

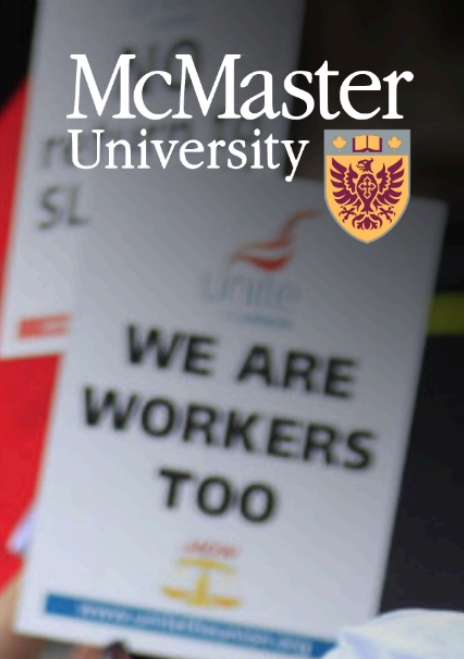
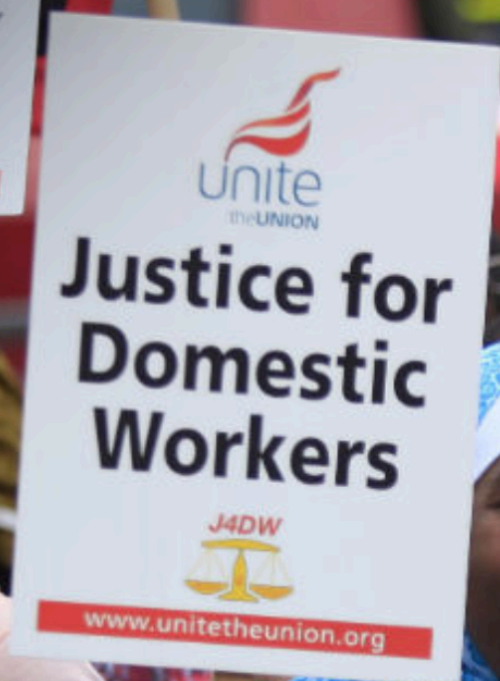


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# General Assembly #3 – SOCHUM

MACMUN 2018 | SOCHUM Background Guide



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*“We live in a complex world. The United Nations cannot succeed alone. Partnership must continue to be at the heart of our strategy. We should have the humility to acknowledge the essential role of other actors, while maintaining full awareness of our unique convening power.”*  
– UN Secretary General António Guterres

# Committee Overview

## *Mandate and Function of the Committee*

On January 10, 1946, representatives from 51 nations gathered in London for the first General Assembly of the United Nations. Initially formed to set standards for international law to maintain peace among different nations, the General Assembly (GA) now holds a central position as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. It currently consists of 193 members and, as representatives of a nation in the General Assembly, the delegates are responsible for making decisions that dictate global contributions for global peace and wellbeing.

Under the Charter of the United Nations, the functions and powers of the GA include:

- I. To discuss and approve the United Nations budget and establish the financial assessments of Member States.
- II. To elect the non-permanent members of the Security Council and members of other United Nations councils and organs and, on the recommendation of the Security Council, appoint the Secretary-General.
- III. To consider and make recommendations regarding general principles of cooperation for maintaining international peace and security, including disarmament.
- IV. To discuss any questions relating to international peace and security (except when a dispute or situation is being discussed by the Security Council).
- V. To make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situation which might harm the friendly relations among nations.
- VI. To discuss and make recommendations regarding the powers and functions of any organ of the United Nations.
- VII. To request studies and make recommendations to promote international cooperation, the development of international law, the protection of human rights, and international collaboration on economic, social, cultural, educational and health issues.
- VIII. To receive and discuss reports from the Security Council and other UN organs.

