

Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee (SOCHUM)

Chair: Alex Matysik



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Letter from the Chair

Howdy Delegates,

My name is Alex Matysik, and I am thrilled to be your chair for SOCHUM this LYMUN XI. I am currently in my junior year here at LT and my third year as a part of LTMUN.

Throughout my Model UN journey, I have previously been a vice chair for SOCHUM and have participated in a SOCHUM committee as a delegate two other times, so I thought it would be fitting for me to continue my personal tradition of participating in this captivating subject.

Understanding different cultures and societies around the world offers astounding opportunities and insight into how other people live and develop one's understanding of the world as a whole.

Outside of Model UN, I am a member of the LT Math Team, Scholastic Bowl Team, and the Cyber Defense Club. Mathematics and science topics are my favorite school subjects, but I am captivated by global relations and geography, which is what initially brought me to this club. I enjoy tinkering with computers and technology, programming, and networking, which is what I will likely pursue in college and beyond. Some of my other interests include traveling, watching movies, and researching random topics on Wikipedia.

My goal for this committee is for delegates to make peaceful and realistic resolutions to the problems they are presented with in this committee. Remember that in order to qualify for awards, you must submit a position paper for each topic. This can either be emailed to me the night before or turned in the morning of the conference. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at mat513387@d204.lths.net. I will try to respond as soon as possible.

See you guys at LYMUN!

Alex Matysik

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Committee Members

- United States
- Canada
- Mexico
- United Kingdom
- France
- Venezuela
- Columbia
- Turkey
- Peru
- China
- Russia
- India
- Australia
- Afghanistan
- South Sudan
- Greece
- South Africa
- Nigeria
- Brazil
- Iran
- Japan
- Indonesia

- El Salvador
- Portugal
- United Arab Emirates
- Qatar
- Croatia
- Thailand
- North Korea
- The Netherlands
- Israel
- Germany
- Egypt
- Bangladesh
- Singapore
- The Philippines
- Zimbabwe
- Kenya
- South Korea
- Norway

Committee Background

The Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM), also known as the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, is a committee at the General Assembly which focuses on social and humanitarian issues. The committee focuses on a broad expanse of issues which are shared between many other United Nations committees. These topics include the protection of children, the advancement of women, the protection of indigenous populations, the treatment of refugees, rights of persons with disabilities, and the international drug trade.

SOCHUM has played an integral role in advancing human rights, limiting societal and humanitarian issues, and protecting the rights of the child. In the past, SOCHUM played an important role in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), establishing clear human rights which must be protected by all member states of the United Nations. Additionally, SOCHUM worked on the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), emphasizing specific rights and protections for children. SOCHUM also proposed and supported the International Decade for People of African Descent and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), both of which uplift the rights of marginalized races around the world.

In recent years, many of SOCHUM's focuses have become controversial issues between member nations. The issues of refugee rights and narcotics trafficking are very complex and systemic issues that probably cause the most disagreement in the committee today. In order to solve these issues, member nations need to ensure that the delicate balance between national sovereignty and international resolutions is kept in order to maintain order in SOCHUM and the United Nations as a whole. Due to increased prevalence of these issues, there is still a lot to be done about both refugee's rights and narcotics trafficking, which is why it is important delegates pass realistic and meaningful resolutions.

