



BMUN LXXII



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (UNHRC)



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Hey Delegates!

I am beyond delighted to welcome you to BMUN 72's Human Rights Committee! My name is Stephanie Nguyen, and I will be your Head Chair for UNHRC this year. A bit about me: I am a second-year student, majoring in English with an intent to minor in Journalism and Education. As an English major and a staff writer for our school's newspaper, The Daily Californian, I am passionate about the way narratives hold meanings that transcend time periods and draw upon communal experiences. Therefore, being at Berkeley with an amazing English department has only fueled my love for literature. Since being here at Cal, I have developed an interest in sports and data journalism, especially the way sports and culture intertwine. With that being said, I am the hugest Anaheim Angels fan (yes, I said Anaheim Angels), even though it is definitely not easy seeing them consistently miss the postseason. In my free time, I love to try anything matcha-flavored, buy way too many books I probably won't read, binge sappy rom-coms, and attend the games of the inferior MLB teams in the Bay Area.

This year, I am joined by my superb Vice Chairs: Kathryn Clark, Adam Zbriger, and Ava Reyes.

Kathryn is a sophomore majoring in Public Health and Biology, with a minor in either Data Science or Human Rights! She loves science and sociology especially their intersections, which is why Berkeley is such a wonderful place for her. This is her sixth year doing MUN, and she is our BMUN 72 USG of Media and Alumni Relations, so you might see her running around taking photos at the conference, and if you message the BMUN Instagram, you'll be chatting with her. Outside of BMUN, she is involved in the Cal Climbing Club and Chi Omega Mu women's fraternity, volunteers at the Homeless Prenatal Program in SF, and works at Mezzo in Berkeley—go check it out! She loves rock climbing, yerba mate, being outdoors, and music, and cannot wait to meet every single one of you at the Conference!

Adam is a sophomore studying Physics and Astrophysics. Science has always been one of his favorite topics to learn about, and space most of all! Because of this, he's ecstatic to be at Cal, which has among the greatest departments for both majors in the world. He enjoys listening to music and reading, especially science fiction and fantasy stories. He is a baseball fan, and his favorite team is the San Francisco Giants, which he claims are far superior to any teams located in Anaheim of all places.

Ava is a freshman double majoring in Political Science and Rhetoric. She is also a writer for the Berkeley Political Review, a member of a co-ed foreign service fraternity, and a part of the pickleball club! Having been in MUN for four years, she has truly loved her experience so far and how it has given her a multitude of different perspectives of the world. In her free time, she likes to ball, Taylor Swift it up, and eat (lol). Aside from being a devoted Swiftie, she loves the Beatles, Billy Joel, The Rolling Stones, and The Beach Boys.

She also loves watching women's basketball (mostly college) and would do anything for a Caitlin Clark meet and greet.

Before you delve into the research process, I wanted to share some of the goals of this committee. The topics of this committee will challenge you to consider the way everyday practices and common occurrences hold strong human rights implications that are embedded in culture. To briefly introduce the topics, Topic A centers on sportswashing as a complex issue that is continually being researched as the phenomenon increases with globalization and the changing landscape of the media. Topic B focuses on ritual attacks and honor killings as hidden practices that greatly impact the livelihoods of communities and individuals involved. The UN Human Rights Committee, along with other international institutions, has taken more definitive initiatives over the last years to address these topics; however, they are often limited in their scope for influence in reaching communities joined by common interests and practices. Therefore, our goal for you in this committee is to uncover the struggles of current legislation and develop solutions that take into consideration the culture that allows human rights transgressions to occur.

As a dais, we prioritize making your BMUN experience an educational one that encourages you to step out of your comfort zone whether that be in researching different forms of academic texts or participating in the actual conference. With that being said, we want creative and thought-provoking solutions rooted in strong research, vocal participants engaged in meaningful debate, and most importantly, understanding and open citizens of the world willing to practice respect and tolerance.

To end our bittersweet introduction, please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or concerns to our committee email: unhrbcmun72@bmun.org. I wish everyone the best of luck in your preparations, and I can't wait to meet you all in March!

My best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephanie', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Stephanie Nguyen
Head Chair of UNHRC
Email: snguyen@bmun.org



TOPIC A: SPORTSWASHING AND THE RIGHTS OF ATHLETES

Content Warning:

This synopsis contains topics that may be difficult to discuss including suicide, sexual violence, and abuse. Please do not hesitate to reach out to our committee email (unhrcbmun72@bmun.org), your advisors, or other resources if you have any questions or concerns.

TOPIC BACKGROUND

What is Sportswashing?

Basic Overview

The unifying power of sports is undeniable and lends itself to the millions of athletes and fans who participate and engage in the sporting world. However, the looming presence of politics has increasingly darkened the sporting scene as sportswashing narratives

over the last decade have begun to taint the headlines of major international sporting events. Sportswashing refers to the practice of individuals, groups, corporations, or governments laundering a reputation or normalizing wrongdoing by capitalizing on the attraction of the sporting world (Towriss). Although sportswashing is a relatively new term, the practice has been used throughout history, dating as far back as the first Olympics in Athens, Greece.

Widely viewed as an early case of sportswashing in the modern era, the 1936 Berlin Olympics saw the Nazi regime temporarily removing anti-Jewish signs and toning down harsh rhetoric within the media to mask its violent anti-Semitic policies. By taking advantage of the anticipated Olympic Games, the regime presented foreign audiences with a fabricated image of a tolerant Germany (US Holocaust Memorial Museum). In a more recent example, Qatar's 2022 FIFA World Cup was filled with issues of violence against LGBTQ+ Qatari citizens and exploitation of migrant workers in which the government actively assured prospective visitors of the inclusiveness the games would espouse (Human Rights Watch).



Determining which countries or individuals participate in sportswashing is often a subjective decision that varies among differing perspectives and motivations of observers. However, numerous stakeholders and bodies engage in identifying and addressing the sportswashing controversy for public acknowledgment and awareness. Varying by context, the sportswashing phenomenon is reviewed by various entities that hold their individual standards, including the following:

- **Media Outlets:** Often engaging in the most scrutiny on sporting events, journalists and news outlets tend to investigate and expose the human

rights violations taking place behind the scenes. By covering interviews, protests, special reports, and editorial pieces, the media aims to push the sportswashing narrative among public viewers to garner awareness and discussion.

- **Athletes and Athletic Bodies:** Many athletes have raised concerns about the sportswashing issue and have unfortunately faced harmful consequences as a result. On the sporting stage, some athletes have used their media coverage to bring attention to the human rights issues of their home country or certain corporations.
- **Non-governmental organizations (NGOs):** UN Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International are among the top NGOs that have shed light on the sportswashing issue. By assessing nations' human rights records and actively monitoring the actions of sporting entities, NGOs play a pivotal role in advocating for human rights and documenting crimes.
- **Sporting governing bodies:** Sporting bodies like the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) have their hands deep in the sporting world with the responsibility of selecting reputable host countries for competition. The selection process is flawed and has given a margin to corruption and bribery (see Forms of Sportswashing). With the increase in media coverage and public attention, these bodies face intense pressure to consider ethical measures and human rights when evaluating hosting rights.
- **Governments and political bodies:** When referring to sportswashing, the link is often associated with countries like China, Qatar, or Saudi Arabia due to their generous investment in sports and the recent publicized coverage of their human rights record. Many Western democracies have

- been extremely critical of sportswashing and demanding more transparency among sporting entities. Nations like the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, and Canada have vocalized concerns about human rights violations at the recent 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar (Harding). These governments have advocated for enforced regulations that discourage sportswashing activities on a global scale. (Because these countries have stronger institutions and greater press freedom which allows the discussion of sportswashing to be acknowledged, international communities should be open to the conclusion that Western countries could also be rightly accused of sportswashing; otherwise, western bias in sportswashing could taint the human rights violations happening in these nations and project a xenophobic view on global issues. However, the dilemma with this is that if the definition of sportswashing is applied too loosely, international actors run the risk of categorizing all state involvement with sports as sportswashing. Even though all governments are flawed to some extent, the practice of sportswashing would be ubiquitous and ignored overall.)