The GA has five main committees, each of which handle different issues. The Third Committee, also known as the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM), deals with international matters, such as:

*“...the advancement of women, the protection of children, Indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the right to self-determination. In addition, the Committee addresses important social development questions, such as issues related to youth, family, aging, persons with disabilities, crime prevention, criminal justice, and international drug control.”*

The recommendations from the GA are an important representation of the world's opinions on global issues. However, it may not override or make decisions on issues that the Security Council and the International Court of Justice are discussing. The GA also cannot force a nation to follow the suggested recommendations.

Each Member State of the GA has one vote. Matters are decided by simple majority. Decisions on important issues, such as international peace and security, admitting new members, and the UN budget are decided by a two-thirds majority.

### ***Recent Activity***

In September 2016, the 71st session of the GA commenced with general debate, during which delegates discussed international issues and allocated agenda items to its six Main Committees. The Third Committee was assigned issues relating to the protection and promotion of human rights. Topics tackled included the rights of Indigenous peoples, the advancement of women, the elimination of intolerance, and international drug control.

Over the course of two months, the Third Committee drafted and submitted draft resolutions, addressing the agenda items, to the GA for further debate and approval. In December 2016, the GA reconvened to discuss and approve the submitted draft resolutions. Draft resolutions concerning sexual orientation, gender identity, and human trafficking proved to be especially controversial. Ultimately, it adopted fifty resolutions and eight decisions recommended by the Third Committee.

### ***Simulation Style/Composition of the Committee***

The GA will be composed of three designated Chairs responsible for maintaining the course of debate in accordance with the National Model UN rules and procedures. The Chairs will open and close each meeting, recognize any points or motions on the floor, set the agenda, manage the list of speakers, and facilitate the discussion. In addition, the Chairs are given the final rule on any disputed points, and will declare when motions are to be voted on by the body. It is also the decision of the Chairs to pass any draft resolution to be introduced for debate.

The General Assembly will consist of 85 delegates representing their assigned Member States. Delegates are expected to research the committee topics, submit a position paper, and be prepared to debate in accordance with their country's global stance and foreign policy.

Two pages will be present during the meetings to pass notes between delegates. Pages will be screening notes to ensure appropriate content and to maintain a professional environment.



## ***Sample Timeline***

9:30-9:40 – Roll Call  
9:40-9:55 – Setting the Agenda  
9:55-12:30 – Debate on the Agenda Topic and Motions  
12:30-1:30 – Lunch  
1:30-4:00 – Debate on the Agenda Topic, Motions, and Draft Resolutions  
4:00-4:30 – Voting on the Draft Resolutions  
4:30 – Closure/Adjournment of Debate

## ***Forming Resolutions***

Resolutions represent the consolidated opinions of the United Nations body and act as proposed comprehensive solutions to the issues at hand. They are a final result of the discussions and negotiations regarding the topics, and detail recommended courses of action. A resolution is first considered a draft resolution prior to being voted on by the committee. During the course of debate, delegates may work individually or collaborate with others to write a draft resolution. The delegates writing the resolution are considered its “sponsors” and must recruit a certain number of delegates as “signatories” in order for their resolution to be introduced by the Chairs to the committee. Signatories are members who wish to bring the resolution to debate but they do not have to support the document. Once brought to debate, amendments can be made until the final resolution is voted on by the committee.

## ***Position Papers***

The position paper is a detailed essay of your country’s policies and position on the topics that are going to be discussed in the committee. The creation of your position paper is an important task because it will help you, the delegate, to organize your thoughts and ideas about MACMUN topics so that you can successfully engage with the rest of the committee. Additionally, the position papers will be judged by the conference hosts, and the writer of the top position paper in each committee will be recognized at the conference award ceremony. Please note that to be considered for any award at MACMUN 2018, you must submit a position paper.

Your goals are to research your assigned country in depth, to examine the stance they take on the given topics, and to summarize this information in one position paper. The length should not exceed one page per topic, single-spaced.

