important and visible aspects of the United Nations' work. Currently, there are some 15 peacekeeping operations employing 45,145 military and civilian officials from 87 member states.[1] As provided in the UN Charter, these operations are under the control of the Security Council. In its oversight role, however, SPECPOL has a responsibility to ensure that peacekeeping operations are carried out in accordance with the principles of decolonization and self-determination.

There are six peacekeeping operations that fall under SPECPOL's responsibility. Western Sahara is a Non-Self-Governing Territory listed by the General Assembly. East Timor, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Cyprus, and India and Pakistan are all former non-self-governing territories that achieved independence under UN stewardship.

## Statement of the Problem

The operations under consideration face several major problems. First, several of them have been criticized for lack of impartiality. This applies particularly to the missions in Cyprus (UNFICYP), DR Congo (MONUC), and India-Pakistan (UNMOGIP). Second, some of the missions have been in place for years with little progress and with no end in sight. This is especially true of the operations in Western Sahara (MINURSO), India-Pakistan (UNMOGIP), and Cyprus (UNFICYP). Third, most of the missions are understaffed and undersupplied.

SPECPOL must review all six of the operations in current and former non-self governing territories. The Committee should address the lack of progress in certain missions, and take steps to ensure that self-determination remains a primary goal.

## History and Relevant International Action

There are currently six peacekeeping operations in non-self-governing territories and countries that have achieved self-governance under UN guidance. These are the peacekeeping operations that SPECPOL will review. The history of each mission will be presented individually.

*India-Pakistan – UNMOGIP*

Shortly after India and Pakistan achieved independence in 1947, fighting over the disputed territory of Kashmir broke out. In 1948, the Security Council established the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) to mediate the dispute. The warring states signed a ceasefire agreement, the Karachi Agreement, in July of 1949. UNCIP was to ensure that the ceasefire was observed. In 1951, UNCIP was dissolved and replaced by the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP).[2]

In 1971, fighting again broke out between India and Pakistan. The Line of Control that was established the next year deviated only slightly from the line established by the Karachi Agreement. However, India held that UNMOGIP's mandate—to observe the Karachi Agreement ceasefire—had expired. Since 1972, the Indian authorities have not reported any Pakistani violations of the ceasefire to UNMOGIP, and have restricted the group's movement on the Indian side of the Line of Control.[3]

On several occasions in 2001 and 2002, Indian and Pakistani forces exchanged mortar and small arms fire.

Although India has held since 1971 that UNMOGIP had no mandate in Kashmir, and has not been especially cooperative with the UN observers, it has always tolerated the mission's presence. Recently, this has begun to change. In November of 2001, India reacted negatively to statements made by the head of UNMOGIP, Major-General Hermann K. Loidolt.[4] The normally diplomatic Mr. Loidolt suggested in a public statement that both countries were "playing political games" in Kashmir, and that the Indian administration was posturing in preparation for upcoming elections. In response, the Indian government issued a statement holding the United Nations responsible for the Kashmir crisis and reiterating its stance that UNMOGIP had no mandate in India. The Secretary-General, however, holds that the mandate can be terminated only by a decision of the Security Council.[5]

There are currently 44 military personnel employed by UNMOGIP, responsible for patrolling a Line of Control 450 miles long in mountainous terrain. UNMOGIP derives its mandate from Security Council Resolution 307 (1971), which reaffirmed its observation role after the 1971 hostilities. The mandate is indefinite.

*Cyprus – UNFICYP*

Cyprus gained independence from Britain in 1960. To balance power between the Greek Cypriot majority and the large Turkish minority, the constitution provided for a Greek Cypriot President and a Turkish Cypriot Vice President. The seats in Parliament were also to be split between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. However, this power-sharing system proved unstable and violence erupted in 1963. Turkey and Greece provided support to the two sides.

In March 1964, the Security Council established the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) to prevent further violence and restore law and order.[6] The situation worsened in 1974, when ultra-nationalist Greek Cypriots, hoping for unification with Greece, staged

a coup. In response, the Turkish military occupied the northern third of the island, where the Turkish Cypriot community proclaimed the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). UNFICYP's mandate was extended to create and patrol a buffer zone between the two areas of control and ensure the maintenance of a ceasefire. The Republic of Cyprus remained the internationally recognized authority on the island—only Turkey has recognized the TRNC.

UNFICYP has patrolled the buffer zone and maintained an informal ceasefire since 1964. Hundreds of violations are reported each year, but most stop short of physical violence.[7] With some frequency, Greek or Turkish Cypriots stray on to the opposing side of the island and get arrested by the authorities. Cyprus remains one of the most heavily militarized zones in the world. For the 200,000 residents of the TRNC—of whom only half are native Turkish Cypriots—there are 30,000 Turkish soldiers deployed.

The situation in Cyprus has been exacerbated by the Cyprus' bid to join the European Union. The Republic of Cyprus is scheduled to join the EU by 2004 in the first wave of expansion. This has placed renewed pressured on the TRNC to achieved international recognition, and it has begun showing increased hostility to the UN and to the EU. After UNFICYP's mandate was renewed in 2001, the TRNC government complained that it had been left out of the negotiations.[8] It announced that it did not find UNFICYP's extended mandate "valid and binding." The president of the TRNC, Rauf Denkta°, warned that the Republic of Cyprus' succession to the EU could lead to a Greek-Turkish war.[9] Turkey suggested it might annex the TRNC if Cyprus is admitted to the EU before a political solution is found.[10]

UNFICYP consists of 1227 military troops, 35 civilian police, and 139 civilian personnel.[11] It patrols a buffer zone stretching 180 km across the island and comprising about 3% of its area. Its current mandate, extended by Security Council Resolution 1416 (2002), expires 15 December 2002.

*Western Sahara – MINURSO*

Western Sahara was a non-self-governing territory administered by Spain until 1976. When Spain withdrew from the territory, neighboring states Mauritania and Morocco both claimed it. The Algerian-backed Saharawi group Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (POLISARIO Front), which had originally been formed to fight for independence from Spain, opposed these claims. Mauritania renounced its claim to Western Sahara in 1979, but Morocco still claims sovereignty over the territory.[12]

In the 1980s, the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity sought a peaceful solution to the conflict. Their efforts culminated in the 1991 establishment of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), which had the dual role of supervising a ceasefire between POLISARIO and Morocco and arranging a referendum in which residents of Western Sahara would choose between independence and Moroccan sovereignty.[13]

After establishing a ceasefire in 1991, MINURSO set about the task of compiling a list of eligible voters. The MINURSO Identification Commission faced many problems, including the large Saharawi refugee population living in Algeria and disputes between POLISARIO and Morocco about voting eligibility. In 1996, after several years of frustration, the identification process was suspended and MINURSO's civilian contingent was withdrawn.

In 1997, after a series of talks between POLISARIO and Morocco held under the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara (former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker III), most of the key differences regarding eligibility were resolved and the identification process was completed. However, key differences remain concerning the appeals process for applicants denied the right to vote.