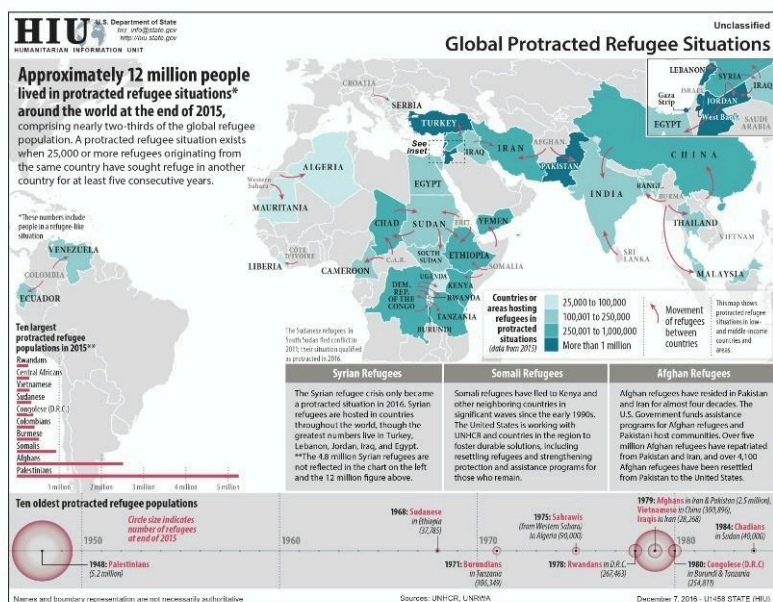
Topic A: Enhancing the Rights of Refugees

Topic Background:

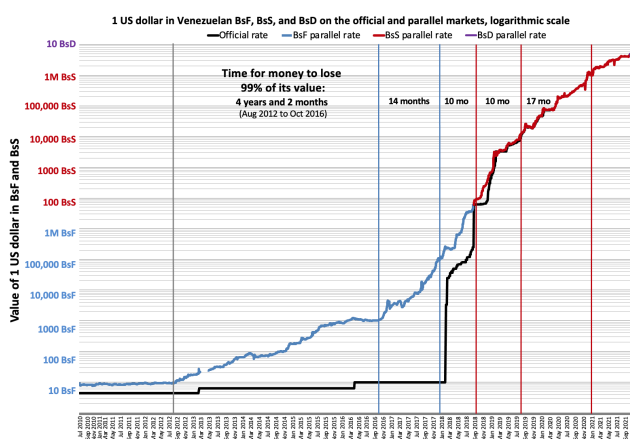
The first internationally established and recognized term for a refugee came from the League of Nations' Commission for Refugees in 1921. The definition has shifted and changed wording slightly throughout the decades, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a well known international organization working with refugees, defines the term as people "who are outside their country of nationality or habitual residence and unable to return there owing to serious and indiscriminate threats to life, physical integrity or freedom resulting from generalized violence or events seriously disturbing public order."

An asylum seeker, which is a type of refugee, is a person who is seeking protection from their home government in a new country. Per the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, every person has the right to seek asylum in every other country. Due to the nature of UN resolutions being non-binding, host countries have the final authority to accept or refuse refugees and asylum seekers despite the UN's resolution. Due to this resolution, many host countries feel international and humanitarian pressure to accept refugees and asylum seekers even if they have their own reasons to reject them.

Historically, refugee crises have been common due to large war and armed conflict. The largest refugee crises in history have been World War II, the Partition of India, and World War I, which had 60 million, 15 million, and



12.5 million reported refugees respectively. With many of these events occurring before the UN Declaration of Human Rights, nations did not often feel international pressure to accept refugees. However, in the case of WW1 and WW2, due to lenient immigration policies in the Americas, many refugees were able to be successfully rehoused in a new nation, albeit with varying levels of racial and monetary discrimination depending on the host nation.



Additionally, systemic discrimination and corruption in one's host country are both causes of large refugee crises. For example, the crisis in Venezuela had displaced nearly 9 million people as of 2014 and was the cause of starvation, disease, crime, and hyperinflation rather than government-involved armed combat. It is a

point of contention whether refugees fleeing for serious economic reasons have threats to "life, physical integrity, or freedom," and therefore qualify for protection under the UDHR or not.