A strong MACMUN position paper should include the following:

1. How your country is affected by the issues.
2. Your country’s policies with respect to the issues.
3. Quotations from your country’s leaders about the topics.
4. Actions that your country has taken with regard to the issues.

5. What your country believes should be done to address the issues.
6. What your country would like to accomplish in the committee's resolution.
7. Description of your relationship with other countries as it relates to the issues at hand.

Important Notes:

- Include your name, assigned country, and committee.
- Please do not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders.
- Include citations and a reference page, making sure to use a standardized citation style of your choice consistently, giving due credit to the sources used in the research. Please note that the reference page is not included in the page limit.

The deadline to submit your position paper is **January 30th, 2018 at 11:59PM**; submissions should be emailed to [usgcommittees@macmun.org](mailto:usgcommittees@macmun.org).

## ***References***

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# Topic #1: Government Interference in the Operation of a Free Press

*“Freedom of the Press is not an end in itself but a means to the end of achieving a free society”*  
*– Felix Frankfurter, former Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States*

## Introduction

The United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers".

The freedom of the press is defined as the right to circulate opinions in print without censorship by the government. It seeks out and circulates news, information, ideas, comment and opinion and holds those in authority to account. The press provides the platform for a multiplicity of voices to be heard. At national, regional and local level, it is the public's watchdog, activist and guardian as well as educator, entertainer and contemporary chronicler.

However, a free press is not something enjoyed by journalists in many countries across the globe. International authoritarian regimes have long imposed strict restrictive policies on the operations of journalists and the press. These attacks on the media, however, are not only being faced in dictatorship countries anymore. According to the 2017 World Press Freedom Index, published by non-governmental organization Reporters Without Borders (also known by its French acronym, RSF), media freedom is proving to be increasingly fragile in democracies as well. In sickening statements, draconian laws, conflicts of interest, and even the use of physical violence, democratic governments are trampling on a freedom that should, in principle, be one of their leading performance indicators.

The freedom of the press is under attack. RSF reports that its global indicator has never been so high, "which means that media freedom is under threat now more than ever." And governments are directly responsible.



Figure 1: Who threatens the press?



## *Current Situation*

Freedom of the Press is a report by Freedom House, a US-based non-governmental organization. This annual report measures the level of freedom and editorial independence in nations across the globe. The analysis of 2017 raised some key findings:

- Global press freedom declined to its lowest point in 13 years in 2016 amid unprecedented threats to journalists and media outlets in major democracies and new moves by authoritarian states to control the media, including beyond their borders.
- Only 13 percent of the world's population enjoys a Free press—that is, a media environment where coverage of political news is robust, the safety of journalists is guaranteed, state intrusion in media affairs is minimal, and the press is not subject to onerous legal or economic pressures.
- Forty-five percent of the population lives in countries where the media environment is Not Free. The world's 10 worst-rated countries and territories were Azerbaijan, Crimea, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Syria, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.
- Officials in more authoritarian settings such as Turkey, Ethiopia, and Venezuela used political or social unrest as a pretext for new crackdowns on independent or opposition-oriented outlets.
- Authorities in several countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Asia extended restrictive laws to online speech, or simply shut down telecommunications services at crucial moments, such as before elections or during protests.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has also released alarming reports on the deteriorating environment for press freedom. For instance, their work in 2012 (the year when the number of journalists imprisoned worldwide reached a record high) revealed trends such as:

- High murder rates and entrenched impunity in Pakistan, Somalia, and Brazil.
- The use of restrictive laws to silence dissent in Ecuador, Turkey, and Russia.
- The imprisonment of large numbers of journalists, typically on anti-state charges, to thwart critical reporting in Ethiopia, Turkey, Vietnam, Iran, and Syria.

CPJ deputy director Robert Mahoney stated, "The right to receive and impart information transcends borders, and international and regional bodies have a key role to play in upholding these principles, which are under attack."

