

Special Committee on Protests

Topic A: Addressing the role of protests in the
international state of affairs

Topic B: Examining underlying causes of protests, both in
common globally and pertaining to specific
national/regional contexts

Letter From the Chair

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to ASFMUN 2021 and the Special Committee on Protests. We are your dias for this committee: Alejandra Hernández Moyers (co-chair), Nanami Haruyama (co-chair), and Dora Wang (moderator). We are avid to listen to your contributions to the debate and see how the discussion develops to bring thought-provoking solutions to the imminent issue of protests .

In the era of social activism, it is of utmost importance that we reflect about the importance of protests. To ensure the representation of multiple groups in society, we must collectively decide on solutions that improve the status quo and ensure the rights and safety of demonstrators. Therefore, the topics that we will be discussing this year are addressing the role of protests in the international state of affairs and examining underlying causes of protests, both in common globally and pertaining to specific national/regional context. Through both debates, we will encounter contrasting perspectives, but we hope that it challenges you to negotiate and present creative solutions that work in different contexts.

We are looking forward to meeting all of you at ASFMUN 2021! Please, do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions or concerns.

Regards,

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Committee Policies:

Technology

Because ASFMUN will be run online this year, delegates will be required to use their laptops and computers to participate in committees. The only websites delegates are allowed to use during committee sessions are Zoom, Google Docs, which delegates will be writing their working papers and resolutions, and any other sources that the Chair permits. Unless there is an emergency, delegates should not be using cellphones or other electronic devices that will give them an unfair advantage. If there is a concern that a delegate is breaking these rules, please contact any member of the Secretariat.

Zoom Guidelines

All committees will use Zoom, and each committee will use the same Meeting ID and Passcode for every committee session. Delegates should never distribute the Meeting ID and Passcode to anybody else. In the meeting, delegates should change their display name to their position. For instance, a delegate representing Mexico should rename their display name to “Mexico”.

Moreover, delegates are expected to have their camera on at all times except when they are standing up, leaving a room, or having connection issues. While in moderated caucuses, delegates must keep their microphone muted until called on to speak.

Delegates should prepare their own placard in advance for roll call, points, motions, and voting.

[This Google Drive folder](#) will have instructions on how to make your own placard.

Position Papers:

Position Papers are due on 11:59 pm of 2/22. Please send it in PDF format to

haruyaman@asf.edu.mx, hernandezal3@asf.edu.mx, and wangm@asf.edu.mx. More details can be found on the Conference Information section of [our website](#).

Pre-writing and Plagiarism

Pre-writing of clauses, language, working papers, and draft papers is strictly forbidden.

Delegates are welcome to use Google Drive to collaborate with other delegates when writing documents. However, they must not work on it outside of the conference.

Plagiarism is strictly prohibited and if any attempts are found, delegates will no longer be eligible for any awards.

Committee Overview:

The Special Committee on Protests is not an existing body within the United Nations. It aims to understand the causes, purpose, and overall role of protests in international affairs with countries who have experienced large-scale protests. In recent years, global protests have sparked awareness of a myriad of issues and forced the world to tackle prevalent inequalities. To that end, protests play a vital role in global relations and the Special Committee on Protests will serve as a forum to discuss their social and political implications.

Topic A: Addressing the role of protests in the international state of affairs

Topic A Background

Statement of the Problem

Protests are a medium through which citizens can express their opinions about racial issues, gender inequality, social injustice, and demand accountability from their leaders to protect and defend the rights of the people they abide to protect. They empower minorities to raise their voice and create a platform for other people to join the conversation. A 2020 evaluation of the 1960s civil rights demonstrations revealed that protests from “subordinate minorities” can “drive media coverage, framing, congressional speech and public opinion” (Wasow). Thus, protests are essential to a healthy democracy where people can express their opinions freely and publicly without facing repression. As protests gain importance on an international scale, we seek to address the ways in which governments can ensure the right to protest, protect the demonstrators during and after the event, as well as create a safe environment for its development.

Past UN Action

In regards to protests, The United Nations’ Human Rights Committee drafted a resolution on “The promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests” in 2012

which discussed the guarantees for protestors and the expectations for the authorities involved. UNESCO presented an additional paper on the safety of journalists during protests and posits recommendations such as protecting freedom of expression as well as police and journalist training.