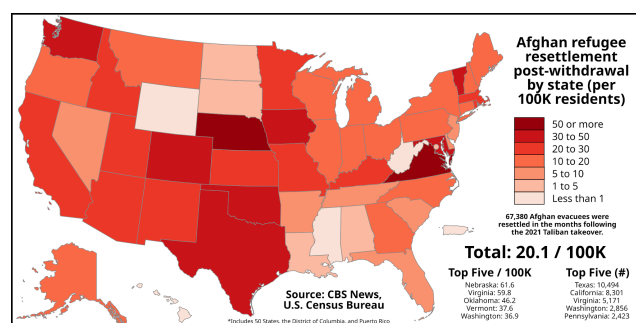
However, even though many Venezuelan refugees may not be able to attain refugee status solely for this reason, many are also starving, suffering from disease, and experiencing crime, which clearly falls under the "physical integrity" portion of the resolution.

Asylum seekers and refugees often face hostility and discrimination by both government policies and the general public once a large influx of refugees enter a nation. An example of a refugee case with much documented discrimination includes Afghan refugees which fled due numerous conflicts, including the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan and the Saur Revolution. Afghan refugees in neighboring countries are often discriminated against by government officials and citizens, with Afghan children not being permitted to attend many

public schools in Iran. Additionally, Afghan refugee teenagers as young as 14 were recruited to fight for Iran in the War against the Islamic State. The United States also contributed to systemic discrimination and human rights abuses against Afghan refugees, having deported many Afghan refugees convicted of a crime in the United States back to Afghanistan, where they may face unsafe conditions.

A lot of discrimination against refugees stems from xenophobia and ethnic nationalism, especially in otherwise homogenous nations. Many nations see a sudden influx of refugees almost as a challenge to their cultural and national identity, thus creating internal divide and conflict. Oftentimes, xenophobia and anti-immigration political groups gain more public support once a large number of refugees enter a country, as a country's ethnic majority often feels uncomfortable with a new culture establishing itself in their nation.

It is often very difficult to legally seek asylum due to the asylum backlogs caused by slow courts and an ever increasing number of asylum seekers. According to the National Immigration Forum, the average wait time for an asylum hearing in the



United States is 4.3 years, with many regions having even longer waits. These long waits and bureaucratic processes are often why many asylum seekers choose to abstain from going through legal channels and instead settle in a new country without proper documentation. Additionally, due to many nations having commitments about maintaining asylum seekers until their applications are either accepted or rejected, nations have to house and feed asylum seekers until they can be properly processed by the courts. Oftentimes, this leads to unsanitary and prison-like conditions for asylum seekers, as nations are compelled to house refugees.

Although the refugee issues are prevalent throughout the world, they are often concentrated near the conflict zones where the refugees originate, thus having some areas with a high concentration of refugees. Additionally, refugees might arbitrarily choose a destination to settle if said destination is known for treating refugees well or has ethnic enclaves of immigrants with a similar culture to that of the refugee. The top three countries with the most refugees are Turkey, Germany, and Pakistan, with 3,368,976, 2,509,506, and 2,080,501 refugees settled in their countries respectively.

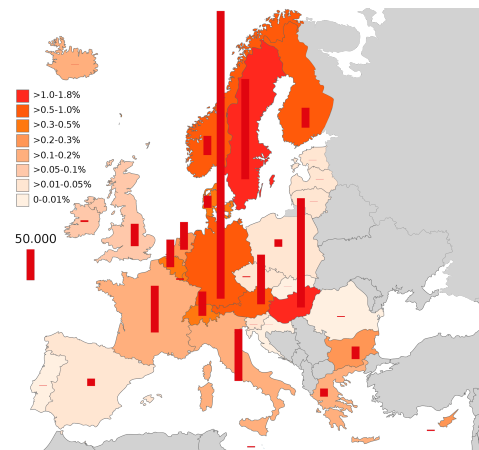
Current Issues:

The number of forcibly displaced persons is at an all time high in the modern day, with the number reaching upwards of 114 million people at the end of 2023. Despite the UDHR, many nations enact anti-refugee policies today for various reasons. Currently, many refugee crises are taking place in Sub-Saharan Africa, with South Sudan, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Eritrea, and the Central African Republic all having a significant amount of refugees fleeing the country. Additionally, Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine take the first, second, and third place spots respectively in terms of the amount of people displaced within the past few years.