The global decline of press freedom is occurring simultaneously with the current rise of media as a powerful tool in our increasingly globalized and interconnected world. American political activist Malcolm X described the media in the 60s as the most powerful entity on Earth, "because they control the minds of the masses". The dominance and influence of this tool has only grown since the days of Malcolm X. With the introduction of new technologies and platforms, as well as the increased accessibility of the internet for billions of people across the globe, online communication has become something that an unprecedented number of people are participating in. Most of the recent global events have been defined by the media that has covered it. From international sporting events to the refugee crisis, the press has played an exceedingly important role in spreading information across the globe and keeping those in

different countries informed of what is happening abroad. Putting so much power in the hands of journalists, however, is increasingly becoming an issue for authorities.

## ***Bloc Analysis***

### *The Situation in Democracies*

Democratic countries have long boasted of their policies that support the freedom of expression and a press unregulated by the government. However, a new era of “post-truth” has jeopardized this standard. An anti-media rhetoric is spreading in the developed world, in countries where the freedom of the press has been entrenched in their legal constitutions. Nigel Farage’s Brexit campaigns in Britain and the election of the 45th President in the U.S. are two important examples of how this is unfolding. The repeated attacks against the credibility of the news media by those such as Nigel Farage and Donald Trump have created a new environment where the media is regarded as “the enemy”. The hate speech and accusations of lying also helped to disinhibit attacks on the media almost everywhere in the world, including in other democratic countries. Hissing and jeering at journalists at meetings, or even throwing them out, has become the new normal. The hostile rhetoric, personalized abuse online, and indirect editorial pressure, have also recently been perpetuated in France, Italy, Poland, the Philippines and South Africa. Even Finland, which had been ranked first in RSF’s Press Freedom Index for the previous six years, came into disrepute when the President pressured a public TV broadcaster to not run stories accusing him of conflicts of interest.

A number of democracies, including individual EU member states, continue to safeguard the principles of media independence, but they do not have the power or influence to make up for the actions of the United States and the EU as a whole. Without the traditional pressure from those two powers, undemocratic governments will have far less incentive to heed the warnings of press freedom advocates. The global flow of accurate news and information will consequently weaken, and citizens, businesses, and policymakers in all countries will pay the price.

### *The Situation in Autocracies*

The 2017 RSF Press Freedom Index has found even more countries entering the so-called “black-list”, where the situation is deemed to be worst. Burundi, Egypt and Bahrain have now been added to the list of 21 countries in the black zone. In Burundi, crackdowns by the President on media outlets that forcing journalists to go into exile, has destroyed what was left of press freedom in the country. Egypt and Bahrain, both in the region with the worst score (the Middle East), find themselves on the black-list because of their imprisonment of journalists for long periods of time. Former Soviet republics and a number of East Asian countries, also find themselves ranked low on the Index for similar reasons.

Many repressive regimes continue to use political or social unrest as a pretext to tighten their grip on the media. The recent coup attempt against Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and the state of emergencies declared in Ethiopia and Venezuela, exacerbated already dire situations for the media in those countries. Journalists have been restricted from being able to cover

protests, many have been persecuted, and numerous websites and media outlets perceived as critical have been blocked or taken down.

War and crises have also created dangerous climates for journalists. The recent and ongoing conflicts in Syria (currently the world's deadliest country for journalists), Yemen, Libya and Somalia have specifically targeted journalists; by not only rebel groups but also governmental authorities.