Because there is no international standard to measure who participates in sportswashing and to what extent, there is some difficulty in addressing the issue on an equal and global scale. Therefore, when researching solutions, consider how your country chooses to define what entities participate in sportswashing. (Because the term “sportswashing” was coined in 2015 and is therefore, a relatively new definitive concept, to help with research, look for words related to image/reputation laundering and soft power tactics in tandem with sports.) Your country may rely on certain media outlets, public protests and engagement, government statements, or other forms to condemn

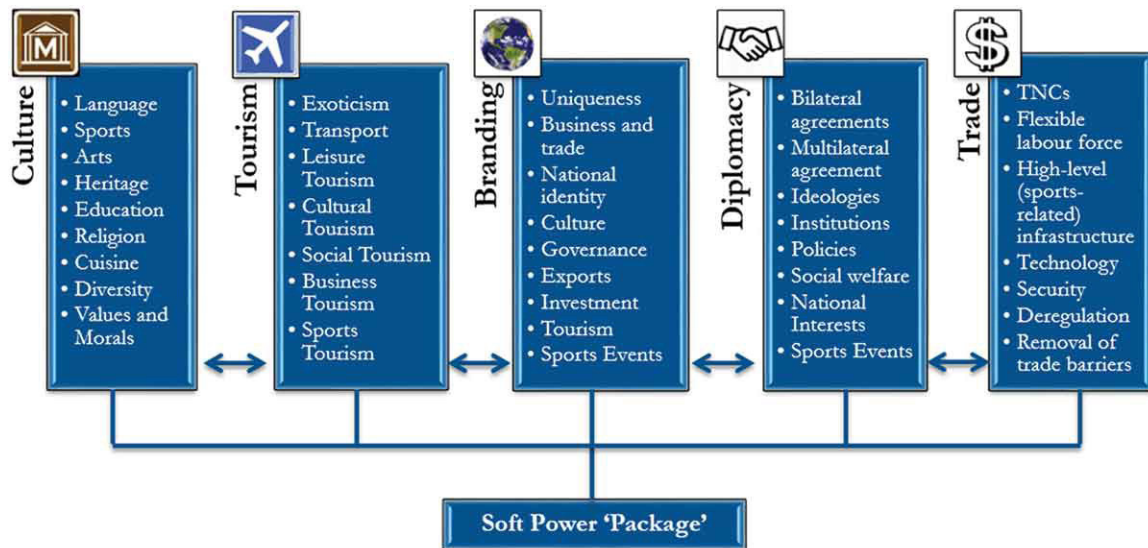
the sportswashing practices of others. To what extent do these participants enact meaningful changes in the sporting world?

Soft power

In this modern era of sports, global integration, and digital technology, the sports industry has evolved into much more than a simple game of fair play. Additionally, corporations and governments have been involved in advanced capitalist societies. As a result, states have manipulated sports as a form of soft power—the ability to achieve goals through attraction rather than coercion. Entities that capitalize on the lure of sports use a soft power strategy when the receiving end (citizens, audiences, fans, media, etc.) rely on these entities for guidance, leadership, affirmation, or imitation of their achievements.

Following the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, the rationale for increased soft power in the modern era lends itself to the heightened concern with welfare as opposed to military glory. Public support began to play a more important role than ever in political engagement. Additionally, the influence of widespread information and media as well as globalization led to increased scrutiny of government affairs by both home audiences and international counterparts. Thus, the reliance on sports as a form of soft power has only increased in the last decades with government and individual actors wielding sporting events for covert social and political gain.

Sports mega-events (SMEs) have been widely used by countries as part of their diplomatic armory to attract international attention. Moreover, sports are linked to resources that further a state’s successful soft power campaign: culture, tourism, branding, diplomacy, and trade.



These interlinked resources signal to other states that a certain country or corporation has the ability and potential to invest in economic infrastructure and conduct logistical business practices (Grix & Brannagan). States that achieve sporting success—whether through providing an entertaining competition or staging of SMEs—encourage others to seek their values and cultural importance through the projection of these principles to foreign publics.

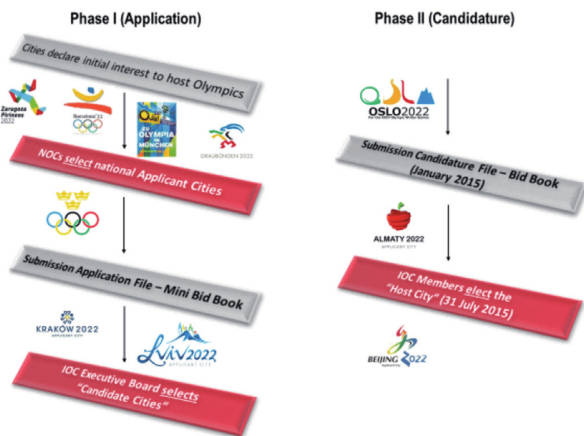
Forms of Sportswashing

Although sportswashing is often understood in relation to major sporting events, the practice is conducted at both an international level and an individual or corporate level. The presumption that the staging of major international sporting events is the main form of sportswashing ignores the more invasive and covert forms that reach wider audiences and are often not publicized in the media. With the many different forms of sportswashing, governments, corporations, and individuals can affect the sporting world both on and off the field.

The Bidding Process and Hosting Mega Sporting Events

For major international sporting games such as the Olympics and the World Cup, the IOC and FIFA conduct a bidding competition to determine the host city or country approximately seven years prior to the event. In the case of the Olympics, there is often a national competition before the international bidding to determine potential host cities. For example, in 2013, the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) sent an invitation to 50 U.S. cities, and in 2015, they named Boston as the official US candidate. From there, the candidate city is in competition with other applicant cities from around the world. The applicant cities will pay a USD 150 thousand fee for consideration in the contest, and if chosen as the final three to five candidate cities, they are required to pay an additional USD 50 thousand. (FIFA follows a similar process and timeline; however, countries are chosen instead of cities.) From a broader perspective, the underlying economic reality is that there is a seller (IOC or FIFA), a monopoly, and multiple bidders.

As a point of contention over the last decade, the rise of the overwhelming cost of bidding has forced credible candidates to drop official or potential bids. For the 2022 Winter Olympics, after six cities had dropped their bids, the IOC narrowly awarded the games to Beijing, in a country known for persecuting Uyghur and other Muslims and silencing dissenters (Vomiero). Therefore, countries that can pay the costly fees and emerge with extravagant plans are awarded hosting privileges. Oftentimes, whether a democratic or authoritarian country, event planning is conducted in tandem with the interests of local business elites that hope to substantially gain from the massive public funding. As a result, not only are costs paid by taxpayers, but those taxpayers also lose from the bidding process and the profits from hosting the event (Zimbalist).



The final stage of the bidding process is a vote by the Congress of the sports governing body to determine the official host country. For FIFA, each of the 211 member states is allotted one vote and the nation with the majority vote is awarded hosting rights. However, there are loopholes in this final step of bidding that allow some countries to manipulate the voting in their favor. In 2020, the US Department of Justice accused FIFA officials of taking bribes in order

to award World Cups to Russia in 2018 and Qatar in 2022. A report from U.S. prosecutors outlines the details of money paid to members of FIFA's top board, payments to South American officials, and bribery schemes by host countries (Panja & Draper). Bodies like the IOC and FIFA play a major role in determining the host country and conducting a process that has been known to be contaminated with corruption and bribery. From there, a host country has the ability to tailor the allure of the games to its advantage.



Team and Athlete Ownerships

Team ownership involves associating a country or company with a particular sporting venue and team and promoting continual engagement. Some of the most well-known team ownerships involve high-level international soccer teams such as the United Arab Emirates' enormous investment in Manchester City in 2008 and Newcastle United Football Club being bought by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) in 2021. However, both countries host significant human rights issues and have come under fire for suppressing critical voices and political opponents (Baniya). Despite the concerns over Saudi Arabia's human rights records, 97% of Newcastle supporters were in favor of the Saudi purchase before it happened (Kershaw). The desire for a winning team under new ownership, essentially the emotional

ties associated with sports and particular teams, is the very basis that allows sportswashing to flourish. Additionally, because the relationship with a sporting team and its owner is often long-term, owners have substantial control over the team's performance and thus, the relation to fans and wider audiences.



On a similar note to team ownerships, the acquisition of high profile athletes by certain countries plays into the role of image laundering and a desire to fuel a positive image in light of domestic concerns. In athlete ownerships, countries attempt to extract the influence and popularity of well-known players by offering huge salaries to sign them to their sporting clubs. Following the 2022 World Cup, the signing of Cristiano Ronaldo to the Saudi soccer club Al-Nassr gained significant international attention. By coordinating efforts that are financed by the Kingdom's Public Investment Fund, Saudi Arabia aims to increase their influence in the sporting world and turn the country's domestic league into a destination for top talent. However, the effort of Saudi Arabia remains reminiscent of a similar Chinese scheme of high profile and costly acquisitions to make a name in the global soccer scene only a decade earlier (Panja and Omran).

