

**Colegio Alemán Alexander von Humboldt**



# **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**

**Humboldt-MUN VII Edition**

Mexico City, April 19-21, 2018

*"An eye for an eye only ends up making  
the whole world blind."*

*Mahatma Gandhi*

## **A few words from the Chair**

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations Security Council of Humboldt-MUN 2018. The topics we chose for this conference are topics we believe many of us are not aware of its importance and impact in our society. We truly hope you find them interesting and decide to join our committee. Furthermore, we would like to ask you to keep the debate as realistic as possible considering the official position of your Delegation and without forgetting the importance of diplomacy in the United Nations, its goals and the faculties of our committee. If you have any questions towards any of the topics don't hesitate to contact us, we will be very glad to help you. Also, you can send us your handouts via e-mail if you like to.

We wish you good luck with your preparations and look forward to meet you.

Welcome to the United Nations Security Council!

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## Welcome letter

Dear Delegates

First of all, please feel more than welcome to the United Nations Security Council of HumboldtMUN 2018. Our names are Mariana Trejo, Katia Nellen and Bernardo Castro and we are honored to be your Chair during this three-day simulation. Having been part of Model United Nations for a few years now, we have had the opportunity to be Ushers, Delegates, Chairs and Secretaries and learnt that MUNs can be a home, a place to make new friends and a very fun activity, but the most important thing is that they are a forum for young people around the world to express their opinions, learn how to build arguments, defend their ideals or the ones of a whole nation and act as true diplomats do.

In today's society we need active changemakers and leaders who can understand that the privilege of having an education should be used to give chances and life opportunities to those who are born in difficult situations. Those leaders can be us, we have the power to help them.

We are certain that with proper preparation and enthusiasm we can have an amazing debate and maybe also find a solution to the problems that our international community is facing at this exact moment. Even if that doesn't change the world immediately, it will surely take us one step in the right direction.

As your Chair, we would like you to know we will be very pleased to help you with any doubt or situation that comes up. We are looking forward to meet you and are very excited for the debate and to have an incredible time.

Best Regards

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Katia Nellen M.  
(President)

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Mariana Trejo S.  
(Moderator)

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Bernardo Castro K.  
(Conference Officer)

## About the Committee

The Security Council is one of the main organs of the United Nations. It was created with the purpose of maintaining peace and security on an international level. The Security Council would assemble whenever the international security was put at risk. So that the Security Council can meet when the need arises, a delegate representing each member state is required to be present at the UN Headquarters in New York City. Since its first session on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1946, the Security Council hasn't moved.

As every organ of the United Nations, the Security Council has the task to maintain international peace and security, to encourage and develop friendly relations internationally, to help solve international problems, to promote and spread the respect for human rights and to harmonize the actions of nations. Although it carries the same purposes as the other organizations inside the UN, the Security Council is the only one that has been granted the power under the Charter to make decisions that every member state has to obey.

If there is a threat to the international peace the Security Council first and foremost should deal with it in a peaceful manner, such as trying to reach an agreement with the involved parties, or assume and investigation, even send a mission or request the Secretary General to try and achieve a peaceful solution. If the threat happens to be hostile, the SC should end this hostility immediately. To do so a ceasefire could be issued to prevent further risks to the population. The Security Council may also send peacekeepers to observe and stand against the opposing parties.

Furthermore, the Council may enforce economic sanctions, travel bans, breakup of diplomatic relations, blockades or even international military actions. These measures are to be minimized so to only affect the conflicting parties, not the citizens, the international economy nor the general peace.

## Topic A: International Gun Control

### Introduction

Throughout the last century awareness has been raised surrounding the topic regulating the use and manufacturing small firearms for public use. Although this topic is usually avoided in international forums, due to the respect of the sovereignty of each nation, the conflicts surrounding the use of firearms by civilians, such as subversive groups using legal guns and international trafficking of guns bought on legal terms inside a country, then sold in another country illegally have made this a topic concerning international safety and thus the international community.