### *The Issue of Surveillance*

Numerous states around the world have long been known to conduct surveillance on media professionals. China, Ethiopia, Iran, and Syria are among the many staunchly autocratic countries where physical and online monitoring is a fact of life for journalists, intended in part to intimidate the media and suppress critical coverage. However, the issue of surveillance has shaken the press corps in a number of democratic countries as well. The justification used in these countries is often the danger posed by domestic terrorism due to online radicalization. Today, anybody with access to the internet can become a voice for their own beliefs. This potentially unregulated power can lead to dangerous outcomes. Across the globe, and most notably in developed countries, extremist attacks due to online radicalization are on the rise. In attempts to monitor and control online activities, governments of countries such as Canada, the U.S., France, Germany and Britain, have passed legislation allowing “eavesdropping” under certain circumstances. With the growing threat posed by online extremism, governments are scrambling at every opportunity to gain leads that alert of potential danger. However, this intrusive surveilling inverts the normal and proper relationship between the government and the press in a democratic society. The criminalization of whistleblowers in these democracies, as well as in most undemocratic countries, is endangering the right to information. The media play a vital role in scrutinizing government performance, ensuring transparency, and holding public officials accountable. By using the resources of the state to peer into the work of media professionals, authorities can upend this dynamic, undermining journalists’ ability to keep the public informed and the government in check.

### *Committee Mission*

It is the mission of the SOCHUM committee as a whole to develop a global standard that addresses the increasing threats to the news media, and the consequences that these threats may have. The members of SOCHUM must come together to form a consensus that strengthens international efforts to fight impunity and increase journalist security around the world, in both democracies and autocracies.

### *Focus Questions*

1. How can countries ensure that journalists’ rights are protected, and that the freedom of expression is maintained?
2. How can member states keep up with the constantly changing dynamics of the news media?

3. How can member states separate the personal interests of the government from the workings of the press?
4. How can the SOCHUM committee hold member states accountable to a commitment to protect the press?
5. How do countries deal with the issues posed by online radicalism, while refraining from interfering with the operations of a free press?

# Topic #2: The Death Penalty and the Right to Life

*You can't reconcile being pro-life on abortion and pro-death on the death penalty.*  
 – N. T. Wright, leading English New Testament scholar, Pauline theologian, and retired Anglican bishop

## Introduction

The right to life has been acknowledged by the United Nations as an inherent and inalienable right of all human beings. Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person”. Furthermore, Article 5 states, “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”. As such, the death penalty breaches two essential human rights: the right to life and the right to live free from torture.

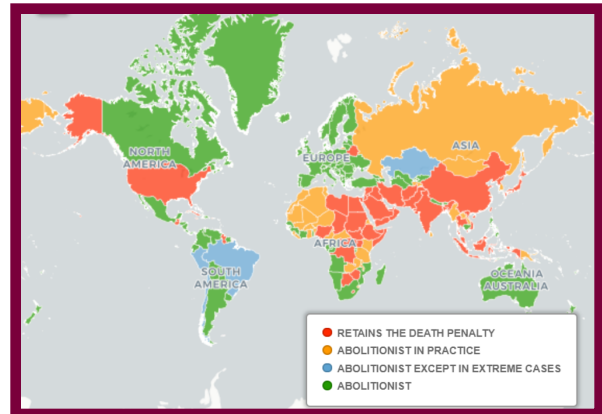


Figure 2: Map showing a breakdown of each country's stage of capital punishment practices.

These rights are not universally recognized across the world. Despite the de facto abolishment of capital punishment in many countries, it continues to be used in a significant number of nations. Under present international law, there is no absolute prohibition on the death penalty binding on all countries in the world. As such, individual states have the freedom to enact their own legislations regarding what they believe to be right. Many scholars have theorized that they do not envision any substantial decrease in the appointment and use of capital punishment in the near future since most of the countries likely to embrace the abolitionist cause have by now done so.

Since there is no permanent and pervasive global ruling on this issue, lives continue to be legally lost around the world in a process that opposes the internationally recognized right to life.

## History and Background

The first established death penalty laws date as far back as the Eighteenth Century B.C. in the Code of King Hammurabi of Babylon, which codified the death penalty for 25 different crimes. The death penalty was also part of the Fourteenth Century B.C.'s Hittite Code; in the Seventh Century B.C.'s Draconian Code of Athens, which made death the only punishment for all crimes; and in the Fifth Century B.C.'s Roman Law of the Twelve Tablets.