Corporate Sponsorships

In a sponsorship agreement, the corporate sponsor enters a relationship with the team, event, or association in which there is significant economic potential. Because these corporations conduct commercial activities, the UN Guiding Principle of Business and Human Rights applies to their policies (see UN Action). As part of this agreement, companies need to implement policies that address respect for human rights. However, this is not always upheld (Björnsson). Governing bodies that control corporate sponsorships practice sportswashing by validating the human rights violations of the companies and awarding them mass coverage on the international stage. In the 2023 Women's World Cup, FIFA had chosen to award Saudi Arabia's state tourism authority sponsorship, and its campaign would have been shown throughout the women's games through advertisements and television commercials. However, Saudi Arabia's connection to human rights is fraught, especially women's rights where a male guardianship system fails to be dismantled and women's rights activists are continually imprisoned (Worden). Because of criticism from civil society and star athletes like Alex Morgan and Vivianne Miedema, FIFA President Gianni Infantino ended the deal with Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, sports sponsorships capitalize on the emotional charge that sports provide fans. For corporations, the opportunity to associate their logos with the stadium atmosphere through team-branded objects, commercials, and athlete endorsements sends positive associations for audiences and consumers. Qatar Airways, owned by the Qatari government, has been an internationally recognized brand through its heavy involvement in the sports industry with high-profile sponsorships of soccer teams like Paris Saint-Germain, Bayern Munich, A.S. Roma, and the NBA team Brooklyn Nets. As the front-jersey sponsor of Paris Saint-Germain, Qatar Airways

receives immense branding exposure that extends beyond players but also the fans who purchase jerseys and other team-branded objects. On the other hand, Qatar's appalling human rights record continues to prevail as global sports involvement becomes a soft power defense strategy for the autocratic state (Olsen).



Information Manipulation

The use of state-led media outlets in determining news coverage can amplify sportswashing practices by diverting attention away from political issues and human rights violations. In many nations where media is controlled by the government, news outlets displace negative content with elevating alternative stories including sports. The selection bias of these governments favors sports as a key component of distraction from other stories. Additionally, some governments have put in place restrictions on international press in order to hinder or prevent certain issues from being brought to the surface. During the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, the Chinese government's censorship apparatus intensified as international reporters entered the country's scene. Dutch reporter Sjoerd den Daas was dragged away while delivering a live report during the opening ceremonies and claimed that other reporters had been "repeatedly obstructed or stopped by the police" (Human Rights Watch).

Although the use of sports coverage may not be intentionally aiming to shift attention away from human rights violations, selection bias is a key source of soft power that can be manipulated by states in order to shape opinions. In 2018, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev aimed to raise the national retirement age which was highly unpopular among citizens. The announcement came during the time of the World Cup as Russia's national team played in its opener against Saudi Arabia. Although the news may have been a coincidence, the measure was long expected, and sources claim that Medvedev's timing was calculated.

Public Relations Tactics

Over the last decades, intermediaries have been a source of information for many people who utilize these stand-ins (or "influencers") for coverage of news as opposed to credible sources. Originating in the early 20th century, the profession of public relations (PR) became an interface between institutions and the public with the heightened usage of platforms like advertising, newspapers, photographs, the mail, and in today's age, social media. With social media exponentially growing over the last decade, the public has relied on information from intermediaries/influencers to help shape opinion, and the sports industry is no exception. Global sports has been dominated by PR professionals in which celebrity athletes, sports administrators, and national policy makers siphon off the public's attention. When Argentina hosted the 1978 World Cup, the military dictatorship hired Burson-Marsteller, a U.S.-based PR firm, in order to recruit local celebrities and foreign journalists to curate a progressive image of Argentina's leadership for audiences abroad. To prepare for the upcoming games, Argentina's sportswashing practices propagated a sanitized narrative that ignored the serious hu

man rights violations of the thousands of disappearances and torture cases plaguing the country (Ganji).

Rights of athletes

A major part of the sporting world lies within the athletes themselves and the interwovenness of sportswashing in the overall integrity of sports. Sportswashing puts athletes in precarious positions: on one hand, athletes want to compete in their sports which many have spent their whole lives working towards; on the other, many may feel a moral obligation to speak out and address human rights concerns. Moreover, governments can use the sporting achievements of their athletes in order to justify the abuse of athletes and/or cover up political issues at home. For example, former Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai disappeared after revealing sexual assault allegations against a former high-ranking member of China's ruling Communist Party. Despite this, the IOC offered minimal regard in addressing the serious human rights violations in Shuai's case and continued to conduct the Beijing Olympic Games—an action that has been criticized by human rights organizations (Adolis & Mendonca). For many athletes, the disclosure of abuse has fatal consequences which leaves athletes vulnerable to human rights violations. As a more discrete form of sportswashing, the rights of athletes are continually put at risk in order to placate the image of a particular government, organization, club, or other entity.

Although athletes' rights may vary among different countries, sports, levels, athletes' unions, NGOs, and others, various rights remain fundamental to the protection of athletes worldwide including the following: freedom of expression, the right to a safe competition and training environment, fair and equal gender representation, protection of personal information, and

participation in a transparent, fair, and clean sporting environment (IOC).

The international sporting industry is regulated by a system of entities from local sporting clubs to international and nongovernmental organizations. Despite each having different connections to human rights mechanisms, human rights standards apply to all relevant actors, and governments are obligated to protect the rights of these athletes. When governments and sports governing bodies fail to incorporate human rights protections in their policy-making and enforcement processes, many athletes are forced to endure fragmented and inadequate protection. When conducting your research, it is essential to know the major sports governing bodies and their function in human rights protection. What standards or regulations do these entities have in place and how effective are they in combating human rights violations?

Vulnerable Groups: Women and Children

Sex Testing

The practice of sex testing has been used by sports governing bodies for decades in which the rights of women athletes are violated by the coercive environment such testing has asserted. Sex testing refers to the medical interventions women are compelled to undergo to determine their gender eligibility for sports. By these practices, the bodies of women athletes are subjected to public scrutiny and those deemed "suspect" are required to undergo a medical examination. Despite no clear scientific consensus that women with naturally higher testosterone perform better in athletics, many are compelled to endure a medically unnecessary and humiliating practice for the sake of competing in their sport (Worden).



According to a 2020 Human Rights Watch report, World Athletics, an international sporting governing body, regulated sex testing that encouraged discrimination, surveillance, and medical intervention on women athletes in track and field. Current World Athletics regulations deny women participation in running events between 400 meters and one mile unless an invasive testing procedure is submitted for gender verification. As a result of these practices, many women have been excluded from their sport, including South African runner Caster Semenya who was banned from events at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics (Human Rights Watch). When charged with allegations of abuse and racially stereotyping women from countries in the global South, World Athletics claimed commitment to “fairness for women in sport.” However, by using sex testing policies to contend for equality in sports, World Athletics engages in sportswashing practices that deflect attention away from ensuring human rights for women athletes (Ahmed).

Rights of Child Athletes

The power imbalance between sports organizations and athletes is a flawed relationship. For children, the imbalance is exacerbated by the lack of education and awareness of protection resources which opens up for

a range of abuses to take form. According to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, of all the children involved in competitive sports, 10% have experienced human rights abuse and another 20% are at risk. For children who have competed internationally, the percentage is even greater with 84% having experienced some form of abuse (Global Times). By the nature of highly competitive sports, the system of accountability and oversight can often be insular. With child athletes, the issue lies within the position that coaches, officials, and higher authorities possess; in the power structure of sports, children are the most vulnerable and as a result, can be more easily exploited (Hoy).



In Japan, the sporting culture encourages trainers to discriminate against children, and physical violence is traditionally used as a coaching technique. In a 2020 report on the testimonies of over 800 former child athletes participating in 45 different sports in Japan, Human Rights Watch documented the practice of “taibatsu” or corporal punishment in sports and addressed the lack of specific reference to child abuse in organized sports within legal regulations. Additionally, verbal abuse, neglect, and bullying among teammates are common denominators within the Japanese sporting environment. Because abuse is embedded within the mentality of the sporting culture, many children endure the violence without understanding

of support systems and awareness of the detrimental effects of youth abuse. Moreover, the alarming rates of suicide among child athletes in Japan are an evident consequence of the brutal conditions of the nation's sports culture (Human Rights Watch). Despite these cases, abuse of children in sports is often unreported and institutions fail to hold individuals responsible for abuse accountable for their behaviors. From sports in school to criminal legal systems, abusive coaches continue to inflict harm because of the failure of authorities to investigate and prosecute. In an online survey, only 31 out of 425 (7%) physically abused child athletes indicated that there were any consequences for their abusers (Benque).