One of the most common destinations for asylum seekers in 2024 is the European Union, which, on 20 December 2023, passed the New Pact on Migration and Asylum of the European Union, a policy to more equally share the responsibility of providing asylum across all EU member states. The policy has repeatedly been criticized by pro-immigration activists, who say that the policy focuses on keeping people out instead of strengthening the borders of the European Union. Critics also point to how the policy will detain migrants at borders and fingerprint children, two actions which some consider unnecessary and deprive one of their

human rights. However, supporters of the bill claim that although asylum is important and should be protected, there should also be a focus on security when deciding who to approve for asylum. Additionally, Greece, Italy, and Malta were the countries with the highest burden to take care of asylum seekers while they were being processed and housed, so many believe that this policy will more evenly distribute resources to European Union member states.

Many European politicians criticize the current asylum system due to the practice of “asylum shopping,” where one actively seeks out asylum in a specific country instead of going to the nearest safe country instead. This phenomenon has been observed all over Europe, where many will attempt to apply for asylum in Germany and Sweden instead of elsewhere due to the higher welfare and support given by those countries.



Additionally, many instances of asylum seekers burning their fingerprints in order to avoid being documented in the European Union so they can request asylum in another country have been recorded. Critics of this practice have claimed that people who partake in asylum shopping aren't in true imminent danger if they have the ability to skip over otherwise safe nations, while proponents of this practice argue that asylum shopping is a result of wanting a better life.

The United States has a similar crisis to Europe, with migrants from Central and South America crossing through many countries in order to have a better life in the US. However, the US asylum system is extremely backed up and as a result, asylum seekers have faced inhumane and downright torturous conditions while waiting for their claim to be approved. It has been reported that asylum seekers have been held in solitary confinement for days and weeks, with additional reports of torture, kidnapping, rape extortion, and other violent attacks. Such asylum

seekers often attempt to cross the United States border with Mexico without proper documentation, which has become a major talking point in United States politics in the modern day. Similar issues exist in Poland, Australia, Serbia, Macedonia, and Mexico.

Sweden in specific has faced a lot of anti-immigration sentiment recently, with advocates claiming that immigration has caused the crime rate in the country to substantially increase. Many point to immigrants and children of immigrants committing disproportionate amounts of crime as a way to advocate against mass-immigration. Despite this, immigration has not been shown to increase crime overall in Sweden and the consensus among researchers is that crime is primarily due to poverty and lack of education in refugee groups.

Throughout the world, many refugees also face exploitation and human trafficking issues due to their difficult situations. Being in very difficult situations, many refugees may seek help from predatory institutions and people, which may lead them to exploitation. Such exploitation may be hard to detect due to a lack of resources, knowledge, and documents possessed by asylum seekers. Additionally, it may be difficult to prosecute the perpetrators because of lack of reporting by asylum seekers out of fear of retaliation and getting in trouble by the government.

Current Solutions:

While the situation here is difficult to navigate due to huge international disagreement, it is important to value the well being of the most vulnerable while still emphasizing the rights of nations as a whole. Many nations have enacted anti-immigration and, by extension, anti-refugee policies which are largely based on fears of the majority ethnic groups. These policies often go into effect once a large number of refugees enter one's home country and said refugees are of a different ethnic group. Many describe this crude solution as inhumane and racist, with the

government denying suffering people sanctuary. However, proponents of this solution argue that many refugees don't truly face dangerous situations and are more similar to economic migrants and should be treated as such.

Many advocates for refugees argue for open-border policies and limiting background checks on asylum seekers. Such advocates claim that these policies will allow people in need to escape danger and go to safety easier, while opponents often argue that these policies allow criminals to mask themselves as refugees in order to gain entry to a nation. Such solutions often face fierce opposition from the conservative parties in the nation, claiming that mass-immigration and refugees will cause cultural erasure in the home nation.