The death penalty became the most common form of punishment in Britain. As such, Britain heavily influenced America's use of the death penalty. When European settlers came to the new world, they brought the practice of capital punishment. In 1612, Virginia Governor Sir Thomas Dale enacted the Divine, Moral and Martial Laws, which provided the death penalty for even minor offences such as stealing grapes, killing chickens, and trading with Indians.

The abolitionist movement finds its roots in the writings of certain European theorists and English Quakers. However, it was Cesare Beccaria's 1767 essay, *On Crimes and Punishment*, that had an especially strong impact throughout the world. In the essay, Beccaria theorized that there was no justification for the state's taking of a life. Before seen as the only reasonable and effective way of punishing criminal offenders, global public perception soon shifted to realize the inhuman reality of the death penalty.

In 1849, the Roman Republic was the first state to abolish the death penalty. A number of other countries soon followed suit and this abolition trend has since grown in popularity.

### ***Current Situation***

In a series of four resolutions adopted in 2007, 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2013, the General Assembly urged member states to respect international standards that protect the rights of those facing the death penalty, to progressively restrict its use and reduce the number of offences which are punishable by death. 141 countries worldwide, more than two-thirds, are abolitionist in law or practice. However, today 58 countries still retain the death penalty.

According to Amnesty International, 2016 saw at least 1,032 people executed in 23 different countries. That same year, there were 3,117 death sentences in 55 countries. By the end of the year, at least 18,848 people were on death row. These figures excludes the thousands of executions believed to have been carried out in China; the world's top executioner. Data on executions in China are considered a state secret. In-depth global regional analysis can be found in the Amnesty International 2016 statistics report.

### ***Bloc Analysis***

#### ***The Debate***

Arguments both for and against the morality and efficacy of the death penalty have fueled years of heated debate between retentionists and abolitionists.

The death penalty is viewed as favourable by certain countries because they believe that it effectively discourages people from committing crimes, and reduces overpopulation in the criminal justice system. However, abolitionists advocate strongly against this practice because of its fundamental nature that threatens the right to life. They also emphasize the risk of executing innocent people, and the insufficient proof that this type of punishment does in fact deter crime.

### *Social Factors*

A number of social factors are involved in the debate on if the death penalty should be abolished, as well as how to do so. Religion, for instance, is used to argue on either side of the debate. For much of history, the Christian Churches accepted that capital punishment was a necessary part of the mechanisms of society. Execution of criminal offenders was enshrined in both the Old and New Testaments. Christians who support the death penalty often do so on the basis that the state acts not on its own authority but as the agent of God, who does have legal power over life and death. However, in recent years, Christians have argued against the use of the death penalty on the grounds that Christianity should support life.

Similarly, other religions such as Judaism, Hinduism and Islam, have morals entrenched in their religious texts that acknowledge the severity of taking another person's life- but allow this practice in the most extreme of circumstances. For example, Hinduism opposes killing, violence and revenge, in line with the principle of ahimsa (non-violence), yet India still retains the death penalty. Capital punishment is legal in most Middle Eastern countries, as teachings from the Qur'an show that although forgiveness is preferable, state sanctioned executions are allowed.

Additionally, race and socioeconomic status have been found to play an unmistakable role in the imposition of the death penalty. A recent report by the American Civil Liberties Union stated, "The color of a defendant and victim's skin plays a crucial and unacceptable role in deciding who receives the death penalty in America. People of color have accounted for a disproportionate 43 % of total executions since 1976 and 55 % of those currently awaiting execution. A moratorium of the death penalty is necessary to address the blatant prejudice in our application of the death penalty". This trend that disproportionately targets marginalized people, poor people and people of color, is one that has been noticed across the globe.