Why Does Sportswashing Work?

External vs. Internal Sportswashing

External sportswashing is more projected in the media and essentially refers to a country or corporation's dependence on international attention for soft power purposes. Efforts like staging SMEs and investing in prominent sporting franchises aim to shape an image on the global stage. The other half of the sportswashing equation lies within the host country itself. The success of sportswashing is how an authoritarian government frames the story within its own borders, relying on specific narratives to shape the perceptions of reality for viewers at home. Moreover, sportswashing is often linked to authoritarian or repressive regimes in which citizens do not possess unfettered access to the internet as in Western democracies; thus, they must rely on government information from state news agencies to shape their opinions. Not only does internal sportswashing divert attention away from domestic politics on a local level, but by quelling dissent within the home country, some

issues are unable to reach the critical mass necessary for reprehension (Busbee).

The Moral Question of Sportswashing

The difficulty of organizing mass response from individual actors is the core of the efficacy of sportswashing practices. Sports, in general, are an integral part of societies and communities; thus, refusing participation in sporting events or staging large-scale resistance strategies is difficult for fanbases who maintain strong connections and interests in sports. For example, major international sports competitions like the Olympics and the World Cup demand worldwide coverage; essentially many audiences would rather consume information of entertaining plays and scores as opposed to the covert human rights violations and wrongdoings of the host country. Additionally, when fans celebrate the success of certain teams, they may cast a positive light on owners and sponsors that engage in sportswashing (Delaney). Therefore, the moral challenge of sports presents itself to millions of people who may understand the background injustice that sportswashing perpetuates but also still want to engage in sporting traditions that empower and unite communities. Additionally, even those who are unaware of the political issues that pollute sports become involved in involuntary reinforcing structural injustices. By capitalizing on the emotions augmented by sports, certain entities can easily manipulate soft power strategies in their favor and contribute to the insidious nature of sportswashing (Fruh et al.,). When researching solutions, it is vital to consider the role that fanbases play in the sporting world. Consider the way public audiences shape mainstream sports and how their involvement may be an advantage or detriment in challenging sportswashing regimes.

PAST UN ACTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Sportswashing is a wide-reaching and pervasive issue that affects many different communities and countries. Although the United Nations does not have any resolutions that address sportswashing directly, many proposed UN actions can be applied within the sportswashing scope that has relevance to the issue and tackles a specific matter of the sporting world. Moreover, the work of human rights organizations, activists, and international bodies has played a significant role in raising concerns about sportswashing practices; many of which have had strong international support and substantial effects in voicing objections to sportswashing regimes. When researching international response, consider the issues that pertain to your country and the relevant sporting culture of your nation; what actions have been taken to address those specific issues?

UN Action

UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) outlines the responsibilities of states and enterprises to uphold human rights with the expectation that these sports governing bodies will adopt specific policies and conduct due diligence. Essentially, under the UNGPs, businesses should acknowledge the human rights violations tied to their practices and demonstrate that they can adequately address them (Prasad & Mishra). Moreover, the UNGPs suggests that harms of sportswashing, specifically in Principle 17: Human rights due diligence “should cover adverse human rights impacts that the business enterprise may cause or contribute to



through its own activities, or which may be linked to its operations, products or services by its business relationships” (UNHRC). The link between sports as a business and human rights aims to ensure that governing bodies can remedy past violations as well as consider the future of their sporting relations.

UNESCO’s Kazan Action Plan

Adopted in July 2017, the Kazan Action Plan outlines the means of sports in contributing to the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically goal 16.2 which addresses ending “abuse, exploitation and all forms of violence against and torture of children.” In order to address abuse against child athletes, the Kazan Action Plan Working Group has set different measures including country-specific indications for national sports organizations to adopt formal child protection policies, the training of athletes, coaches, and officials on these policies, and the nominations of designated officers for “child protection” (UNESCO).

UN’s Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace

The UN’s Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace (2018) is aimed at using sports based initiatives to contribute to the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals. The Action Plan focuses on four main thematic areas: 1) strengthened global frameworks on sports for peace and development; 2) policy development for mainstreaming and integrating sports in development programs and policies; 3) resource mobilization, programming and implementation; and 4) research, monitoring, and evaluation. These recommended lines of action play fundamental roles in the conduction of sports in good practices of human rights on both an international and local

scale (“United Nations Action Plan”). However, consider the nuances of this Plan. Different entities can manipulate sports to fall under the guise of “development and peace” in order to forward an alternate agenda that may perpetuate poor human rights. Therefore, it is essential that sporting actions are monitored effectively such as evidence of impact of sports frameworks and follow up reports.

International Action: Examining Olympic Boycotts and Bans

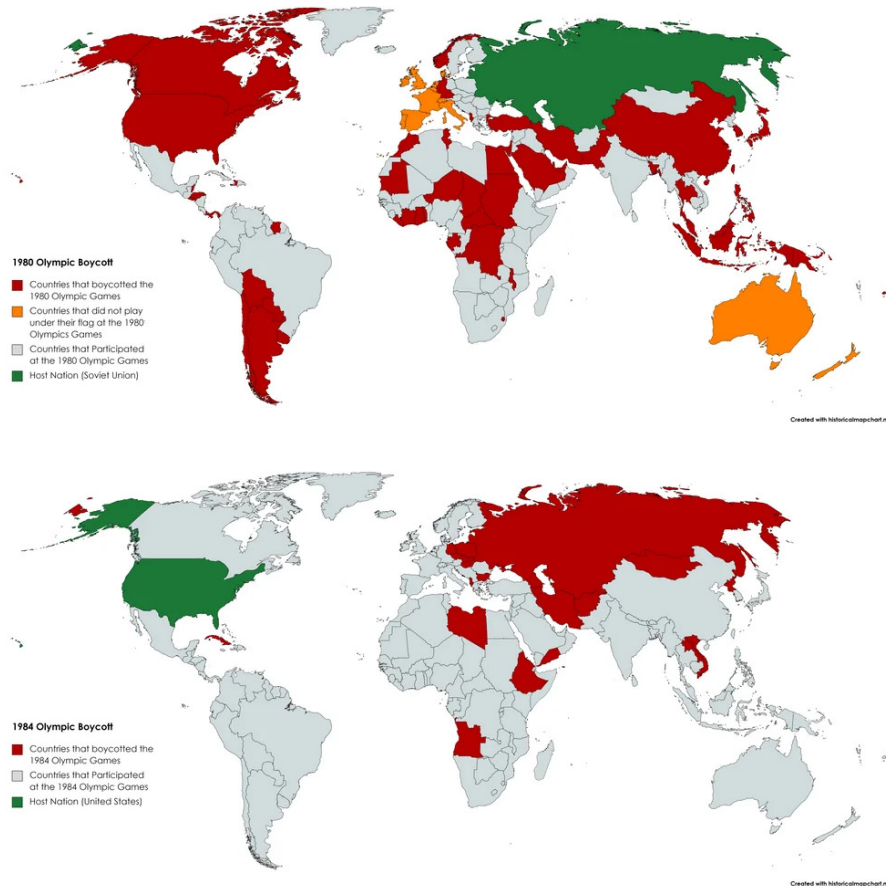
The Olympic Games are the most internationally recognized sporting event, garnering thousands of athletes in competition and a global audience of billions across the globe. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) promotes the customary quadrennial Games as a means of achieving the Olympic ideals of peace and harmony through sports. Although the games are intended to create a more peaceful world through sports engagement, the 125-year history of the modern Games has been marred by geopolitical drama, resulting in two primary international responses: boycotts and bans. Examining these measures will help to think about the way sportswashing is being addressed on an international scale and how effective or ineffective these measures have been in enacting change.

1980 Moscow Summer Games Boycott

In the wake of the 1980 Olympics in Moscow, Russia, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter led the largest boycott in Olympic history alongside 65 other countries to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. For many countries participating in the boycott, their athletes could still compete under the Olympic flag, but for American athletes, those attempting to compete faced losing their passports. Despite only

80 countries competing (the fewest since 1956), the Moscow Games suffered minimal political and economic fallout from the boycott as Soviet troops remained in Afghanistan until 1989. Moreover, the criticism faced by audiences in the United States was far greater as the boycott outraged qualified and pas-

sionate athletes from competing, for many, in their only Olympics. Moreover, in 1984, the Soviet Union along with 14 other nations boycotted the Los Angeles Olympic Games in retaliation for the precursory boycott four years earlier (Kennedy).