There have been different cases of weak gun control affecting civil safety and basic human rights, which are also topics that affect international security therefore require an intervention by the security council. Gun trafficking from the USA to Mexico and other Latin American countries has become a serious threat to these countries. Shootings and other actions by subversive groups or terrorists are facilitated by easy access to guns, which is why it is imperative to encourage stricter laws surrounding firearms.

The United Nations has interfered before in matters of gun control through different measures this century, starting with the UN Firearms Protocol in 2001 which controls and regulates the distribution of illegal firearms, it is the first and only legally binding document concerning gun control in the international community. The UN small arms Programme of Action is a politically binding treaty which regulates small arms trafficking and illegal manufacture, this should help the registration of legal weapons and the confiscation of illegal ones. The UN has also requested member countries in 2006 to report on their import and export of small arms in the UN Register of Conventional Weapons. Finally, in 2009, the General Assembly adopted international standards for Arms Trade.

Although the United Nations has tried to encourage gun control through non-intrusive methods, there is still much to be improved, there are still mass shootings in developed countries and in non-developed countries, there is mass illegal arms trafficking that threatens lives.

### **Main part**

On a smaller scale, an initial threat that can be seen often in school shootings, the most well-known cases for this can be found in the United States of America, but it is also a threat in other areas which receive less coverage such as in the Middle Eastern and Northern Africa Region, as well as in Africa in general.

The United States is one of the countries with most registered school shootings worldwide, there have been two of the biggest mass shootings in US history in the last two years, one in Pulse Nightclub in Orlando on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and in Las Vegas on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2017. Both shootings were shot with automatized weapons. School shootings are also a concerning issue inside of this country, given that there were more than 60 in 2015, meaning more than one shooting a week.

Although mass shootings in the United States get more coverage due to the country's profile, it is not the only member nation with problems like these. In the Middle East and Northern Africa, in many states it is believed that bearing arms is a right, meaning that stricter overview on firearms is desperately needed. Rampage killings in Africa are increasingly common.

It's important to mention that mass shootings occur worldwide, they are not exclusive to countries like the United States that receive massive media coverage or in the Middle East or Africa, where violence is constantly normalized by Western Media, mass shootings have taken place in every single populated continent. In the last two decades Europe has experienced more than three mass shootings, two specifically in Paris, another in Norway and in Germany. In South America there have been different reports of mass shootings, very famously one in Rio de Janeiro in 2011 and in Australia there was the Port Arthur shooting in 1996. After these

shootings, many of the governments involved developed gun control policies or reinforced the already existing ones, some governments though, did not. All of these are a few examples of how poor gun control affects civil safety, which violates basic human rights, making it a growing concern of the Security Council.

Moving on to a larger and more international scale, weak gun control also leads to firearms trafficking and easier access to guns to subversive groups or ill intended individuals. Arms trafficking, according to The Guardian, has reached an all time high since the Cold War, 20% percent of these have been attributed to illicit trade. The illicit Gun Trafficking Value is estimated around \$1 Billion dollars.

According to a report by the Europol, the six main the main sources of illegal weapons are:

- “the reactivation of neutralised weapons;
- burglaries and thefts;
- the embezzlement of legal arms;
- the selling of legal arms on the illegal market;
- the reactivation of decommissioned army or police firearms;
- the conversion of gas pistols.”<sup>1</sup>

Europe has a relative low arms trafficking rate compared to other continents, for example in America 2000 illegal arms cross the US-Mexico border per day, only to be later distributed to other Latin-American countries or used inside of Mexico, causing more violence. In Europe the main sources of the illegal arms market are the Western Balkans and the MENA region, which leads to another problematic area.

The arms flow to the Middle East has increased in the past half-decade, 1 billion euros in small guns in were traded in 2012. Although a large percentage of these weapons

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<sup>1</sup> Illicit Firearms trafficking, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-trends/crime-areas/illicit-firearms-trafficking>

were sold legally, many of them are used by groups suspected of committing war crimes, subversion and oppression.

The recent increase of international arms trafficking has raised further concern for stricter gun control laws, seeing that embezzlement of weapons is a major source of illegal trade. The easy access to small arms poses a threat to civil safety and it contributes to the rise of the illegal firearms arms.