### *Beyond Abolition*

Furthermore, the existence and potential abolition of the death penalty in "countries in transition" should be closely studied. These are countries either in the process of democratization or emerging out of armed conflicts, where people and society are facing big social and political changes. In their book, *The Politics of the Death Penalty in Countries in Transition*, researchers Futamura and Bernaz analyzed the issue of the death penalty in these countries. Notably, their findings in Bosnia and Argentina indicated that abolition should not be regarded as the goal itself. In these countries, the graver problem arose after abolition. This is because the international community was so concerned with abolition itself that they failed to monitor whether the alternative sentence to the death penalty was appropriate, coherent and fair. Confusion over alternative punishments was a serious issue in Bosnia in particular, as the country was dealing with a number of war crimes trials. Caring less about improving the condition of prisons and imprisonment procedures is another emerging post-abolition problem, which seems to be often ignored.

## ***Committee Mission***

As a Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee, the goal of member states is to form a combined consensus on the morality of the death penalty, and implement policies that will effectively address the social, humanitarian and cultural implications of this practice. These policies should respond to not only the issues that the death penalty poses, but also those that a complete abolition movement would create.

In October 2017, UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated that “the death penalty has no place in the 21st century” and called on all countries which have not forbidden the extreme practice to urgently stop executions. It is time for SOCHUM nations to act upon what many leaders have spoken about but what previous UN committees have been unable to do.

## ***Focus Questions***

1. What are the social, humanitarian and cultural causes/implications of the death penalty?
2. How can countries develop policies that preserve the internationally recognized right to life? What overarching standards can be created that will apply to all countries equally?
3. How will these global standards address the problems posed both by the death penalty and its abolition?
4. How can the SOCHUM committee hold member nations accountable to their promises?

# Topic #3: Ethics of Corporations With Respect to Domestic Workers

*“The moment they took my passport and locked me in the washroom with a slice of bread for two days, I knew I was trapped”*  
*– Domestic Worker Survivor in Lebanon*

## Introduction

Domestic workers experience a plethora of injustices working for individuals and families all over the world. The domestic work market is comprised overwhelmingly of women who have left their homes in order to support themselves, their families, and even to flee from abuse in their home countries.

Millions of women employed as domestic workers take on the housework that people often do not consider as ‘real work’. From cooking, cleaning, and caring for children and the elderly, domestic workers perform important work that is disregarded and devalued. This makes them vulnerable to abuse and injustice from their employers. In many states around the world, domestic workers have little to no rights, making them increasingly vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse, often for only minimal wages. Working 14-18 hour days, domestic workers are more involved in the lives of others than they are in their own. Leaving their own children alone, these working mothers tend to the children and needs of their employers at all hours of the day and night.



Figure 3: Statistics on domestic workers

## Who Are They?

Domestic workers are young women, elderly women, single mothers, and women enduring illnesses, poverty, and abuse. Often they are undocumented persons, visible minorities, and living below the poverty line in their respective countries. Due to their vulnerable statuses, these women have little to no help from governments or legal international bodies. The injustices facing domestic workers is a pressing issue that must be addressed by the United Nations, in order to make an international declaration against their mistreatment, and to set regulations to protect them.

## *History and Background*

Traditionally, domestic work was performed by slaves and the extremely poor, before and during the colonial era. In this time, domestic work was attached to either one's status as a 'person' of the state, or to their economic class. In the United States, after Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation which freed slaves, many African Americans, as well as Hispanics, began to perform domestic work for wages. While the laws have changed regarding the status of African Americans, the social climate, however, overwhelmingly remained the same. The 1870 Census in the United States found that 52% of women were employed in domestic work. Despite the increasing workforce of domestic labour, there were little to no protection of these workers, nor were there any organizations working in their favour. Coming into the twentieth-century, the National Labor Relations Act was passed by Congress in the United States, giving rights to employees for unions to engage in collective bargaining and protecting employees from the risk of abuse from their employers. However, this did not cover domestic work, and especially not work performed by African Americans. Domestic work became racialized and sexualized, thereby permitting employers to continue to act as they wished. It was not until 1974 that the Fair Labor Standards Act was passed to provide domestic workers with some legal protections from potential abuses from their employers. In 2007, the National Domestic Workers Alliance formed to voice the concerns of millions of domestic workers.