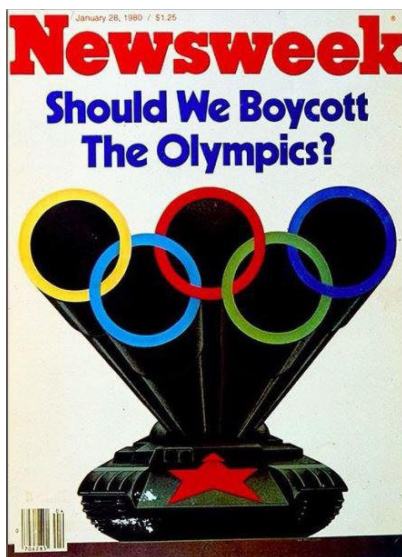
As the international sentiment over Olympic boycotts has emerged as ineffective and a wrongful penalization of determined athletes, governments have found other means to protest sportswashing practices. Over the last decade, government officials have engaged in diplomatic boycotts, which see only high-profile authorities defying attendance at the Olympics. Amid the 2022 Beijing Olympics, government officials from the U.S., Australia, Britain, and Canada refused to attend the Games in order to protest the

human rights abuses against ethnic minorities in the northwestern region of China (Mather). Despite the diplomatic boycotts initiated by some countries, these nations still send their athletes to compete for international recognition, which could also be labeled a form of sportswashing.

The efficacy of Olympic boycotts is up for debate. On one hand, boycotts can draw significant attention to the root of the protests, especially if many

countries participate in it. For example, the African boycott of the Montreal Olympic Games in 1976 solidified the fight against apartheid in South Africa among the sporting world and the UN. The term “apartheid” appeared on the front page of newspapers across the world, and audiences began circulating the issue and pressuring their own governments for change (Riga). On the other hand, the effects can be limited, and oftentimes, boycotts fail to result in substantial political change as seen in the 1980 and subsequent 1984 boycotts. Additionally, boycotts can leave athletes as unwilling victims of politics which can have emotional effects on citizens of the athlete’s home country. The allure of the Games often trumps the political matters that may tarnish it; therefore, enacting a successful boycott for political change is a difficult process, especially for a global audience that strongly engages and relies on the international sports world (Rossner & Low).

vided Russian athletes with performance-enhancing drugs. As a result, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) imposed a four-year ban on the country for the Olympic Games and world championship sporting events which was eventually reduced to a two-year ban by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in 2020. Under the ban which extended to the 2020 Tokyo Games and the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, Russian athletes not implicated in doping competed under a neutral flag, the name of the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC), and Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto No. 1 in lieu of the country’s anthem. The ban also barred Russian government officials and representatives from attending major events or serving on the board of any organization that had signed the global anti-doping code. Additionally, Russia was not allowed to bid to host any international championships, and planned events were required to be moved after the four-year period (Panja).



WADA’s Russian Ban for Doping Program

In 2016, Dr. Grigory Rodchenkov, the former head of an anti-doping laboratory in Moscow, blew the whistle on Russia’s state-sponsored initiative that pro-



Although several punishments were enforced and put in place, the common sentiment among critics and athletes is that WADA’s ban was an insufficient deterrent to doping in sports. Because the ban was shortened to two years, many athletes voiced criticism against WADA and CAS with sentiments that Russia was escaping the doping scheme “unpunished.” Moreover, the decision to reduce the ban and the possibility of Russian athletes—including those allegedly complicit in the doping or the cover-up—

competing in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics raised questions on the international sporting structure's ability to regulate doping and reflected the lack of respect

and protection afforded to clean sports at the highest level (Keh & Panja).

CASE STUDIES

The Success of the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup

The recent 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand was a focal point for discussions on the intersection of sports and human rights. The Sport and Rights Alliance, a global coalition of NGOs and trade unions, emphasizes the importance of holding major sporting events to high ethical standards and demanding transparency and accountability. For example, the Alliance's call for Formula One (F1), the premier automobile racing series in the world, to reveal human rights articles in F1 contracts comes against the backdrop of concerns about "sportswashing" in countries like Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. By scrutinizing the potential ethical implications of these events, the Alliance strives to prevent sports from being exploited to mask human rights abuses. Repressive states often use sports as a tool to improve their image, while democracies employ "soft power" through sports to enhance their influence.

As discussions surrounding major sporting events like the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup unfold, the Sport and Rights Alliance and other groups have highlighted the vital need for transparent practices and accountability measures to prevent exploitation of sports for political ends. The interconnectedness

of sports, human rights, and global politics is evident as concerns over sportswashing prompt inquiries into preventative measures, like F1 contracts. These organizations aim to expose the potential for events to be manipulated for image enhancement rather than genuine progress. This phenomenon is further examined in the context of autocracies and democracies, illustrating the multifaceted ways in which sports are used to shape reputations and narratives on both domestic and international stages. In the recent 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, the Australian Human Rights Commission, in partnership with FIFA and the New Zealand Human Rights Commission, released their Human Rights Risk Assessment Report that was created in line with the UNGPs. The report highlighted gender-related human rights risks including discrimination, endemic harassment, appropriate representation of women, and gaps in access to transparent grievance mechanisms. In addition with the closed deal of Saudi Arabia's Tourism sponsorship, the Women's World Cup was praised as one of the successful examples of meaningful and transparent stakeholder consultation (Sports and Rights Alliance).

The Other Side of Russia's Doping Scandal: Yuliya Stepanova's Testimony on the Rights of Athletes



Prior to Grigory Rodchenkov's immense role in exposing Russia's doping scandal, there were the Stepanovs, the original whistleblowers of Russia's widespread, state-sponsored doping program. Yuliya Stepanov, a former runner for the Russian National team, and her husband, Vitaly Stepanov, a former officer of the Russian Anti-Doping Agency, sent secretly recorded tapings of Yuliya's coaches and doctors and confessions of the use of illegal drugs to the UN Human Rights Committee. As a result, the Stepanovs set off a chain of investigations, ultimately leading to the ban of the entire Russian track and field team from the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. According to the director of the country's anti-doping laboratory at the time, the use of the state-run doping program was meticulously planned for years in order to ensure Russian dominance at the Olympic Games. In an interview with BBC 100 Women, Yuliya Stepanov disclosed that using performance-enhancing drugs was normalized by coaches and doctors who assured her that it was something all athletes did and that they would cover up positive tests in exchange for a percentage of her winnings (Ash). Moreover, athletes who refused to dope would lose the cover protected by the Russian system.

Now living quietly in the United States, the Stepanovs and their defiance of Russian authorities have

left them fearful of their lives and doubtful of ever returning home. Because of their actions, the Stepanovs continue to face hostile backlash and criticism from Russians who equate them to traitors (Ash). Yuliya Stepanov's story is one of the rare ones to emerge from Russia's doping scandal and has left international actors wondering how many other athletes are unknowingly complicit in Russia's sportswashing crimes. In the 2022 Beijing Winter Games, after winning gold in the team event, star figure skater Kamila Valieva tested positive for trimetazidine, a banned heart medication that improves endurance. However, she was only 15 years old at the time, and audiences remain skeptical of Valieva voluntarily taking performance-enhancing drugs. On the other hand, Valieva's coach Eteri Tutberidze has been known for training champions in the peak of their teens and enforcing strict diet restrictions and over-training on her athletes (Abad-Santos). The average audience experience and media representation often afford a lack of empathy for athletes involved in dirty sporting practices; however, it is important to recognize that the rights of athletes are continually compromised by entities that prioritize sporting prowess over human rights. Moreover, the sporting culture and mentality of various entities affect the manner in which abuses are brought to light, if ever at all.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Has your own country or a neighboring country hosted an international sporting event in the last 20 years? Was your country affected in any way by the event (tourism, economics, media coverage, political relations, etc.)?
2. Consider the states or companies in your country that sponsor sports teams or participate in team ownership. Does the association between a state/corporation with a team have an effect on how it is perceived from an international perspective? If your country or a corporation in your country has a strong partnership with a sports team, what effect does the association have among players and fans?
3. In relation to abuse of athletes, what laws in your country are in place to address regulation in sports? To what extent have these laws been effective in combating abuse within sporting institutions? If they have been unsuccessful, what factors are affecting the enactment of meaningful reform?
4. What role do international audiences, fans, and athletes play in the sportswashing scene? Why is it important for them to be addressed in tandem with efforts to combat sportswashing practices?