Progress in the referendum process has stagnated. In February 2002, Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his envoy, Mr. Baker, outlined a series of options for Western Sahara.[14] The first involved implementing the original settlement plan without the concurrence of the two parties. The second centered on Baker's Framework Agreement, which calls for an autonomous Western Sahara under Moroccan sovereignty. The third option follows a POLISARIO proposal of dividing the territory. The final option was to terminate MINURSO's mission entirely.

Morocco, along with the United States, Britain, and France, supports the Baker autonomy plan.[15] The POLISARIO Front, however, has dismissed the Framework Agreement and announced that it will accept only complete sovereignty or a division of the territory as determined by a referendum.[16] King Mohammed VI of Morocco, for his part, announced that he will "not renounce an inch" of the territory.[17]

Although the 1991 ceasefire is nominally still in place, POLISARIO has threatened to resume guerilla action if its demands are not met. Both sides still hold several hundred prisoners of war.[18]

MINURSO currently employs 243 personnel; most of its civilian contingent has been withdrawn.[19] MINURSO's mandate was extended to January 31, 2002, by Security Council resolution 1429 of 30 July 2002.

*Sierra Leone – UNAMSIL*

Sierra Leone was a British colony until 1961. The current conflict began in 1991, when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) launched an attempt to overthrow the government. After a year of fighting, Sierra Leone's army stopped fighting the RUF and overthrew the government itself. The coup, however, did not deter the RUF, which continued its attacks.

Elections were held in 1996, and the army handed over power to the winner, Alhaji Dr. Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. The RUF did not participate in the election and did not acknowledge the results. Later in 1996, the Secretary-

General's Special Envoy in Sierra Leone, Berhanu Dinka, negotiated a peace agreement between the RUF and Kabbah's government. In 1997, peace came to an end as another coup d'état sent the government into exile in Guinea. This time, the army had allied with the RUF. [20]

Despite pressure to step down from the UN and other international organizations, the RUF/army junta ruled the country until early 1998. In February of that year, the Military Observer Group (ECOMOG) of the Economic Community of West African States, in response to an attack by RUF troops, launched an attack that led to the removal of the junta. Kabbah returned to office.

In June 1998, the Security Council established the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), whose unarmed teams monitored the continuing violence. The RUF attack did not end. RUF forces killed, mutilated, raped, or forcibly enlisted many civilians in fighting that peaked in January 1999, when rebel troops retook the capitol of Freetown and the Security Council evacuated all UNOMSIL personnel.

The Secretary-General's Special Representative, Francis Okelo, responded to the attack with a new series of diplomatic efforts that culminated in the signing of the Lome peace accords in July 1999. The Security Council also responded by replacing UNOMSIL with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), a larger mission that included a military contingent. After enlargements in 2000 and 2001, UNAMSIL reached a maximum size of 17,500 military personnel.[21] It was charged with maintaining the Lome accords and helping to disarm and demobilize rebel combatants.[22]

In May 2001, the RUF agreed to surrender its arms to UNAMSIL.[23] The disarmament plan proceeded fairly well, through slowly. It became apparent that the RUF had abducted a huge number of children and forced them to fight. In December 2001, UNAMSIL reported that over 10% of the rebels it had disarmed had been children.[24] Children (as young as 13 at the time of their abduction) reported being forcibly administered cocaine before being sent into battle.[25]

UNAMSIL came under attack in March 2002, when the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the British charity Save the Children alleged that workers affiliated with UNAMSIL and other relief organizations had sexually exploited children in refugee camps in the country. [26] The Secretary General launched an investigation that turned up allegations against at least 67 workers. UNAMSIL representatives admit that charges of sexual abuse are commonplace.

In July 2002, Sierra Leone held its first general elections since the beginning of the civil war ten years earlier. Observers from the European Union and non-governmental organizations confirmed that the elections were free and fair "taking into account the circumstances and the history."[27]

UNAMSIL remains at nearly full force with 17,356 military personnel and civilian police. Its mandate current mandate expires in September 2002.

*DR Congo – MONUC*

Zaire achieved independence from Belgium in 1960. In 1994, Hutu extremists in Rwanda attempted genocide of the Tutsi minority. When the Tutsis seized power, over a million Hutus fled to refugee camps in Zaire fearing retribution. Worried about the armed Hutu militias on its border, Rwanda supported a Tutsi rebellion in Zaire and helped to install a marginal warlord, Laurent Kabila, as president to replace the ousted dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.[28] Kabila established the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Former members of the genocidal Rwandan militias remained camped on the Rwanda-DRC border. Apparently unconvinced that Kabila could keep these forces in check, Rwanda sponsored a fresh revolution in the DRC at 1998. The war pitted the rebel Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) and the Rwandan military against Kabila's forces. Uganda also sent troops to aid the rebels, while Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia supported the DRC. In July1999, the countries involved signed a ceasefire agreement in Lusaka (Zambia). The Ugandan-backed rebel group, the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo, also signed the agreement.

The Security Council created an observation team to ensure compliance with the ceasefire agreement. The original force of 90 military observers was expanded in February 2000 into the United Nations Observer Mission in Congo (MONUC), which constituted 5,537 military personnel. MONUC's mandate was to monitor the ceasefire agreement and facilitate humanitarian assistance.[29]

Despite the ceasefire agreement and the new UN peacekeeping operation, violence did not subside. In early 2001, before MONUC was fully deployed, Laurent Kabila was assassinated. His son, Joseph, took over as president and vowed to revive the Lusaka agreement.

MONUC forces have had a difficult time enforcing the ceasefire. Rebel forces often attack peacekeeping troops. On February 12, 2002, a MONUC plane was hit by machine gun fire while landing in a rebel-controlled town.[30] In August 2002, a MONUC helicopter carrying humanitarian workers was turned back at gunpoint by more than 100 RCD soldiers.[31]

In May 2002, there was a mutiny of RCD rebels in the city of Kisangani. A group of soldiers calling itself the RCD-Originale took over the local radio station and encouraged the residents of Kisangani to drive the Rwandans out of the town. The local branch of the Rwandan-backed RCD, the RCD-Goma, quickly put down the mutiny. In the chaotic reprisals that followed in the following two days, many civilians were killed.[32] MONUC issued a preliminary report accusing the RCD of serious human rights violations, including summary executions.[33] The Kisangani uprising has brought MONUC under criticism from all sides. After the report was published, the RCD accused MONUC's chief, Amos Namanga Ngongi, of pro-

DRC bias demanded his replacement.[34] On the other hand, Congolese activists joined Amnesty International in blaming the murders on MONUC's inaction.[35]

The "invisible war" in the DRC is one of the most destructive and complicated engagements in the history of modern warfare. Estimates of the death toll range from 1 to 3 million, with millions more displaced.[36] Infighting between the various rebel factions and the involvement of neighboring states has complicated matters. Traditional, poorly armed Mai Mai militias have also become involved in the fighting, switching alliances frequently and demanding to be included in the peace process.[37]

In July 2002, Joseph Kabila and Rwandan President Paul Kagame announced a much-praised peace deal negotiated in Pretoria, South Africa. Under the terms of the agreement, Rwanda will withdraw its 20,000 troops from the DRC, and the DRC will disarm and repatriate the Rwandan Hutu rebels based within its borders.[38] MONUC is to ensure compliance with the new deal. The agreement is especially promising since it takes steps to ensure Rwanda's security—steps that were missing from the Lusaka agreement. However, the timeline for the implementation of the agreement was set at an unrealistic 90 days; it is unclear how long it will take the two states to comply. It is also doubtful that Kabila's forces will be able to round up the Hutu militias. MONUC's mandate does not authorize it to assist in this task.