It is difficult to balance both quick and speedy court hearings for asylum seekers while still maintaining humane conditions for refugees. When a nation receives many asylum seekers, it is often impossible to process cases in a reasonable amount of time and as a result, many simply cannot be kept in government custody that whole time. Some nations allow freedom of movement for asylum seekers while their claims are being processed and provide government assistance so they can start living on their own. Critics argue that this system allows refugees to illegally stay in the country even if their claim is rejected as the government may have difficulty tracking them down.

Questions to Consider:

What is your country's current relationship with refugees? Does your country receive a lot of refugees or relatively little?

Does your country currently have an easy or hard immigration policy? Is it easy for asylum seekers to successfully settle in your country?

How has your country handled refugees in the past?

What are any country-specific issues to do with refugees?

How do refugees cross into your country? Where do they typically come from?

What is the sentiment on refugees by the general public in your country?

Topic B: Reducing the International Trade of Narcotics

Topic Background:

For most parts of history, drugs had no regulation by world governments and therefore there was no such thing as an “illegal” trade of narcotics. One of the first recorded instances of recreational drug regulation occurred in the early 1700s, where the Qing dynasty issued edicts against opium smoking. As a result, many British merchants began to sell opium illegally to the Chinese, which was the first recorded instance of illegal drug trafficking. In the 1800s, many countries in the western hemisphere began issuing laws against addictive drugs, although they were rather relaxed. In 1912, the International Opium Convention urged countries to enact legislation against opium, and as such countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States decided to nationalize their restriction against opium.

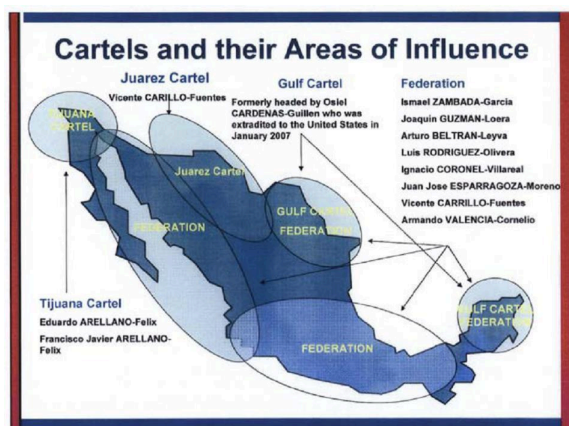
In the 1920s, the 18th amendment to the US constitution prohibited the sale of alcohol in the country. Advocates for this change emphasized the destructive effects of alcohol addiction such as domestic violence and poverty. The prohibition of alcohol proved to be very difficult to enforce and lead to a massive increase in organized crime and drug smuggling. As a result, the prohibition of alcohol in the US has widely been considered a failure due to leaving the root problem still unsolved while increasing crime.

In the late 20th century, a coalition of countries led by the United States decided to enact a “war on drugs” in order to solve the adverse effects of increasing recreational drug use. Restrictions such as strict penalties for the trade and possession of recreational drugs were put in to deter potential drug users from engaging in the practice. Research on the effects of the war on drugs displays that it led to little or no change in youth drug use while increasing incarceration rates. Harsh penalties lead to addicts often going to prison repeatedly and getting the proper help they need in order to beat a drug addiction. This punishment of drug addicts led to an increase in homelessness and lack of recovery for pre-existing and new addicts after the war on drugs.

As a result of such drug restriction, international trade of narcotics has increased in order to take advantage of the lack of drugs in the market. Drug cartels such as the Sinaloa cartels were founded in the latter half of the 20th century and focused on the illegal trade of drugs, especially to the United States. The cartel focused on cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin, and largely gained local control using fear. The Sinaloa Cartel has a horizontal system of organization, allowing for more local and diverse control. Although many cartel members have already been



caught by various police forces, the cartel still carries massive local and national power in both Mexico and beyond.