### **Overview by continent**

#### *North and South America*

Canada and Mexico have moderate gun laws, they are allowed but under regulations, for example police check-ins, a background check, passing a test and acquiring a license among other parameters. In the United States, though, gun control laws are less strict, seeing as the right to keep and bear arms is protected by the American constitution. Most South American countries have stricter gun laws, gun possession is legal, but strictly regulated, although that could change soon. The Brazilian government is considering loosening gun control, allowing civilians to own guns for self-defense.

#### *Europe*

The European Union requires every member state to have a minimum standard of firearms regulations, civilians can't acquire firearms easily, for example automatic firearms are completely prohibited. Semi-automatic firearms are restricted, they require authorization, smaller caliber semi-automatic firearms are allowed with registration and a background check, the minimum age for possession a firearm is 18 years old.

#### *Africa*

Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons was



ratified in 2000 by the Organisation of African Unity and it recommends the signatory states to make the illegal possession of guns and light arms a criminal offence under the law.

### *Asia*

Asia has a broad spectrum involving gun control, for example South Korea, China, Brunei, Japan, amongst others have one of the most restrictive firearm related policies, while other countries like Yemen and Pakistan have much more relaxed laws concerning this topic.

### *Australia*

Since a mass shooting occurred in Australia in 1996, the Port Arthur massacre, gun policies changed completely, while firearms were initially allowed and were easy to access, until different rampage killings forced the government to overview their gun control laws. After that, to possess a firearm one must have a legitimate reason to process a license.

## **Conclusion**

Considering all the aforementioned information, gun control has to be reinforced worldwide. It has risen to an all time high and it is the duty of the Security Council to cater to civil safety and international security.

Seeing that there are many different treaties and agreements on international gun control, the Security Council should focus on them, analyze why they are not working for the current state of the world and come to a conclusion on how to fix them and make amendments based on that.

### **Keywords**

- . Firearms
- . Rampage killings
- . Mass shootings
- . UN Firearms Protocol
- . UN Small Programme of Action
- . UN Arms Trade Treaty

### **Questions to consider**

- . What is your delegations position on gun control?
- . How does your delegation reinforce gun control?
- . Which international treaties has your delegation signed?
- . How is your delegation affected by arm trafficking?
- . How does small arms violence affect your delegation?
- . What does your delegation propose to better the gun violence situation?

## **Topic B: The situation in Eastern Ghouta and the implementation of UNSCR 2401**

\*In light of recent events that have taken in Syria and in the United Nations Security Council the original “Topic B: Subversive Groups in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA region)” will be now replaced by “The situation in eastern Ghouta and the implementation of UNSCR 2401”. This shall provide a more realistic debate which concerns the ongoing situation in the United Nations Security Council and is also closely related to previous topic B, for it has a direct impact on the issues addressed in the original topic B.