Since the signing of the Pretoria agreement, various rebel groups have continued fighting. In August 2002, fighting between a Ugandan-backed arm of the RCD and local tribal militias killed at least 85 people.[39]

MONUC's current mandate expires in June 2003. The force consists of 3,719 military personnel, although it is authorized to include up to 5,537.

*East Timor – UNMISET*

Until 1975, East Timor was a Non-Self-Governing Territory administered by Portugal. When Portugal attempted to establish a provisional government that would determine the status of East Timor, civil war broke out between those calling for independence and those supporting integration with Indonesia. Portugal withdrew from the territory, and Indonesia annexed East Timor in 1976. The United Nations never recognized the integration.[40]

In response to pressure from the UN to withdraw from the territory, Indonesia proposed a limited autonomy for East Timor. A series of agreements between Indonesia and Portugal, signed in 1999, entrusted the Secretary-General of the UN to conduct a popular consultation to determine whether the East Timorese accepted the autonomy proposal. To carry out the consultation, the Security Council established the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET). On 30 August 1999, the East Timorese voted to reject the Indonesian proposal and begin the transition to independence. However, pro-integration militias—supported by the Indonesian military—began a campaign of looting and arson.[41] Eventually, Indonesian forces withdrew from East Timor, along with the Indonesian administration.

In October 1999, the Security Council created the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) to maintain order in the territory and supervise the transition to independence. Two years later, East Timorese voters elected a Constituent Assembly delegated with the task of creating a constitution for the territory. On 20 May 2002, The Constituent Assembly was transformed into the country's first Parliament, and assumed control of East Timor from UNTAET.

Security Council resolution 1410 (2002) created the United Nation Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET) to maintain security and provide stability during the post-independence period. It consisted of 5,000 military personnel and 1,250 civilian police, as well as a civilian contingent focusing on humanitarian concerns. UNMISET is intended to reduce in size and dissolve entirely within the next two years. Its current mandate expires in 2003.[42]

## Analysis

Of the six current peacekeeping operations in current and former colonies, only the missions in East Timor and Sierra Leone show some signs of success, although it remains to be seen if those countries will be able to reduce their dependence on UN troops in the coming years. In general, the operations under consideration have shown little progress and are horribly understaffed.

*India-Pakistan*

UNMOGIP is the oldest, and perhaps least successful, peacekeeping operations under consideration. Its staff of 44 military personnel is inadequate to supervise the line of control in the rugged terrain of Kashmir, and India has made it increasingly clear that the UN troops are not welcome. It is not surprising that UNMOGIP has been unable to prevent the occasional firefights and mortar attacks that occur across the line of control. The only function it has been able to perform with any degree of success is that of reporting ceasefire violations—and that information, according the commander of the forces, comes mainly from local papers rather than military patrols.[43]

The plight of UNMOGIP underlines the need for bilateral support of peacekeeping operations. It is severely handicapped by India's insistence that the UN has no business in Kashmir. On one hand, it is clear that the force needs to be enlarged if it is to have any hope of maintaining the 1971 ceasefire. On the other hand, it is obvious that a larger force will receive even less cooperation from India than the current one.

For SPECPOL, more critical than UNMOGIP's failure to maintain the ceasefire is its failure to make any progress towards Kashmiri self-determination or any kind

of political resolution. The line of control has barely moved since India and Pakistan achieved independence, and still a resolution of the conflict is not in sight. In accordance with the UN Charter, UNMOGIP derives its legitimacy by the threat to international security that exists in Kashmir, not by its status as a disputed territory. Nonetheless, SPECPOL must take steps to ensure that the principal of self-determination is being pursued wherever it is possible.

*Cyprus*

UNFICYP is the second longest-running operation ongoing in a former colony. Like UNMOGIP, it has not made much progress towards settling the underlying territorial dispute. However, it has been more successful in preventing violent along the buffer zone. It has fulfilled its mission even as its size has declined from a peak of 6,000 in 1964 to 1,200 today.[44]

Despite occasional disputes and minor diplomatic crises in the past 40 years, the resolution of the Cyprus problem has seldom appeared to be a pressing issue on the UN's agenda. But Cyprus' impending ascension to the European Union may change that. For President Denkta[o] and the government of the TRNC, the 2004 date for the Republic of Cyprus' acceptance seems to be a pressing deadline by which to gain international legitimacy. Although the UN has always stressed the political equality of the Republic of Cyprus and the TRNC, Cyprus' admission to the EU under the control of the southern government seems to reaffirm the Republic of Cyprus' sovereignty over the island.

Indeed, the recognized (Greek) Cypriot administration has always enjoyed the role of the legitimate government and cast the TRNC as a Turkish occupation administration. Even the post of Vice President and the 24 seats in Parliament reserved for Turkish Cypriots have remained vacant since 1964.[45] Now, the EU ascension could bring this issue into the spotlight. Denkta[o]' complaints about the TRNC not being consulted before UNFICYP's mandate was extended, and his claim that the force's presence on the island is illegitimate, can easily be interpreted as posturing in preparation for a renewed bid for international recognition.

As for the threats of Turkish annexation of Northern Cyprus or a Greek-Turkish war, these are probably exaggerated. Considering Turkey's own aspirations of EU membership and its status, along with Greece, as a member of NATO, it seems unlikely that it would risk war or a diplomatic disaster for 1,400 square miles of Mediterranean island, whatever its rhetorical or political significance. Nonetheless, the heavy military presence on the island and increasing tension make UNFICYP's mission more critical than ever.

*Western Sahara*

Disagreements between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front have reduced MINURSO's mission from an optimistic campaign for Saharawari self-determination to a pure peacekeeping operation. The mission has fulfilled its role well for the last several years, but it is poorly positioned to maintain the ceasefire if POLISARIO makes good on its threat to resume guerilla action.

Secretary-General Annan has made it one of his personal campaigns to resolve the Western Sahara issue. He appointed James Baker, his Personal Envoy, for just this reason. However, from the point of view of self-determination, the strong support for Baker's Framework Agreement has a fatal flaw: it does not anticipate the results of the referendum which, despite a decade of work, has yet to take place. The future of Western Sahara must be determined not on the basis of diplomatic convenience, but on the principle of self-determination. If the United Nations stubbornly backs the Framework Agreement, the POLISARIO front would be justified in claiming UN bias and refusing to accept the decision; resumed violence would be inevitable.

