

Exploitation in South America

By Adira Jutz-Ryan

“There are nearly 1.3 million people working in forced labor in South America.” This alarming statistic has many countries around the world concerned. Slavery has been around since society began. However it is time for its reign to end. Either because of poverty, unstable governments, or large corporations taking advantage of how little they have to pay workers, many people (especially children) are exploited around the world. Today at MUNSA XXIV, the UN Human Rights Council has come together to discuss possible solutions and how to obtain funding to put these ideas in place.

Chile and Belize were of the opinion that local law enforcement should seek out unseen plantations and have regular inspections. However the US believed the solving the problem started by educating the citizens in poverty, and keeping the people from falling low enough to work in such horrible conditions. Syria added that a better economy and infrastructure would help stop this perpetual cycle. Several countries were not satisfied with this plan. For example, Mexico responded to the plan with, “There are a lot of other countries who are focusing on a very passive means of tackling this issue, and because of that those countries will only see results in a decade or a decade and a half. There are people right now who need help.”

Delegates in UNHRC discussed how agriculture requires a lot of physical labor to maintain. The people who run plantations often take advantage of desperate people and pay them much less. While discussing this, the delegation of Costa Rica had a very unique solution saying, “We need to encourage countries to no longer rely on forced labor, and directly combat the issue by lowering the value of the things produced with slave labor.” The delegation’s idea with this was that if the value is lower, there will no longer be a global demand for these products, and South America’s international agriculture industry will begin to die off so that a majority of exploited people would be able to find better jobs.

The delegation of India discussed how in most third-world countries, people are often unidentified and practically invisible to the government. The delegation of India also discussed solutions to this statement saying that if there was better identification of workers it would be easier to keep track of who might be being exploited. Cyprus vehemently agreed, hoping that countries would start by acknowledging the facts and their own people. “I think that Cyprus has done a very good job of discussing how there is very little identification of people, which leads to forced labor,” said Mexico in agreement with Cyprus. The delegation of Eritrea spoke of the success of making forced labor legal. He was alone in his attempts to convince the other delegates this would benefit their economies.

Forced labor in South America prevents the country from developing further and raising its HDI. All of the human rights council agreed that this was a global crisis and needed to be handled as swiftly as possible.