The Sinaloa cartel and other organized crime organizations which focus on drug trafficking frequently commit violent crime in order to maintain local control. Border violence across the United States-Mexico border surged after increased border security, and the Mexican government estimates that 90% of killings near

the border are related to drugs in some way. Murders committed by organized crime organizations are often very grotesque and cruel in order to scare potential opposition from publicly denouncing their organization. Their mass importation of addictive drugs into the United States continues to rise drug addiction rates and deaths. Additionally, violence may target civilians and people not associated with the cartel, which creates fear and unsafe communities.

Statistics in the United Kingdom show that drug use was responsible for the majority of crime committed in the country, with the majority of shoplifting, burglaries, and robberies being directly connected to drug usage. Such crimes are often attributed to the cost of addiction, where addicts often spend the vast majority of their money on drugs every year and must turn to crime in order to afford more drugs. Without proper rehabilitation pathways for drug users, many continue to pursue paths of crime, which leads to prison time and repeat offenders until they can get the help they need.

The money to be gained from drug trafficking is huge although exact numbers are unknown due to the secrecy of the industry. According to the RAND Corporation, the illicit drug

trade in the US is estimated to be worth upwards of \$150 Billion. Such wealth allows many organized crime syndicates to utilize bribery as a method of local control as well. In numerous West African countries, police bribery is commonplace in order to smuggle drugs and ship them. Due to lack of corruption control measures and the very low pay of police officers in the region, such bribery becomes the norm and allows for drug traffickers to gain a lot of control in the region. Additionally, border control officers are often targets of bribes as well, often offered tens of thousands of dollars so the officer will not inspect a vehicle. However, officers who begin accepting these bribes are often exploited and threatened by smugglers, who ask for more involvement for less money and eventually have border control officers work for them.

An increasing number of illegal drug sales have taken place online. Websites which sell illegal drugs are often on the Tor network (also known as the “dark web”) and are paid for with anonymous cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin and Monero. Large drug trafficking websites, although anonymous in nature, have historically been taken over and shut down by crime-fighting organizations, such as the large trading platform called the Silk Road. Although a number of websites have been taken down by governmental organizations, the ease at which new drug-trading websites are able to be made allows for multiple to be made in the place of shut-down service. Internet-based drug services allow drug dealers to reach a much wider, nation-wide audience, which increases profits for the dealer but also increases drug usage and addiction.



Current Issues:

Currently, illicit substance use is at a high and as a result, drug markets and the illegal drug trade have skyrocketed. In recent decades, very potent drugs such as fentanyl have been both intentionally and accidentally added to other illicit drugs during production, causing thousands of casualties as a result. Drug dealers sometimes “cut” opioids with fentanyl in order to increase their addictive properties while giving less of the drug itself. This practice is controversial and, when done incorrectly, can severely harm or kill the person taking the drug. Additionally, due to the lack of protective measures taken by drug dealers and traffickers, fentanyl can be introduced into other drugs via cross-contamination. This often goes unnoticed and is the reason why there are cases of fentanyl overdoses while taking drugs like cocaine and LSD. It is reported that 37.5% of all overdose pediatric deaths between 1999 and 2021 were related to the consumption of fentanyl.



Another drug which has gained unprecedented popularity in recent decades are opioids, with opioid addiction skyrocketing in the early 2000s. Many attribute the beginning of the opioid crisis to the mass overprescribing of addictive opioids as pain medication, with the companies producing these opioids falsely claiming their products were addiction free. The company Purdue Pharma played a role in the deceptive advertising of opioids, pushing their OxyContin drug to doctors and claiming the drug was not addictive. The initial overprescription of opioids caused many to become addicted and maintain their addiction due to the ease of access to the drugs. However, once this problem was realized by governments and doctors, the prescription of opioids had dropped significantly in order to combat the opioid

epidemic. This drop in prescription of opioids did not necessarily solve the opioid addiction problem of the thousands who were already addicted, with many today getting opioids through the illicit drug trade.

