

**Committee: UNHRC**

**Topic: Religious Persecution in the Middle East**

**Report of the Chairs**

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### **I. Theme of the Conference**

Model United Nations San Antonio (MUNSA) is a conference dedicated to fostering authentic and passionate debate amongst delegates in order to generate solutions to current global issues. The theme of *MUNSA XXIV: Envision* encaptures our mission to urge delegates to foresee a future in which these problems have been dissolved. With collaboration in mind, delegates from every committee are encouraged to visualize innovative resolutions and a prosperous world to come. Together, we will propel ourselves into an age in which brilliant ideas converge to transform our world and address its most paramount issues.

### **II. Rationale**

The large scale persecution of religious minorities is a pressing issue in the Middle East. Millions of Christians in this region have been taken from their homes, kidnapped, killed, imprisoned, and discriminated against. Christians once comprised 20% of the population in the Middle East and North Africa. However, the Christian population has fallen to less than 4%<sup>5</sup>. This has led to an influx of immigrants from the Middle East to North Asia, Africa, North America, and Australia. The regions that are affected by this topic are the Middle East, North Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, and Australia<sup>7</sup>. The discussion of this issue will help this committee stymie the persecution of religious minorities in the Middle East and foresee a more equitable future for people of all religions.

### **III. Background of the Topic**

The rise of Islamic extremism is a key factor in the rise of the persecution of religious minorities in the Middle East. This rise in extremism began when the Islamic State took over one-quarter of Iraq after the U.S invasion in 2003, which caused two-thirds of the estimated 1.5 million Christians to leave their homes<sup>1</sup>. Currently, Erbil, the capital of Kurdistan, has been a

refuge for the victims of the Islamic State. Not all victims are Christian, as the refugees fleeing to Erbil include Shia and Sunni Muslims as well<sup>1</sup>. In 2011, the outbreak of Syria's civil war prompted around half of the Christian population of 2.5 million to flee the country. The Islamic State has been conducting murderous campaigns against Christians and Yazidi "infidels, which are those who hold a monotheistic faith<sup>2</sup>.

There have been many attempts to combat the persecution of religious minorities such as the United States signing the Frank Wolf International Religious Freedom Act in 2016, whose purpose was to counter a worldwide escalation of religious persecution<sup>11</sup>. At the July conference on counter-terrorism in Kenya, the UN High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations, Mr. Moratinos, spoke about a draft plan to protect religious sites in order for worshippers to peacefully observe their rituals<sup>3</sup>. In 2018, the European Centre for Law and Justice appealed to the United Nations to label the persecution of Christians in Iraq and Syria as "genocide," which ensures victims access to aid and provide the UN the power to stop the genocide and fulfill their responsibility to protect the victims<sup>4</sup>.

#### **IV. Contemporary Evidence of the Topic**

Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East are home to small populations of Christians, many of which are being persecuted for their religious beliefs. Northern Burkina Faso is an example of one of the many violent oppressions that has happened recently, when dozens of men stormed a Christian church and demanded the people inside to convert to Islam<sup>12</sup>. When the people of the church refused they were all executed for their faith. Nearly 140 million Christians in southeast Asia have suffered high levels of hostility last year<sup>5</sup>.

#### **V. References and Research Resources**

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## **VI. Note to the Delegates**

Hello, and welcome to MUNSA XXIV! We are very pleased that you have decided to participate in this conference. This experience will give you the opportunity to collaborate with different delegates to plan and communicate ideas regarding global issues occurring around the world. We hope this conference will help you build interpersonal and team-building skills when finding solutions to these issues. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the topics or anything MUNSA-related, please feel free to contact us. We look forward to seeing you at this year's MUNSA XXIV conference!

Marie Alvarez - [malvarez1034@stu.neisd.net](mailto:malvarez1034@stu.neisd.net)

Meghann Ring - [mring5154@stu.neisd.net](mailto:mring5154@stu.neisd.net)

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## **VII. Director General Contact Information**

Joseph Ruelas - [jruelas4856@stu.neisd.net](mailto:jruelas4856@stu.neisd.net)

Dana Marion - [dmarion0455@stu.neisd.net](mailto:dmarion0455@stu.neisd.net)