The problem facing MINURSO is therefore still one of deciding who is eligible to vote in the eventual referendum. This dispute has paralyzed the operation from its infancy, and it does not appear easy to solve. Morocco and the POLISARIO Front have accused each other rigging voters' lists. The issue is not made any clearer by Western Sahara's primarily migratory population or the large number of Saharawari refugees living outside of the borders of the territory.

Annan's announcement of the four options for Western Sahara—referendum without consensus of the two parties, Baker's Framework Agreement for autonomy within Morocco, division of the territory, or the termination of MINURSO—was clearly meant at least partially as an ultimatum to Morocco and POLISARIO to settle their differences at last. At this point, any of the options would probably lead to resumed violence in the territory. Each of the first three is unacceptable to at least one side, and the termination of MINURSO would be tantamount to legitimating Morocco's claim. The fact is that any solution will likely require UN forces on the ground, either in a peacekeeping or supervisory role.

*Sierra Leone*

The successful disarmament of the RUF and Sierra Leone's recent elections represent real success for UNAMSIL. The mission's work, however, is far from complete. Although all of the major RUF strongholds have been disarmed, UN peacekeepers now have their hands full trying to control frequent riots and other incidents of violence. Furthermore, UNAMSIL faces the unpleasant task of reintegrating the RUF fighters, many of whom were abducted at a young age and spent their adolescence as soldiers in a grisly war. Many of these child fighters do not want to go home; some fear retribution for the atrocities they helped commit during the war.

The truly remarkable thing about UNAMSIL is its size. Both in terms of personnel and budget, it is by far the

largest peacekeeping mission the United Nations has ever undertaken. Compared to the other missions under consideration, UNAMSIL had both a wider range of goals and a broader authority to pursue them. UNAMSIL's involvement in disarming RUF troops, for example, contrasts with MONUC's current inability to assist in the disarmament of Rwandan Hutu militias that is required by the latest peace agreement. This authority helped UNAMSIL realize RUF demobilization and the reestablishment of democratic rule, but it also made the peacekeepers' position more hazardous: eighty-seven UNAMSIL personnel have been killed to date.[46]

UNAMSIL has already completed its most difficult work . Now that the RUF is disarmed, the mission's main tasks are helping with the reintegration of soldiers and refugees, and the policing of major cities. The major question is when Sierra Leone will return to some kind of normality. Now that the war over, formally and in reality, the member states contributing troops to UNAMSIL will expect the mission decrease in size. The political situation in the country, however, is still unstable. Furthermore, the current overwhelmingly military force is not the best suited to carry out the humanitarian tasks that lie ahead. On the other hand, a reduction of UNAMSIL's presence could precipitate a new outbreak of violence from the RUF, the army, or another group.

*DR Congo*

The task facing MONUC is huge. Even in light of the recent ceasefire between the DRC and Rwanda, there are hundreds of thousands of heavily armed and poorly organized rebels, some backed by neighboring Uganda, who have not been party to any ceasefire agreement and who would have no credible way of ensuring compliance if they were.

To realize the scale of the MONUC's mission, consider Sierra Leone: UNAMSIL involves more than 17,000 soldiers. Like UNAMSIL, MONUC is charged with helping to restore the rule of law in an African country devastated by civil war. The DRC is over 30 times the size of Sierra Leone and has over 50 million inhabitants—yet MONUC is authorized to deploy fewer than 6,000 soldiers. A force large enough to monitor every town in Congo cannot be mustered by the United Nations. In the words of former US African Affairs secretary Susan Rice, "the peace will sink or swim on the will of the parties."[47] That will is obviously lacking, and it appears that the parties are far too diverse and fragmented to develop it.

An important question is why, in light of the UN's experience in Sierra Leone, MONUC remains as small as it is. The DRC's war is as old as Sierra Leone's, and more destructive. The Lusaka agreement and the recent DRC-Rwanda accord suggest that the Congolese peace process is, at least on paper, as advanced as the one in place when UNAMSIL was deployed. What makes the situation in the DRC so different from the one in Sierra Leone?

One possible answer lies in the atrocities committed by both sides during the latter conflict. Images of child soldiers and mutilated civilians served to bring Sierra Leone's conflict to the center of the international stage. But war crimes have been committed in the DRC as well; they continue to be committed practically before MONUC's eyes. The conflict in the Congo has fittingly been dubbed "the invisible war." While Sierra Leone's victims plastered television screens and newspapers the world over, the victims of the Congolese conflict receive little media attention in the rest of the world. The apparent degree to which the lack of publicity has restricted MONUC's size is a cause for concern.

It is not possible to compare the war in the DRC to that in Sierra Leone in every respect. The involvement of other nations, for one thing, makes it politically difficult to give MONUC the kind of free hand that UNAMSIL has. It is nonetheless clear that MONUC's current size is insufficient to make much difference in the decade-old Congolese conflict.

*East Timor*

It is too early to pass judgment UNMISET's success or failure. Its very existence and unique mandate, however, are a tribute to the success of its predecessor. Perhaps because of the clear international consensus on East Timor's political status after the popular consultation of 1999, UNTEAT was able to achieve its goal with some finality. The disputes over Kashmir and Western Sahara have none of the political clarity of the East Timorese issue, precisely because no referenda have been conducted.

The UN mission in East Timor was from the beginning one of transition. The first stage of this transition, the establishment of a sovereign East Timorese state, was completed under the guidance of UNTEAT. The next stage will be the establishment of all of the institutions of a sovereign state. The young legislature and judiciary will have to test their wings, and police and emergency services will have to be trained and equipped.

The conflicts in India-Pakistan and the DR Congo are, at least in part, the legacy of colonialism and of mistakes made during decolonization. Had the United Kingdom answered the question of sovereignty over Kashmir before detaching itself from India and Pakistan, the current conflict might never have arisen. The government of the DR Congo, like that of its predecessor Zaire, has not been able to effectively govern a country that was formed without consideration of cultural and ethnic divisions in its population—it is, in the words of one analyst, "to vast and diverse to be a viable country."[48] UNMISET now has the opportunity and challenge of ensuring that these mistakes are not repeated in the young nation of East Timor. It is a job just as pressing and difficult as that of the other operations.

## Possible Solutions

Each of the peacekeeping operations has its own unique problems and demands its own solutions. SPECPOL can, however, identify and address of the common problems plaguing operations in current and former colonies.

The most obvious of these is the lack of adequate personnel. The achievement of peace in Sierra Leone attests to the ability of international military forces to end even complex and entrenched disputes. The less successful operations—especially MONUC, but also MINURSO and UNMOGIP—will never be able to match UNAMSIL's success without access to UNAMSIL's resources. The UN's budget, though, is limited, as is the willingness of member states to commit their own troops to dangerous missions in foreign countries. SPECPOL might suggest a review of peacekeeping operations with an eye towards downsizing or discontinuation. While troops in, for instance, East Timor and Cyprus clearly do great service to the residents of those countries daily, it is questionable whether UNMOGIP provides anything but a ceremonial role. The impotence of under-staffed missions also precipitates a lot of the criticism against them: witness claims of MONUC's inaction in the face of human rights abuses.