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TOPIC B: RITUAL ATTACKS AND HONOR KILLINGS

Content Warning:

This synopsis contains topics that may be difficult to discuss including suicide, sexual violence, and abuse. Please don't hesitate to reach out to our committee email (unhrbcmun72@bmun.org), your advisors, or other resources if you have any questions or concerns.

TOPIC BACKGROUND

What is cultural violence?

Before delving into the intricacies of cultural violence, it is vital to understand the types of violence and their correlation with one another. Norwegian theorist Johan Galtung developed a three-layered understanding of violence to represent the way in which historical factors merge to create the conditions that are normative today and result in promoting violence.

- Direct violence is the most notable type of violence, referring to behaviors that threaten human life and/or diminish an individual's capacity to attain basic needs. This would include killings, sexual assault, bullying, and emotional manipulation. The effects of direct violence are visible and easier to identify and do not affect many people as widely as structural and cultural violence.
- Structural violence refers to the indirect targeting of communities that denies these groups the sat-

isfaction of basic human needs like survival, welfare, identity, and freedom. As suggested by its name, structural violence is the result of systems that impair equal access to certain resources. This kind of violence can be formalized through legal structures that enforce discrimination like apartheid in South Africa, or it can be informalized through common practices like limited access to healthcare or education for marginalized groups.

- Cultural violence is the manifestation of prevailing or prominent social norms that allow direct and structural violence to flourish as “natural” or “right,” if not at least acceptable. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), cultural violence refers to “any type of behavior, whether physical, psychological, or verbal, which is based on cultural norms and practices and has the aim or effect of inflicting harm or suffering on another person or group of persons.” This symbolic violence is expressed through aspects of culture—religion, ideology, language, art, science, media, and education—that legitimize the other types of violence and manipulate and suppress victims into feelings of shame, guilt, and distrust. For example, the cultural acceptance and belief that Africans were physically and intellectually inferior to Caucasians gave sanction to the African slave trade and the systemic oppression that ensued as a result. (While researching and developing solutions, it is important to recognize the aspects of culture that are violent instead of labeling an entire culture as violent. Traditional beliefs that are mainly practiced in African and Asian countries and related to magic and supernatural powers can be done for benevolent purposes involving peaceful means. Therefore, it is important that solutions differentiate between harmful cultural beliefs and lawful and legitimate ones in order to adequately address cultural vio-

lence while still respecting the dignity and beliefs of different communities.)

This understanding of how types of violence are intertwined provides an adequate explanation of how violence becomes embedded within belief systems and permeates societal structures and communities. As a result, cultural violence is reproduced uncritically and across generations as victims can become entangled into the cycle and eventually become perpetrators themselves. Acts of direct violence are projected and widely circulated within the media, and structural violence can harm individuals within systems that intend to govern them; however, it is cultural violence that permits and sustains direct and structural violence to exist (“Peace and Violence”). Moreover, it is important to note that violence does not solely consist of physical aggression but refers to any means of depriving one of basic human needs, whether that be through physical force or mental harm.

Ritual Attacks and Witchcraft-Related Violence

Ritual attacks and witchcraft-related violence is the violation of human rights motivated by belief in supernatural powers. As researched by the UN Human Rights Special Procedures, harmful practices related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks (HPAWR) have affected at least 22,000 victims across 50 countries and six regions in the span of 10 years in the 2000s. The acceptance of witchcraft-related violence in certain communities is based on the belief that an individual possesses supernatural powers that enable them to harm other people and/or damage or negatively affect communal things (leading to the notion that arbitrary misfortunes such as disease,

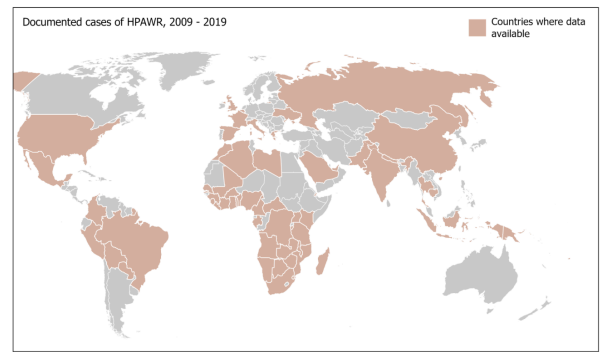
natural disaster, crop loss, death of a person, etc. are caused by the workings of a “witch”). As for ritual attacks, the belief that certain body parts of designated groups of people possess supernatural qualities facilitates actions like mutilations, sexual assault, and killings for the acquisition of some believed outcome (such as fortune or cure for disease). In an attempt to structure an understanding of HPAWR, researchers have identified witch hunts as a three-stage process: accusation, declaration, and persecution. Accusation refers to the act of accusing an individual (usually a woman) of inflicting harm in the community or to an individual, a accusation that is made through collective decision-making. The declaration means to brand the suspected individual as a “witch” and exclude them socially. In some rural communities in India, suspected witches are identified through rituals by traditional witch-finders or witch doctors, known variously as khonses, sokha, janguru, or ojha. Persecution constitutes mental and physical torture, ranging from social exclusion, psychological torture, lynching, and death (Yadav).



Although the number of large-scale witchcraft and ritual attacks has dwindled over the last centuries, witch hunts continue to prevail in many tribal communities across the globe with often no robust state-led response or judicial system to condemn these abuses. The difficulty of eliminating HPAWR legislatively is in part due to these practices taking place

in communities with strong cultural and traditional religious backgrounds and regions dominated by a particular ethnic group. For example, in ethnically Sukuma western Tanzania, witchcraft beliefs serve as the foundation for the traditional religion that is practiced by nearly two-thirds of the population.

Witch killings are mainly known to take place within sub-Saharan Africa, documented in Kenya, Ghana, Mozambique, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. Additionally, isolated indigenous communities within the Andean regions of South America and impoverished states in India have also been reported to engage in witchcraft violence (Miguel).



Honor Killings

Honor crimes are a harmful and disturbing form of control over women’s rights. Honor killings are the most extreme form of honor-based crime and refer to the murder of a girl or woman by their family or community members who justify their actions by claiming that the girl or woman has brought dishonor to the family. Victims of honor killings can also be males, although it is not as common as females. (Note: Honor crimes refer to killings, social isolation, insulting, coercion, and forced marriage under the guise of maintaining honor in the family). In communities where honor crimes occur, the meaning of

“dishonor” varies, and forms of disapproved behaviors range from sex outside marriage, flirting, refusing arranged marriage, and even being raped. Honor crimes are justified by a woman’s perceived or actual transgression of family, community, or religious sex-

ual traditions and subsequent disrespect and dishonoring of the family or community. By committing honor-based abuse, family and community members aim to restore honor to themselves.



Particularly in the Mediterranean and Middle East, honor-based communities value the concept of honor as a public recognition of one’s moral worth, prestige, and social standing—factors that serve as a license to social participation and maintain a connection to community norms and shared values. According to the UN, over 5,000 women are victims of honor killings each year. Honor killings are mainly reported to occur in Mediterranean, Latin American, and certain Muslim societies. While most prevalent in countries with a majority Muslim population, these crimes are practiced globally and occur in countries like Bangladesh, Brazil, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Turkey, Uganda,

and the United Kingdom. Additionally, recent cases have occurred of young Muslim women in Western countries like Germany, Sweden, Canada, and the United States becoming victims of honor crimes (Perlmutter) (Stillwell).

Criminalizing these killings has proven to be a difficult process; in many cases, honor killings are reported as accidents or suicides. Oftentimes, a woman is driven to suicide by the severity of the threats she receives from her family. According to the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, many women have taken their lives as a result of being coerced to do so by family members who would prefer not

to risk sending a male relative to prison for killing her. Furthermore, the legal systems in some countries reflect the socio-cultural attitudes that underlie these crimes. For example, some countries have penal code provisions that justify or excuse honor-based crimes due to traditional systems that grant men the power to punish women. For instance, in Iraq and Iran, penal codes provide a specific exemptions for murder when conducted in the name of “honor.” Other countries like Kuwait and Egypt provide a penalty reduction for honor-based killings. Moreover, in countries where honor-based crimes have been specifically abolished, sentences for offenders may still be diminished under the guise of a “provocation/heat of passion” or “fit of fury” defense such as in Pakistan, Lebanon, and Jordan (Department of Justice, Canada).