Furthermore, the UN Human Rights chief has shown deep concern about the use of power in Belarus and the ill-treatment of protesters. The High Commissioner, Michelle Bachalet, has urged the government to put an end to ongoing violations and take steps towards peaceful dialogue. Regarding the United States, she urges the government to take a human rights-based approach in their response to protests and avoid employing violence.

The UN asserts that governments should not collect personal data to harass or intimidate participants, although there may be exceptions, and that all people should have the right to protest peacefully in public or private spaces. Additionally, authorities must be transparent about their actions addressing protests. The UN strongly recommends that violent protests that have been identified by law enforcement be dealt with fairly and in accordance with the due process.

Topic History & Recent Developments

Ten years ago, the world experienced a series of protests in the Arab world against authoritarian regimes and in favor of democracy during the Arab Spring. Protests in Tunisia ended the 23-year-regime of president Zine El Abdine Ben Ali (Aljazeera). In 2011, Egyptians marched against President Hosni Mubarak who, less than a month later, resigned (Aljazeera). Thereafter, Libya, Syria, Yemen and other Arab countries followed with more protests. However, most of the uprisings descended into violence, turmoil, and socio-political instability.

In recent years, young protesters in South America, including Venezuela, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Colombia have shown strong disagreement with their political systems and began speaking up, organizing through social media, and as globalized citizens, looking at other countries for inspiration and solidarity (DW). Last year, Latinamerica women stood up against femicides, abuse, inequality, and patriarchy; here, perpetrators are impune for their crimes and women experience strong economic dependency on men. However, the movement is growing

stronger and peaceful demonstrations such as “un violador en tu camino” have incited protests around the globe, inspiring more women to speak up.

Last year, Belarus’ protesters demanded an end to Alexander Lukashenko’s dictatorship. While they gathered peacefully to fight for freedom and democracy on Belarus’ streets, authorities responded with ruthless arrests and violence (ABC News). Delegates are advised to discuss measures to ensure the protection of demonstrators.

Resolution Focus

In an international conference, there are no doubts as to clashes in different countries’ policies to resolve their own protests. Thus, when coming up with solutions, delegates should focus on the protection of human rights in protests, the socioeconomic effects that protests may cause, the role of the government in these cases, and the extent of international intervention necessary. While it is important to discuss how violence in protests could be addressed, it is suggested that delegates do not spend much time debating the definitions of nonviolent and violent protests.

Questions to Consider:

1. In politically unstable countries, demonstrations are necessary to represent citizens’ voices, but may also be met with force from opposing viewpoints. In this case, how can governments and local humanitarian organizations meet both the demands of protesters and other indirect stakeholders who are affected by the instability?
2. Many governments’ responses to protesters are violent and jeopardize human rights. In such cases, to what extent, and in what way, is intervention necessary?
3. Given the current situation with the Covid-19 pandemic, how does the role of protests change? What covid-specific measures should governments take to ensure that both protesters and security personnel are safe?
4. What measures can be taken to ensure that the violence in protests do not escalate and affect third parties of the nation?

Key Players

- In the **Middle East and North Africa**, historical protests have often ended in stalemates, as while protestors are determined in bringing about change in political institutions, governments tend to take a defensive stance for the systems. Thus, there have been large-scale damages to the protestors through the deployment of violent police forces.
- In **Asia**, where many protests occurred in regards to independence or the separation of borders, governments have taken a strong stance against the minority protesters. For example, in the independence protests in Hong Kong, the Chinese government has taken actions to restrict opinions on the topic, including the use of violence. In governments in other parts of Asia, similar steps have been ensured, ending in major clashes that often cause a lot of international attention.
- In the majority of **North America and Europe**, governments have been tolerant towards peaceful protests on issues like the environment, yet still subject to certain biases. For instance, in the recent Black Lives Matter movements, members of the police have taken violent measures against protests in claims of self-defense. However, there hasn't been much accountability in holding responsible these members, which fuels the protests furthermore.

Topic B: Examining underlying causes of protests, both in common globally and pertaining to specific national/regional context

Topic B Background

Statement of the Problem

Within the committee, we will debate the deep-rooted causes of protests worldwide. Protests are often sparked due to the frustration of the public with the status quo and create possibilities and opportunities for necessary change. Some are caused by a growing opposition to government

corruption while others are caused by the dwindling levels of employment. It can also be the unique combination of socioeconomic factors that lead to protests. Although countries present varying issues and causes, protests all reflect the population's struggle to enhance their standard of living. Hence, despite the different causes there may be, it is important to clearly identify them in order for governments to work with activists, understand their goals, and formulate a response. Delegates must accurately identify the causes of regional, national, and global protests and pinpoint any overlaps they may see.