UNAMSIL's size also suggests that public opinion can play a big part in fostering the political will to establish peacekeeping operations that are large enough to be successful; SPECPOL could help shape this public opinion in many ways, from creating new public-relations initiatives to addressing the criticism against the current operations.

A second concern of SPECPOL is the overwhelmingly military inclination of the peacekeeping operations in former colonies. While their mandates typically extend beyond peacekeeping to humanitarian and other activities that can be loosely described as "nation building," most of the missions are equipped only for military and observation roles. This issue seems particularly acute in East Timor. SPECPOL could address this issue by suggesting a different composition for peacekeeping forces, or establishing an umbrella institution that might advise current and future peacekeeping operations on the non-military aspects of their missions.

As the situation in Western Sahara, Cyprus, and India-Pakistan make clear, a peace mission alone cannot hope to solve conflicts. Political cooperation of all of the interested parties is also necessary. Whether or not accusations of bias are true, the fact that such accusations are made seriously damages the credibility, and therefore the effectiveness, of peacekeeping operations. While the individual cases are beyond the scope of SPECPOL's current discussion, there are some measures that SPECPOL might be able to take to help current and future operations cooperate with the parties to the conflict. Some peacekeeping have been approved only on the condition that the parties engage in regular consultations with UN representatives—SPECPOL could institutionalize and expand this practice.

## Conclusion

Although moderately successful in achieving the immediate goal of peace, UN operations in current and former colonies have been largely unsuccessful in pursuing the more fundamental goals of self-determination and nation building. Some have seen no progress after years or decades of work, while others have mandates that appear impossible to fulfill. The Fourth Committee needs to examine the peacekeeping operations in current and former non-self-governing territories with a critical eye towards their success as instruments of decolonization.

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TOPIC TWO

# Media Coverage of Terrorist Actions and the War against Terrorism

## Introduction

Terrorism and the current war against international terrorism have been a major focus of media attention in the past year. Much of the media coverage has elicited criticism for all sides, with the accusations ranging from sensationalism to bias to outright war-mongering. At the same time, governments waging the war against international terrorism have come under fire for censorship and media manipulation. The Fourth Committee is concerned with the spread of information and its impact on political, economic, and social circumstances in the various member states. As such, the current criticism surrounding media coverage of terrorist acts and the war against terrorism must be addressed.

## Statement of the Problem

Access to independent news media is a human right, as established in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (Annex I). In the case of terrorist attacks, however, the rights of an independent press have been called into question. The attacks have come from two sides. First, reporters may intentionally or unintentionally release information that increases the risk of terrorist attacks; reporters might release information about counter-terrorism measures that reveal defensive weaknesses, or even unknowingly broadcast the internal messages of terrorist groups. Second, media treatment of religious terrorism (and counter-terrorism) can fuel bias, misunderstanding, and racism. Often, this takes the form of sensationalistic and nationalistic news reporting.

The Fourth committee must find a balance between the fundamental desire for a free press, the security concerns that lead to censorship, and the goal of unbiased distribution of information. Furthermore, it must accomplish this without infringing on Member States' sovereign rights over their own media sources.

## History

*Security and Censorship*

Media censorship during times of conflict is certainly nothing new. During the Second World War, combatants on all sides were widely known to censor newscasts and release misinformation. As Winston Churchill once said, "In wartime, truth is so precious that she must always be attended by a bodyguard of lies." In the context of media coverage of terrorist actions, however, censorship tends more towards the withholding of information from reporters and requests by governments for media self-censorship. This variety of censorship can be traced back to the Falklands War of 1982, according to a study by the Centre for Public Integrity.[1]

During the Persian Gulf War, the United States employed a similar kind of "pre-censorship" known as media pooling. Only a limited pool of reporters was given access to combat zones, and reporters were always supervised by a public affairs officer.[2] Soldiers were forbidden to give off-record interviews. The buzzword of the day was *Information Operations* – the media, said the U.S. government, is an important weapon of war, and irresponsible media coverage might put U.S. soldiers' lives in danger. The result of the policies, of course, was that American media content was strictly controlled by the U.S. military. It was widely believed that the military used this control not only to protect confidential information, but also to manipulate public opinion. After the war, a number of publishers filed suit against the government for violation of the principle of freedom of the press, laid out in the U.S. Constitution, but this suit was unsuccessful.[3]

After the terrorist attacks in September 2001, the United States Department of Defense set up the Office of Strategic Influence, which was charged with coordinating overseas information campaigns.[4] On the 26th of February of the same year, the office was closed after complaints that its primary purpose was to provide misinformation to journalists and increase support for the American military campaign in Afghanistan.

Many governments request that the media voluntarily restrict coverage of terrorist and counter-terrorist actions for a variety of reasons. The U.S. government, for example, asked newscasters either to not broadcast videos released by Osama bin Laden, or else to edit the tapes before showing them, for fear that the tapes could include hidden messages to al Qaeda agents in the United States.[5]

Government requests for responsible journalism—that is, requests that the media voluntarily and independently censor potentially dangerous reports—have not always been followed. In both Germany and in the U.S., coverage of confidential military information relating to the war in Afghanistan has been blamed for putting troops in undue danger.

*Racism and Bias in the Media*

Every media source is biased to some degree. Western media sources have been strongly criticized for their pro-U.S. bias and unfavorable portrayal of Islam in coverage of the terrorist attacks on the U.S. and the ensuing war in Afghanistan. The Canadian Islamic Congress pointed out in a news conference that frequent references to terrorists as "militant Muslims," "Islamic terrorists," and similar phrases failed to draw a distinction between mainstream Islam and the radical interpretation adhered to by the Taliban, al Qaeda, and similar groups.[6]

The perceived failure of Western media sources to provide impartial coverage of the war on terrorism has had some serious side effects in the Arab world. The government of Malaysia, for example, quietly removed the U.S.-based news magazines Time, Newsweek, and Far Eastern Economic Review from circulation following unfavorable coverage of the country.[7] The worldwide popularity of the al Jazeera satellite news station, known as the "CNN of the Arab World" has increased significantly since September 11, as viewers around the world look for alternatives to newscasters—like CNN, BBC, and Reuters—with perceived Western biases.[8]

Western media is certainly not alone in portraying a biased view of the war against terrorism. In many Arab countries, print media has implied that the attack on America was not planned by Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda network at all, but was in fact part of a "Jewish conspiracy designed to trigger a U.S. attack on Islam."[9] Some told readers that Jews working in the World Trade Centers received advanced warning and were told to stay at home on September 11, or that food supplies airdropped by the U.S. in Afghanistan were intentionally poisoned. A Saudi newspaper published an article (later retracted) explaining that Jews use gentile blood to bake cakes for religious festivals.[10]

## Analysis

*Security and Censorship*

Clearly, governments cannot be asked to provide full media transparency during a war. Information about strategies, troop movements, or even battles won or lost can be a valuable weapon to the enemy. The real problem with censorship of war coverage is when it moves past protection of confidential military information and becomes part of a public-relations effort to increase support for the war.