Comparing Forms of Cultural Violence

There are many forms of cultural violence, but this committee will focus on two: ritual attacks and honor killings. Despite being different forms of cultural violence, ritual attacks and honor killings, as well as other forms of cultural violence, are linked in similar causes and effects. For starters, cultural violence thrives on community mentality and is based on a

collective value, meaning that these kinds of violence mainly depend on group or community decision making to be enforced. Ritual attacks and honor killings can be viewed as a means of social control in defiance of assimilation into other cultures. Additionally, honor killings and ritual murders are essentially physically violent purification rites to remove a culturally designated “uncleanness,” meaning that communities define a specific situation or circumstance that defies their values or belief systems, and aims to scour that “impurity.” Moreover, the means of “cleansing” violations of purity, honor, or other value is violence. These rites of purity are intertwined with fears of diseases, expulsion, eternal punishment, or other external factors in which violent practices are sanctioned by cultural traditions and taboos (Perlmutter). Therefore, to these communities, violence becomes justified within their socio-cultural bounds and allows them to inflict harm on ostracized individuals.

Causes of Cultural Violence

Cultural violence can not be attributed to a singular cause, but rather the amalgamation of various norms that are shared by community members and provide individuals with a justification for these crimes. When conducting your research, consider how the different causes of cultural violence are intertwined and need to be addressed in relation to one another to develop effective solutions.

Tribalism in the Face of Modernity

The foundation of tribalism is the establishment of social and physical boundaries defined by blood relations, common ancestry, loyalty, conformity, and most importantly, a shared group identity. For tribal communities that engage in these practices today,

cultural violence can be a response to modernity: essentially, these groups participate in local and familiar customs in order to maintain their community in the face of marginalization by the modern state. In the modern age, the rise of state power has brought populations of various territories and regions under one legal regime, which can lead to the erasure of local traditions and norms. This tension between state and local community power has only intensified over the last century as modern states often fail to provide equal opportunity and protection for all its social groups. As a result, these local groups cling to their own traditional codes and resort to cultural violence in order to maintain a sense of certainty and security amidst systematic exclusion by the modern state's legal and value system. In the context of ritual violence and honor killings, the modern state creating a structure to regulate health and reproduction can be seen as threatening the traditional power structure of tribal or local groups who view themselves as responsible for their members, and specifically women's bodies. Moreover, the issue with tribalism in relation to cultural violence is that it can fuel an us vs. them mentality that leads to extremism.

Religious Justifications

To preface this section, it is important to recognize that cultural violence is not a direct or intrinsic part of any religion. It is wrong to assume that cultural violence is based solely on religion because this assumption is misleading and can perpetuate an inaccurate notion of religion itself as a driver of violence. It is important to view the discussion of cultural violence through a nuanced lens that avoids characterizing it as being specific to particular countries, regions, and communities.

Although honor crimes have been reported mainly

among Muslim communities, cultural violence is not a sign of a primitive or barbaric religious, cultural, or social ideology and is not sanctioned or endorsed by any major world religion. Communities that practice cultural violence often share religious beliefs or practices and may use religion as a pretext to justify honor crimes and ritual attacks. For instance, offenders may willfully misinterpret religious texts, traditions, or beliefs to align with their actions, despite the inaccuracy of these interpretations and their failure to represent a religion's core teachings. Thus, a flawed understanding of religion can permit, legitimize, and reinforce structures of cultural patriarchy, including gender-based violence.

In thinking about cultural violence in relation to religion, it is important to examine the intersection between religion and legal systems. According to a UN Women 2013 report analyzing gender Millennium Development Goal (MDG) progress and constraints, researchers linked countries struggling to meet MDG obligations regarding gender equality and women's empowerment with male dominated cultural and social norms. Despite strengthened legal frameworks to promote gender equality, communities with entrenched cultural and religious practices that perpetuate gender inequality face difficulties in meeting gender equality targets. However, this leaves the question of how religion and legal systems can be intertwined for peaceful development. In the post-2015 development agenda, the UN recognized the religious, cultural, and social structures of each community as extremely vital to progress and social change. They acknowledged that secularization is not an inevitable byproduct of the modernization process, but that religion will continue to shape the development of many countries and therefore, is a social and political reality that must be navigated (Mokhtar). Therefore, when researching, consider the

way legal systems and religion need to be acknowledged and balanced within a plausible political and social context.

Poverty and Disease

Low economic growth can contribute to cultural violence in different forms and perpetuate these crimes among various communities. For some communities that rely on and engage in spiritual or supernatural beliefs, income shocks can lead to an increase in ritual attacks as these communities perpetuate exclusion, discrimination, and hostility towards certain groups or individuals to divert blame. For example, a study done by University of California, Berkeley researchers revealed a relationship between income shocks and witch murders in a rural Tanzanian district. They found that twice as many witch murders occur in years of extreme rainfall in which poor harvests and near-famine conditions negatively affect the community. According to the community, extreme rainfall is a shock that “witches” can control, which provides a justification for violence (Miguel).

The link between ritual attacks, witchcraft, and periods of uncertainty, fear, and suffering has been more recently observed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Similar to poor economic states as a cata-

lyst for cultural violence, many communities employ ritual attacks during periods of arbitrary misfortune such as pandemics. In the last decade, UN Human Rights and the expert mandate on albinism have reported over 600 attacks against children and adults with albinism with witchcraft as a root cause of the attacks. Albinism is a rare, genetically inherited condition that results in lack of pigmentation in the hair, skin, and eyes which can lead to skin cancer and severe visual impairment. The appearance of people with albinism makes them “hypervisible” in parts of the world with a majority of people with darker skin. This makes them susceptible to multiple forms of discrimination and in extreme instances, the target for ritual attacks. Communities that participate in these ritual crimes believe that body parts of people with albinism can bestow fortune on those who possess them (UNHRC). Moreover, killings of people with albinism have increased during the pandemic due to communities plunging into poverty and turning to witchcraft in hopes of gaining quick wealth. Because of the extreme secrecy surrounding HPAWR practices, a handful of cases have been reported linking HPAWR with COVID-19. However, there are well-documented links between HPAWR and previous pandemics like the HIV/AIDS and Ebola outbreaks (UNHRC).

PAST UN ACTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Resolutions

A/HRC/RES/47/8: Elimination of harmful practices related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks (July 12, 2021)

This is the first UN resolution of its kind to address violence sanctioned by supernatural beliefs. The resolution urges member states to recognize and achieve a balance between the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion on one hand, and the limits to these manifestations of these freedoms in order to protect human rights on the other.

A/RES/55/66: Working towards the elimination of crimes against women and girls committed in the name of honor (December 4, 2000)

The adoption of this resolution was the first to specifically address the elimination of crimes against women committed in the name of honor. The resolution urged nations to implement effective laws involving awareness-raising campaigns, preventative measures, support and rehabilitation services, research mechanisms, and collaboration with the UN (UN).

Reports

A/HRC/52/47: Study on the situation of the violations and abuses of human rights rooted in harmful practices related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks, as well as stigmatization (March 1, 2023)

In this report, the UN reveals the severity of human rights violations in relation to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks. It specifically addresses the impacts of these violations on vulnerable populations and includes research needs to develop a more comprehensive understanding of preventative measures.

A/HRC/20/16: Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (May 23, 2012)

The focus of this report is gender-related killings of women and refers to practices that are culturally and socially embedded. Because impunity remains the norm for these crimes, forms of violence against women are continually accepted, tolerated, and justified across the globe. The Special Rapporteur visited Jordan, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea to further investigate these crimes.

Examining International Approach to HPAWR

2017 Experts Workshop on Witchcraft and Human Rights

In September 2017, the UNHRC held a two-day workshop to address witchcraft and human rights in a systemic manner, the first-ever convening at the UN or international level. Participants from different countries shared legal experiences surrounding witchcraft and ritual attack cases within their region while also contributing to a framework of recommendations for comprehensive and multi-level responses in priority areas of intervention.

As an important step towards forwarding the issue into mainstream discussion, the workshop brought together UN experts to discuss the efficacy of current legislative frameworks in preventing, punishing, investigating, and providing remedies for harm caused by witchcraft beliefs (OHCHR). In examining their discussion, consider the following ways in which legislative action and work by NGOs have been effective

or ineffective. What solutions can remedy the challenges faced by international efforts to mitigate and combat cultural violence in their regional contexts? Although the discussion centers around HPAWR, the barriers to effective solutions can be examined in relation to honor crimes, seeing that these forms of cultural violence can share similar roots and components.