Past UN Action

The United Nations has not yet introduced any resolutions in regards to identifying the cause of protests. However, it has formulated a number of related documents and reports on the topic. It produced a document titled "COVID-19, systemic racism and global protests : report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent" in the summer of 2020 that analyzes international protests and their causes in the context of COVID-19. Moreover, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia published a report in 2013 titled "The promises of spring : citizenship and civic engagement in democratic transition" that identified the causes of politically motivated protests. In addition to these reports, the Security Council and Human Rights Bodies often release press statements that shed light to ongoing protests, their causes, and the UN's stance.

Recent Developments

Protests all around the world have made headlines in recent years. Most notably, 2020 was a defining year for public protests. Black Lives Matter protests in the United States, the Women's Strike in Poland, the farmers' protest in India, and more - 2020 was truly a year of activism; it highlighted how social media platforms are a catalyst in fueling support for protests and campaigns. It is also evident that recent protests share similar causes. They protest against political corruption, police brutality, and racism. They support LGBTQ+ rights, environmental protection, and women empowerment. In such ways, national and regionally organized protests connect to larger, international issues. Delegates are encouraged to cite recent protests that took place in this decade but are not limited to any specific time frame.

Resolution Focus

Upon identifying the causes of protests in both global and national/regional contexts, delegates will create a resolution that presents a plan to tackle the causes of protests from the core. As it is impractical to attempt to address every problem that nations face, delegates will discuss and debate the top imminent causes and propose solutions to resolve them. Such solutions should take into account not only the causes but also the tangible goals that protestors have outlined. For instance, one of the goals of the protests in Egypt and Belarus is for the government to conduct fair elections. Thus, one clause within the resolution could focus on how governments can secure and implement fair elections. Moreover, these resolutions should not be limited to one specific region or nation but aimed for a variety of regions and countries.

Questions to Consider:

1. One prime cause of global protests is against femicides and governments' inaction to solve them. Even when masses protest in the streets, perpetrators are often not held accountable and the issue continues to be ignored. What steps should be taken by governments to address the public's concern for a lack of accountability? How can systemic impunity be tackled in a way that takes into account the protestor's demands?
2. Many protests arise due to citizen outrage on political causes in specific nations. In such protests, the demands often request the stepping down of a leader or the removal of a policy. How should national governments compromise both the citizens' voices and the stability of a country?
3. In both history and modern times, protests have been met with violence from security personnel such as the police, even when protesters were peaceful. How does police brutality contribute to the causes of further protests?
4. Forms of inequality, such as racial inequality and economic inequality, have fueled justified protests in many nations. In what ways can governments ensure the solving of these inequalities from the root? What role do protests have in the same fight against inequalities?

Key Players

- In the **Middle East and Northern Africa**, protests usually occur due to the failure of an entire political system to meet the basic needs of a large portion of the population, usually those with low-incomes. For instance, despite how countries like Algeria and Iran are rich in oil resources, they also have significant issues with economic inequality and violence inside borders. Thus, protests occur, demanding for less corruption, more employment, and more rights for marginalized communities like migrant workers.
- Protests in **South & Southeast Asia** are usually targeted towards certain policies proposed by governments. To mention a few examples, there have been farmer protests in India against a new agricultural policy, protests that demand change in the Thai monarchy, and anger over the new jobs law proposed in Indonesia. In response, governments have faced instability, while failing to provide substantial changes.
- In **Latin America** countries, recent protests are usually centered around intertwining topics like the violation of women's rights, the continuous abuse of the environment, and corruption in the governments. Unfortunately, these countries have met such protests with a lot of police brutality, which people are trying to counter as well. Nonetheless, without removing the roots of corruption in the system, aspects like the reproductive rights are difficult to guarantee.

Participating countries

- Algeria
- Belarus
- Brazil
- Chile
- People's Republic of China
- Egypt
- France
- Hong Kong
- India
- Indonesia

- Iran
- Lebanon
- United Mexican States
- Nigeria
- Poland
- Russian Federation
- Syria
- Thailand
- United States of America
- Venezuela

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