Since the Vietnam War, the conventional wisdom has been that domestic public opinion, influenced heavily through the media, has the potential to lose wars.[11] Public relations efforts are therefore an essential part of the military campaign. In the war against terrorism, the role of PR has expanded; now the military must convince not only American citizens to support the war, but also skeptical foreign allies.

Such activities are understandable. A war, like any political policy, needs to be justified to the public who are meant to support it. The problem lies in the fact that, through measures like media pooling, the military has a unique ability to go beyond putting a positive spin on the facts: they can actually control what facts are released. When this is done in the name of security, it is condonable. When it is done in the name of public opinion, it is not. The problem lies in telling the difference between the two cases.

A frequent argument put forth by the governments waging the current war is that the news media has a responsibility to protect soldiers' lives by withholding sensitive information. On the other hand, many publishers and broadcasters believe that one of their primary responsibilities is to ensure that the military remains answerable for its actions. Inasmuch as both positions are valid, the important question to address is how to strike a balance between the news media's two contradictory responsibilities. One compromise that has frequently been suggested by both governments and media is voluntary self-censorship.[12] Such a method claims to protect the security of sensitive information without violating the freedom of the press; the problem, of course, is that the press and the government often have different views about what constitutes responsible reporting. Additionally, media outlets do not always comply with government requests.

Another problem with the voluntary censorship argument is that it provides little protection against the kind of public-relations media manipulation that is of concern in the current war. During the Gulf War, for example, U.S. media outlets often complied with government censorship requests, not just to withhold information regarding troop movements or other sensitive military information, but also to downplay enemy casualties and American military shortfalls.[13] Videos of laser-guided bombs hitting their targets were played and re-played on American television, while films of them going astray were simply not aired. If the main concern about censorship is, as many say it is, that the news media can become a PR organ of the military, then voluntary self-censorship is no different than imposed censorship.

*Racism and Bias in the Media*

Biases in the media stem from several sources. Every report is colored, first of all, by the opinion and culture of the writer, editor, and publisher. Such biases are unintentional and probably unavoidable. The tendency for Western news sources to rely on phrases like "Islamic terrorist" and for Arabic news sources to refer to "the American war on what they call terrorism" probably fall into this category. What many Muslims perceive as an attack on their religion, the writers probably see only as an easy description of al Qaeda terrorists; what Arab journalists see as an acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the terrorists' cause, Americans tend to see as transfer of blame to the victims of attacks. Bias, after all, is in the eye of beholder: even the Qatari news station al Jazeera, which U.S. observers tend to see as violently pro-Arab, is routinely censored and has received about 450 complaints from Arab governments since its founding in 1996.[14] Whether biases like these can—or should—be reduced by national or international action is far from certain.

One potential problem of even minor biases is that consumers of news media often turn away from sources they perceive as biased against them, as the popularity of al Jazeera attests. To the extent that Western media desire access to the Arab world, they work against themselves by

harboring a pro-Western bias; the recent censorship in Malaysia highlights this point.

More serious biases occur as media sources allow culture and opinion to invade their "impartial" reports. Newspapers that present as fact the idea that a Jewish conspiracy masterminded the World Trade Center attack are certainly guilty of this, but the problem is not limited to the Arab world or to the current war on terrorism. In 1997, the trial of Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols (for the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City) had to be relocated after a federal judge found that they had been "demonized" by the local media.[15] Also guilty of harboring flagrant biases are Western papers that accused al Qaeda of the attacks long before any objective evidence was available—that the accusations have since proven correct is no justification for their publication in the first place. Inasmuch as the generally accepted responsibility of the news media is to provide truthful reports of world events, such biases are greatly worrying.

A further issue with media biases is that they tend to promote themselves. Publishers of Arabic-language news media react to the biases apparent in reports by CNN (and other broadcasters), and respond by emphasizing the Arab point of view in their own papers. Of course, the biases of others always appear more glaring that one's own biases, and it is easy for media sources to see themselves as impartial compared to "the other guys."

Especially among Western news media, the final source of bias can be traced to reporters' desire maintain good relations with the government and the military. It is widely assumed that U.S. broadcasters refrained from running stories suggesting a connection between the September attacks and U.S. foreign policy (from the Afghan war of the 1980s to current Near East policy) for fear of being blacklisted by government information sources. On top of this, commercial news sources are always cautious about airing stories that run contrary to popular opinion, for fear of loosing viewers and readers. It is difficult to fault news providers for harboring biases purely for self-preservation.

Serious media biases are a problem that can only be solved by coordinated international action. However, what form that action could take is unclear. Broadcasters cannot be forced, even by their own governments, to tell both sides of the story.

## Possible Solutions

The most difficult aspect of the question of Media Coverage of Terrorist Actions is that the two major issues must be balanced: any solution to the issue of censorship will speak to the freedom of the press to publish what it pleases, but any solution to media bias must attempt fundamentally to restrict (or at least qualify) that same right. Nonetheless, we will examine solutions to the two aspects of the problem separately. It is left to the committee to develop a synthesis that will be acceptable to Member States and the media.

*Security and Censorship*

Requiring governments to disclose sensitive information to the media is both ill-advised and unenforceable. As long as nations fight wars, they will have secrets they want to keep. This committee must protect the media's right to produce impartial reports, but also acknowledge governments' right not to disclose information. At the same time, a solution should discourage governments from releasing misinformation.

Because this problem deals with both government and independent organizations within various member states, enforcement of any policy will be very difficult. Compliance will inevitably be voluntary. The most effective solution will probably involve of increasing transparency for both governments and media sources. The committee might draw up guidelines for government and media conduct, monitor governments and the media for compliance, and publicize the results. This would allow governments to discriminate between "responsible" and "irresponsible" journalists when releasing sensitive information, providing an incentive for media to follow the guidelines. At the same time, governments will have incentives to comply (i.e., provide information) to maintain the incentive for responsible reporting. Through this and similar incentive-alignment techniques, this committee can hope to provide a lasting solution to the problem of media censorship in times of war.

*Bias and Racism in the Media*

Eliminating all bias from media sources is impossible, but encouraging impartial reporting and discouraging racism and aggressive nationalism is desirable. As is the case with censorship, the development of a set of guidelines for media behavior would be a good start, but creation of incentives to adhere to the guidelines will be more difficult.

The moderation of media biases will by necessity be self-enforced. The Committee may choose to discourage biased reporting by undertaking a study of some of its effects. Experience seems to say that biased news providers are ridiculed and ignored in countries that do not share their biases. If, as suggested by anecdotal evidence, biased reporting is self-defeating, then widely available empirical studies may encourage impartial reporting.

To deal with the problems of sensationalism in the media and the reluctance to broadcast unpopular points of view, the Committee may try to develop non-commercial news sources. Publishers that do not rely on advertising revenue or readership volume to stay in business are less inclined to avoid stories that run against the common public view. Such an effort would be quite expensive, however, and it may be difficult to find sources of funding that do not themselves encourage biased reporting. (Currently, many not-for-profit media concerns are funded by national

and regional governments). Nonetheless, the Committee may decide that the necessity of independent, impartial reporting warrants significant investment.