Africa

- Researcher Patricia Lund addressed the issue of witchcraft killings of people with albinism, which is a common practice in parts of Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa. Through projects incorporating song, dance, and drama, NGOs provide education lessons for communities to convey the genetic explanation of albinism.
- The impact of witchcraft beliefs extends beyond physical violence and into the dehumanization of persons through educational, health, and employment barriers. To address this more extensive system of oppression, the NGO Standing Voice

in the United Republic of Tanzania built responses on community attitudes including promoting scientific narratives to challenge harmful beliefs.

Asia and the Pacific

- In 2015, Papua New Guinea adopted the Sorcery National Action Plan to address HPAWR cases. Although designed with a holistic approach with provisions for support services, advocacy and communication, legal protection, and research, the plan faced challenges including the lack of baseline data, a dispersed and culturally distinct population, lack of police presence in cases of immediate dangers, safety of witnesses during prosecution, and lack of funding.
- Researcher Dinesh Mishra explained the Movement Against Witchcraft, a program established in 1995 to address human rights violations in India. Successful initiatives of the program included organized public meetings and training of students, support for victims and their families, survey-based research, educational plans for social organizations, intervention in actual cases, and support for rehabilitation and treatment for victims. Challenges of the program included illiteracy, unavailability of treatment facilities, and lack of health awareness.
- Other researchers mentioned issues such as collective “hysteria” due to a lack of rational leadership and support from police and law enforcement agencies in NGO work.

Europe

- Due to cases of witchcraft-related harmful practices in the United Kingdom, Oladapo Awo-socketanre and his organization, Africans United Against Child Abuse (AFRUCA), have advocated for witchcraft branding of children to be rec-

ognized as a distinct form of abuse within the country. Notable proposals intertwined within the organization's approach factor in non-community specific laws to avoid stigmatizing a single community, laws centered on the branding of children as witches rather than on ethnicity to avoid wider debates about migration, and provisions ensuring protection from rebuke from mainstream churches.

- Debbie Crowder, a representative from the Metropolitan Police in London, described the challenge of HPAWR being categorized by authorities as a form of child abuse and not a specific type of abuse. Another prominent barrier included the understanding of witchcraft as an

issue of "mental health" as opposed to other researched causes (UNHRC).

In examining this international report on honor killings and ritual violence, it is essential to note that a one-size-fits-all approach will fail to address the wide range of violence across different communities. Therefore, feasible solutions need to be tailored to the traditions and circumstances of a specific community in order to adequately address the causes and impacts of cultural violence. To help concentrate your scope of research, it will help to investigate countries within your relevant bloc or communities that share similar traditions, cultures, customs, political and economic systems as your own country.

CASE STUDIES

Witch Hunts in the DR Congo

Within the South Kivu Province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a dark trend has emerged, tearing apart communities and claiming innocent lives. In recent years, a surge in witch-hunt murders has predominantly targeted women, who are accused of practicing witchcraft. These allegations have become tools of control, punishing women who challenge traditional roles or exhibit influence within their communities. These accusations are rooted in deeply ingrained cultural beliefs, with the notion that misfortunes stem from women and their supernatural powers, setting off a cycle of retaliation and violence against these women.

The tragedy finds its roots in the region's political instability alongside its history of armed conflict. The reality exposed harmful beliefs and showed the need to strengthen the legal framework. Bosco Muchukiwa, a director at the Higher Institute of Rural Development in the capital Bukavu claims that these instances stem from a vacuum in governance" ("Witch Hunt Murders Surge..."). With a struggling justice system, there is a need for community-driven solutions and involvement. Amidst the dangers, there are initiatives aiming to empower women through awareness and education, looking to initiate conversations that combat norms, gender-based biases, and violence. The country's efforts to address this crisis require community engagement, education, and a shift

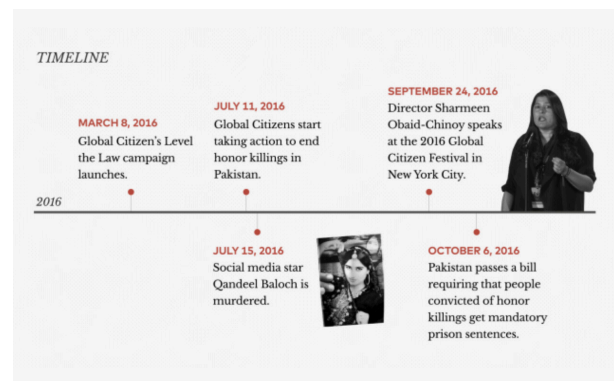
towards addressing the underlying socio-economic factors that fuel the tragic witch-hunt phenomena. A deep intertwining of community groups, government entities, and NGOs is needed to address the deep-rooted suit. Ultimately, these accusations have historically been used as a means of social control.

Furthermore, these issues have been compounded by negative influences from Western countries, particularly Europe and the United States, an impact that must be addressed in order to solve this problem. The scramble for Africa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries led to a brutal colonization that exploited the region's resources and people. This legacy of exploitation left a lasting impact on the country's governance, economy, and social fabric. With matters further complicated by economic hardships, tensions, and suspicions are fueled. Scarce resources trigger rivalries, pushing people to seek external causes for their struggles. Tragically, women often bear the brunt of these desperate circumstances, facing horrifying consequences. Ultimately, the surge in violence is fueled by a toxic mix of political instability, armed conflict, and economic hardship, creating an environment where vigilante justice thrives, jeopardizing women's safety and rights.

Looking at Pakistan's Anti-Honor Killings Bill

On July 16, 2016, Qandeel Baloch, a 26-year-old often called "Pakistan's Kim Kardashian" and famous for breaking with conservative traditions, was drugged and strangled in her home by her brother in the name of so-called "honor" (Syed). The death of Baloch encouraged many people to sign a petition and join a campaign to end honor killings in Pakistan and pressure the government to enact legislative

changes. Although honor killings were officially outlawed in Pakistan in 2004, persistent cultural norms and a legal loophole allowed perpetrators to be pardoned by a victim's family. With the fresh outrage over Baloch's case and internal pressure, Pakistan passed the Anti-Honor Killings Bill which sought to close this loop by ending the pardoning of honor killings. The Bill was passed after much influence like advocacy from civil society groups, large-scale efforts by NGOs like Equality Now and Global Citizens, and the global success of a documentary by Obaid-Chinoy detailing the story of a 19-year-old's survival of a brutal honor killing.



The legislation is a major turning point in the fight against honor killings on a national level in Pakistan. However, legislation can only do so much in crimes that thrive on cultural values. Unfortunately, the enforcement and implementation of the Anti-Honor Killings Bill have not been as effective as people had hoped. According to nonprofits and law enforcement, awareness of honor killings has been on the rise and there is more reporting on incidents of violence, but women continue to face ongoing threats despite the tighter regulations. Many advocates address the need to change cultural norms and laws that enshrine women's status as second-class citizens. Moreover, experts point the issue towards the 2016 amendment



that set a mandatory 25-year sentence for honor killings that allows judges to decide whether a murder was “honor-based” or committed with another motive. Without a clear definition, judicial systems can apply a loose application of the law allowing perpetrators of honor crimes to leave unpunished or minimally excused. For example, in 2017, various perpetrators of honor crimes successfully argued for

different motives and were able to be pardoned by the victim’s family (Selby and Rodriguez). The main takeaway is that international pressure can have significant effects, but these efforts can only do so much. It is imperative that the culture that surrounds honor killings is adequately addressed on a long-term scale.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What forms of cultural violence transpire within your country? How effective or ineffective have legal systems been in addressing these crimes?
2. What are the difficulties of investigating, prosecuting, and criminalizing forms of cultural violence? Moreover, what repercussions can stringent punishments by the state have on vulnerable groups in communities that participate in ritual attacks and honor killings?
3. On July 12, 2021, the UN Human Rights Council passed its resolution of the Elimination of Harmful Practices Related to Accusations of Witchcraft and Ritual Attacks—the first resolution to address this kind of violence. As dictated by the recency of this resolution, there has been a lack of research and awareness around cultural violence like ritual attacks and honor killings. Why is this so?
4. Ritual attacks and honor killings tend to transpire among tribalized and/or close-knit communities; thus, the scope of legislative action is often limited in its capability for efficient regulation. How does the cultural and social structure of these marginalized communities impact the difficulty of implementing solutions in these affected regions?

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