## *Current Situation*

Domestic workers have been present since the integration of wage labour, where women were left to do housework when work outside the home became increasingly masculine. As housework became feminized, it also became devalued. However, with the rise of the working-class, men and women find less time to tend to household work and the ever-present needs of their children. The domestic worker has been molded to tend to the work that the modern 'working man/woman' may not have the time for. Increasingly, domestic workers are sponsored by their employers from foreign countries, obtaining work-visas in order to eventually gain residency in the country or accumulate enough money in order to sustain their life, and the lives of their family back home. Domestic workers from Singapore, Indonesia, Pakistan, China, Hong Kong, and Romania, to name a few, commonly find themselves in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany.

Angelica Foster, a once entrepreneur fleeing from domestic violence by her ex-husband in Jamaica, was introduced to domestic work as she became a nanny in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. Though her married life was financially very privileged, Foster's grandmother was a domestic worker. Foster therefore understood the difficulties of the work, but never imagined that she would be subjected to it herself. She describes her experience as an domestic worker to be difficult from the beginning as the families she worked for hardly acknowledged her, all while expecting her to accept the low pay and high maintenance schedules. She was expected to work holidays, which she was only paid a half-days work for, and to work even when she was ill. She experienced the racial and economic gap between herself and her employers for many years. Foster is one of many cases of domestic workers who are stuck in occupations of domestic



labour, forced to accept their conditions and pay as their employers design them to be due to their legal status in the country, their race, gender, and economic vulnerability.

### ***Bloc Analysis***

The labour market for domestic work covers physical labour, infant and child care, elder care, and an expanse of household work that goes beyond minimal tasks. Work inside the home is not widely regarded as ‘real work’ by society and even employers. Domestic workers are forced to accept injustices due to the nature of their work and to factors of physical appearance, economic status, and vulnerability overall. The ILO Convention of Decent work for Domestic Workers (2011) was the first international agreement where the issues affecting domestic workers were addressed openly. The private labour of domestic workers is structured in societies that do not respect the work that is performed or the worker that performs it. Migrants make up a large sector of the domestic workforce, as they take care of strangers’ children to provide for their own families.

An international definition of the domestic worker needs to be established in order to cover the work they perform; work which is often ignored and devalued. Their work conditions are disregarded due to the “private” nature of their work, giving permission to the employer to design the conditions domestic workers perform within. Many of these workers do not have many options in order to survive and feed their families, preventing their mobilization and resistance. Unions do not fulfill the needs of domestic workers, and cannot cover them, again due to the nature of their privatized work. The conditions that domestic workers are met with in regards to their work need to be addressed and regulations need to be drawn. States need to recognize these workers, their situation, and humanely deal with their legal, economic, and social status.

### ***Committee Mission***

The mistreatment of domestic workers is an injustice that must be addressed by the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) because this an issue that concerns vulnerable workers travelling across borders, working in all kinds of conditions for minimal pay. Their rights must be recognized and addressed, and a global standard must be set to protect domestic workers from abuse by employers. The SOCHUM committee needs to address this issue and develop a global standard that will protect and provide assistance to domestic workers facing physical and/or psychological abuse from their employers.

### ***Research Questions***

1. How can states set a standard of rights for domestic workers when their work is so heavily based in privatization?
2. Due to the illegal or temporary residency status of domestic workers, how can states or the international bodies protect foreign domestic workers under policy and regulations?

3. What can SOCHUM as a committee do to help domestic workers find the support and help they need to leave harsh employers and improve their livelihood?
4. How can governments more attentively protect foreign workers who enter the country on work visas to occupy positions of domestic workers? How can they set a standard for pay and work conditions for employers? And how can they make sure these standards are being met?