## Relevant International Action

Media coverage of terrorist actions was one of the topics discuss by the Fourth Committee in its general debate on questions relating to information in November 2001. No draft resolutions were introduced.

## Conclusion

Determining the proper conduct of the media in relation to terrorism and war is not an easy task. Media outlets are expected to fill several contradictory roles, and are hindered both by governments and pragmatic concerns. Finding the dividing line between governments' right to keep confidential information and media's obligation to provide full coverage of current events is difficult; so is finding the line between editorial privilege and the public's right to unbiased information. The fact that many media concerns are independent of any state's government complicates matters.

Recent developments bring many of these problems into the light. Because of the scope and number of media sources, these problems can only be solved globally and multilaterally. It has fallen to the Fourth Committee to discuss them and attempt to find solutions.

## Annex I

*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

Adopted and Proclaimed by General Assembly Resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948

ARTICLE 19. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

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TOPIC THREE

# Human Rights in Palestine

## Introduction

Although it has recently become more violent, the conflict between Israel and Palestine has been nearly continuous since long before 1948. The territorial conflict has caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians; those that have not fled the area remain fearing for their lives and the security of their families. Human rights violations are rampant in Palestine. Civilians are injured and killed by combatants on both sides, suspected terrorists are denied their right to legal protection, and freedom of movement is restricted.

Control of the Palestinian territory is disputed, and decades of bilateral and multilateral negotiations have done little to solve the problem. Since the Fourth Committee is charged above all with facilitating decolonization, it has a particular interest in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Human rights violations in Palestine are a major obstacle to a peaceful solution. Both sides in the conflict have repeatedly expressed their desire for peace; although the UN cannot impose a peaceful end to the conflict, they can aid the process by addressing the urgent problem of human rights violations in the occupied territories.

## Statement of the Problem

The state of human rights in Palestine is an issue that affects the entire global community, not just those living in the Middle East. Both parties to the conflict have a miserable human rights record.

Israel has failed to comply with international law, denied the Palestinians the right to self-determination, and exhibited a lack of "respect for the framework of belligerent occupation, giving rise to a legally protected right of Palestinian resistance and armed struggle in the occupied territories."[1] Through military and police action, the people of Palestine have been denied the right to self-determination; the right to seek it through violent resistance is affirmed by Article 51 of the UN Charter.

The Palestinian Authority has encouraged—or at least tolerated—terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians. Such indiscriminate attacks are clear violations of the right to "security of person" set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To complicate matters, Israel and its allies argue that negotiation with a government that sponsors terrorism is impossible. Strict military and police control, they say, are necessary to protect citizens from terrorist attacks, and do not represent violations of human rights. For decades, the argument between the Palestinian Authority and Israel has changed very little, as both sides blame the other for failure of negotiations and continuation of violence.

The question of the control of Palestine is complex, and any solution must have the full support of both parties. SPECPOL cannot hope to solve the dispute, as years of failed third-party intercessions have shown. However, SPECPOL can help move the dispute to an end by addressing the problem of human rights violations in Palestine. Precedent and international law provide a framework for the Committee not only to address the question, but also to enforce any solution that is found. The end of human rights violations is an important step towards ending the violent Israeli-Palestinian conflict entirely.

## History

The social geography of Palestine in the 20th century, especially the area west of the Jordan River, has been greatly affected by the dramatic political changes and wars in the region. The West Bank, an area west of the Jordan River and the Gaza strip, is comprised of a majority Arab population. The Arabs strongly oppose any Jewish control of this area, and they have feared an eventual annexation of their land by Israel. Most Israeli settlers living in the occupied territories support the occupation; they think the land ought to be part of Israel. Both Jewish nationalists and Palestinian nationalists have at times taken control of the area west of the Jordan River. The rivalries between the two groups have caused several Arab-Israeli wars; some members of each group still make claims to complete control of the area, while others are now willing to seek a bilateral solution.

In May of 1948, the state of Israel was born. Conflict between Jews and Arabs began almost immediately.[2] Despite the numerical superiority of the Palestinians, the Israelis were better prepared with a well-trained and experienced army, as well as a working government. The Palestinians were still recovering from a past Arab revolt, and many of their leaders had been exiled. Israel's victory gave it more territory while Jordan took the West Bank and Egypt the Gaza Strip. As a result of the war, however, between 500,000 and 800,000 Palestinians became refugees.[3] Half of these refugees fled, while the remaining half was compelled to make room for Jewish immigrants from European and Middle Eastern countries.

The Palestinian refugees retained their identity and their desire to return to their homeland. In 1964, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed as a political body representing the Palestinians in their efforts to reclaim their country from the Israelis. Originally an umbrella organization of refugee and military groups, the PLO was ultimately joined by professional, labor, and student associations.[4] The purpose of the PLO was to help Palestinians to recover their usurped homes and to replace Israel with a secular Palestinian state. It has been responsible for destructive raids both in Israel and other countries. The PLO has now become the Palestinian Au-

thority, and its leader since 1968 has been Yasser Arafat.

In 1988, King Hussein of Jordan ceded all territorial claims to the Israeli-held West Bank to the PLO. In November of the same year at a meeting of the Palestinian National Council in Algiers, Arafat announced the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. Furthermore, the council decided to use the United Nations resolutions 242 and 338, together with the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, as the basis for an international peace conference. Then, in December of 1988, the United States agreed for the first time to begin direct contact with the Palestinian Authority.

In 1993, after decades of violence and war, Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister, signed the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, a peace accord that introduced some Palestinian self-rule in the occupied territories, and legitimized the Palestinian Authority. The conditions of this peace accord specified Palestinian self-rule in Israeli-occupied areas including the Gaza Strip and Jericho. There were, however, serious doubts of the Authority's ability to maintain control of the areas that Israel had relinquished. Unfortunately, a group unassociated with the Palestinian Authority, Hamas, instigated terrorist attacks, which in turn led to clashes with Israeli security forces.

As the violence continued, elections in Israel were held in May of 1996. The favored candidate was Simon Peres, a man who was a strong supporter of the Arab peace process. He was, however, defeated at the polls by Benjamin Netanyahu, a far more conservative politician who opposed the establishment a Palestinian state. His victory disappointed many Arab leaders, who held a summit in June of 1996. The summit sought the return of more Israeli land to the Palestinians; it also sought the establishment of a Palestinian state and an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights and south Lebanon.[5] The Arab leaders hoped to present a united front to Netanyahu so that he would soften his viewpoint on certain issues. Netanyahu disagreed with the Arab summit decisions, and it looked like there was no hope for peace in the future. However, Netanyahu and Arafat did sign a peace accord in 1998.

In May of 1999 elections were held in Israel; a new president, Ehud Barak, was elected to lead Israel into the peace process with Palestinian Authority. Palestinian-Israeli relations became extremely hostile in September of 2000, when a visit by the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, to East Jerusalem sparked riots that escalated into a new cycle of violence in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Israel. Since then, both Palestinian attacks and Israeli retributions have been frequent.