Many governments around the world are involved in the drug trade in some way. The government of Syria is involved in and finances a large drug trade within their borders. Important government employees, such as the dictator's younger brother, are directly connected and involved with the production and smuggling of drugs internationally. Despite customs screening measures throughout the world, 90% of all fenethylamine pills were successfully exported out of Syria to their worldwide customers. Mexico, although not having as much of a connection to the drug trade as Syria, has many government officials involved with the illegal drug trade in some way. There is evidence of many officials within the Mexican government accepting bribes and being connected to the cartel. Additionally, former president of Mexico Enrique Peña Nieto has been accused of accepting bribes from the druglord known as “El Chapo”.

The increased use of illegal narcotics also stresses healthcare institutions, which have to deal with increased visits to the hospital as a result of the adverse health effects of most drugs. Patients with consistent substance use have disproportionately higher rates of other medical problems as a result, including injury and psychiatric disorders. Additionally, the use of recreational drugs has been linked to problems such as cancer and blood-borne infections, which may require expensive medical treatments. Increased medical issues can increase the cost of living for the patient and increase government spending on healthcare as in countries with socialized healthcare, the government must pay for the increased treatment. In Canada, substance use added \$13 billion to total healthcare spending in the year 2020 alone.

Current Solutions:

One of the most popular solutions currently to solve the illegal international drug trade is to decriminalize the usage of many drugs for recreational use and regulate their safety. Portugal was the first country to pilot a program like this, called the decriminalization bill, in 2021. This bill established that people addicted to drugs were patients and not criminals, as they were treated in some other jurisdictions. Portugal established numerous safe methods of acquiring drugs while offering treatment to people addicted to drugs. This program has been widely considered a great success, with many Portuguese heroin addicts seeking medical treatment and successfully recovering from addiction. Portugal has consistently been ranked near the bottom for drug overdose deaths in Europe, with the country being the 11th lowest out of the 30 countries ranked. Such solutions solve the issues associated with the international drug trade as they give people an opportunity to buy drugs legally from the government, which removes the need for an illegal third party to provide drugs.

Although the aforementioned program was a substantial achievement, it is important to consider the infrastructure and regulation necessary in order to successfully pull off drug decriminalization. Drug decriminalization must come with available, free treatment methods and long-reaching government assistance in order for the public to actually end their addiction. Many jurisdictions have since implemented similar programs as Portugal did with varying outcomes. The US state of Oregon experimented with legalizing many drugs in 2021 in order to prioritize treatment over criminalization. However, instead of experiencing the same effects that Portugal did, Oregon saw a massive increase in overdose deaths, crime, and homelessness, which resulted in the end of many aspects of the program in 2024. Activists point to the lack of affordable

treatment options and safety measures as the reason why Oregon's decriminalization effort ended in failure.

Stricter border and customs control is also a potential solution to solving the issue of importation of drugs. As mentioned previously, upwards of 90% of illicit drugs made it through various nations' custom controls and to the customer in some cases. Greater customs control measures can be taken in order to try and reduce this number. However, strict border and customs control can also prove to be a difficult and invasive process which is unpopular with most people. Having a greater number of searches and personal security is very resource intensive and it may be difficult for many border control agencies to conduct the amount of searches necessary in order to significantly reduce the transportation of illicit drugs.

An ideal solution would be to stop the production of drugs used for illegal purposes in the first place. This would require the systematic dismantling of government connections to organized crime and drug traffickers and implementation of more prevention measures, which would be very difficult to organize worldwide. Such a solution may have the ability to be aided by international organizations such as the United Nations. The issue of national sovereignty and security is a valid concern for this solution, however, as it could be considered a violation of sovereignty and possibly democracy as a whole. This solution is very unlikely to ever take fruition.

Questions To Consider:

What is your country's currency policy on substance abuse and drug usage?

What are your country's domestic protections against the importation of drugs?

How has drug usage affected your country in the past?

What drugs have been most popular in your country?

What potential solutions to solve the drug addiction issue has your country implemented?

How accessible are addictive substances in your country?

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