In 2002, Israel received much criticism for their policy of demolishing buildings in the Gaza strip, either as retribution for terrorist attacks or to create "security strips" around Israeli civilians.[6] In one incident, Israeli security forces razed sixty houses in a refugee camp in response to the killing of four Israeli soldiers. Security forces also occasionally demolish the houses of suicide bombers' families. Israel argues that such measures are the only way to deter attackers who are willing to die for their cause. On the other hand, the punishment of parents or neighbors for crimes of the deceased is a violation of several articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## Relevant International Action

In the past few years, the United Nations has taken many steps to deal with the issues of human rights in Palestine. In July of 2001, a Special Rapporteur, John Dugard, was appointed as a member of the Human Rights Inquiry Commission. His mission was to make a special report to the General Assembly regarding the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel. During his mission to these regions, he met with and spoke to Palestinian and Israeli NGOs, various international agencies and members of the Palestinian Authority. His report stated that both sides were guilty of human rights violations, and that the principal cause of the conflict in the region was military occupation.[7] He also concluded that military occupation was the cause of the violation of human rights and humanitarian law. The Special Rapporteur called for international intervention in order to monitor and reduce the use of violence. The Palestinian Authority still favors this plan; however, the Israeli government remains committed to its policies.

There have also been numerous resolutions brought forth by the United Nations that call for an end to the violence in the Middle East and re-affirm the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. One of these resolutions, 54/152, *The Right of the Palestinian People to Self-Determination,* was adopted by the General Assembly on February 29, 2000. Another, 55/130, was adopted on December 8, 2000, and titled *Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.*

## Analysis and Possible Solutions

Although Israel's occupation of Palestine by no means justifies Palestinian attacks on civilians, it is the root of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; therefore, it is also the root of the human rights violations perpetrated by both sides in the conflict. Recognizing this fact is a key to reaching a solution.

The majority of the Israeli and Palestinian people want to see an end to the violence and fighting. Despite the last decade's progression of Israeli leaders who claimed to seek peace, little progress has been made. As the conflict continues to intensify, other nations have become involved, and have taken sides with either Israel or Palestine. The additional weaponry and soldiers have facilitated the violence, and it is becoming increasingly diffi-

cult to come to a peaceful settlement.

Like any regional conflict, the question of Palestine can only be solved by the combatants. The lack of progress in spite of the prolonged efforts of the UN and allies of both sides to end the conflict illustrates that point. The United Nations has in no uncertain terms affirmed the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and criticized Israel's use of force and poor human rights record, but has not helped to bring the conflict any closer to a solution. The problems with ending the conflict are well understood: as long as the Palestinian Authority promotes terrorism and attacks against civilians, Israel will refuse to negotiate; as long as armed Israeli troops occupy Palestinian land, though, the attacks will continue. Mediation, or some kind of third-party intercession, is necessary; indeed, this is the only route that has shown any signs of success in the past. While the UN and SPECPOL can call for a peaceful solution, they cannot force the combating parties to negotiate. Another issue is the lack of ariable land and water. Any peace negotiation needs to account for water usage, or it will ultimately be ineffective.

It is not the job of the Fourth Committee to solve this issue. By focusing on the issue of human rights in Palestine, the Fourth Committee may be able to bring the conflict one step closer to solution. Unlike historical claims to sovereignty in the occupied territories, there is clear international precedent to determine what acts constitute human right violations and what international bodies may do to fight them. The work of the Special Rapporteur indicates both the Israeli government and Palestinian militants are guilty of such violations in the occupied territories. Ending them is a necessary first step to peace negotiations.

The argument in support of Israel's behavior is one of security. The Palestinian conflict is one between an organized, well-equipped army and mostly disorganized civilian combatants. The Palestinian Authority could never match Israel in a conventional battle, so the preferred method of resistance has been isolated attacks on Israeli soldiers and civilians. In the face of suicide bombers, insists Israel's government, there is no room for niceties like probable cause and due process of law. Soldiers and police must react immediately and decisively to prevent attacks on civilians. In essence, the argument can be summarized thus: to fight terrorism, one must become a terrorist.

Of course, Israel is not the only side guilty of human rights violations. When a Palestinian martyr blows himself up on a bus full of Israelis, the rights of the victims and their families have been violated. So have those of every Israeli citizen who is unable to live a life free of fear. An important point, though, is that, by and large, it is not the administration of the Palestinian Authority who orchestrates such attacks, even though it does little to stop them. Numerous broken cease-fires suggest that Arafat actually has very little control over terrorist attacks on Israel; Hamas and other groups are largely responsible. Suicide attacks are not part of Palestinian government policy; they are a response to the Israeli occupation and poor treatment of Palestinians. As such, police and military action will probably never stop them. The attacks will stop only when the occupation ends.

While the General Assembly as well as the Security Council have indicated that Israel is primarily responsible for the continuation of the conflict, it is hard to imagine Israel's human rights record improving without concessions from the Palestinian Authority. Requests for improved treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories have been made and have gone unanswered. The solution reached by this committee will therefore have to be more drastic and more specific than previous attempts. The use of UN observers to verify compliance is certainly not out of the question, although such a measure would probably require assurance from Palestine that aggression would cease once UN troops are present; otherwise, Israel would not tolerate UN interference. Such assurances will be difficult to make credible, since Arafat has demonstrated inability to control Palestinian attacks.

Previous calls for improved treatment of the Palestinians have failed partly because they are too general. Israel, first of all, does not admit that its actions violate human rights and is disinclined to soften its Palestinian policy as aggression is on the rise. A more realistic solution would involve a gradual improvement of Israeli treatment of residents of the occupied territories with matching concessions from the Palestinian Authority. Such an agreement would primarily be a bilateral treaty between the combatants, but the UN can play a valuable monitoring and enforcement role, as well as initiate the process.

## Bloc Positions

UN member states have overwhelmingly supported the right of the Palestinians to self-determination. Many, however, also support Israel's security measures in the face of continued Palestinian attacks. Naturally, different blocs have differing attitudes towards the conflict.

*Arab Countries*

Arab countries are almost exclusively violently opposed to the Israeli treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories. They support the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Most do not recognize Israeli sovereignty at all.

*US and Europe*

Historically, the United States and most European countries have supported Israel since its creation in 1948. However, as the conflict has progressed and Israeli treatment of residents of the occupied territories has worsened, this support has waned. Recently, the US, historically Israel's greatest ally, voiced support for the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Without the backing of the US, it is doubtful that Israel can meet either the military or

the diplomatic needs of its war.

## Conclusion

As the Israeli-Palestinian conflict approaches its 55th year, international opinion is tilting in favor of the Palestinians. In recent months, the conflict has become bloodier and there is no sign of an end any time soon. While there is little hope of Israel withdrawing from the occupied territories in the near future, the plight of the Palestinians may still be improved by international action. The Fourth Committee can play a valuable role in ensuring respect for human rights in Palestine.

## Endnotes

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