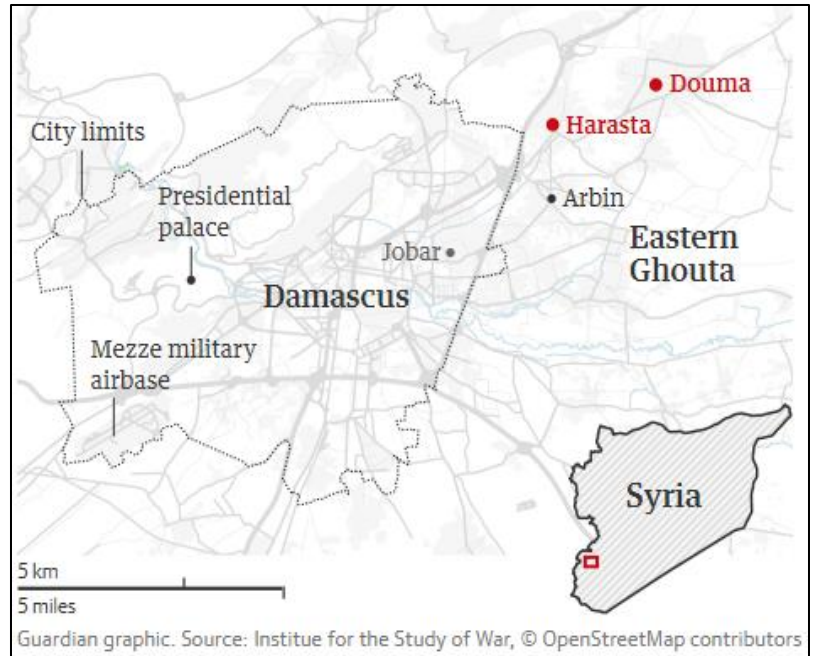
### **Introduction**

Nowadays, countries in the Middle East and North Africa region find themselves in turmoil, facing economical and great political challenges on a day to day basis. As a consequence, citizens of various countries of the MENA region have been displaced, leading to one of the “biggest refugee crisis since World War II”. Jordan, Lebanon, Djibouti, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and Syria are currently considered to be in the center of this crisis. The last three ones being currently in a state of civil war and Syria on the focus of the international community for a little more than a month ago, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of march of 2018, it entered its eighth year of war.

Since the start of the Syrian Revolution in 2011, the conflict has escalated to the point where the Syrian Arab Republic is now suffering from what UNICEF calls “the largest humanitarian crisis in the world”. The war has not only damaged the countries’ infrastructure, energy sector, health services (with more than half of the hospitals either completely or partially destroyed), and economy (with an estimated cumulative loss of the gross domestic product (GDP) of \$226 billion by 2016 according to The World Bank). It has also been the cause of many human rights violations and deaths. Child soldiers have now become part of the picture and life expectancy in Syria has sunk about 15 years, “nearly 6 million children are in need of humanitarian assistance” (UNICEF), which is nearly half of the more than 13.1 million Syrians living in the same situation, the estimated death toll lies around 470,000 deaths, while the population of Syria in 2010 has been reduced by ca. 50% because of displacements. One of the places in the core of the conflict and this dreadful situation is East Ghouta.

## East Ghouta

East Ghouta is a suburban region in the southwest part of Syria which collides with Damascus and is not further than 10km away from the center of the capital. Since the beginning of the Syrian Revolution, citizens of eastern Ghouta sympathized with the cause of the rebels and became one of its most important strategic points. In the early 2013, rebel forces started entering Damascus, posing a great threat to Bashar Al-Assad's government. As a response, the Syrian Arab Army sieged the entire region.



As for today, Eastern Ghouta is the last rebel stronghold near Damascus and has an estimated population of 400,000 inhabitants. However, the figure has changed drastically due to recent evacuations. In mid-February the Syrian government launched an offensive against the rebel enclave and has gained territory, splitting the area into three parts. These consist of the southern towns of Eastern Ghouta, which were captured by the government forces on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May of 2018, the town of Harasta, which was isolated and evacuated on May 22<sup>nd</sup> and town of Douma and its surroundings, which are now cut off the rest of Eastern Ghouta (Douma at this point of time being the last rebel held town, which is predominantly under control of *Jaish al-Islam*).

During a timeframe no larger than one year there have been many proposals to turn East Ghouta into a de-escalation zone. However, the cease-fires have been repeatedly violated by both parts of the conflict (them being the Syrian and Russian government and the rebel groups). Even though the region is mainly controlled by the group *Jaish al-Islam*, others such as but not limited to *Jabhat*

*Fateh al-Sham, Faylaq al-Rahman, Hay'et Tahrir al-Sham and Ahrar al-Sham* have also played an important role, showing the importance of Eastern Ghouta for the rebels. On the other hand, the government strives to regain power over the region, which would represent the biggest rebel defeat since Aleppo in 2016.

The siege has not only led to a medical emergency, but also to a food crisis causing widespread malnutrition, especially amongst children. Daily bombardments and never-ending offensives coming from both parties have affected civilians, most of them now living in shelters due to the destruction of their homes, trying to hide from the bombings. In addition to that, the damage caused to medical facilities and civilian objects, alongside with the rise of violence in the region has prevented the access of humanitarian aid. No words can describe the situation better than the ones used by Secretary General Antonio Guterres referring to East Ghouta as “hell on earth”.

### **United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2401**

In February of this year the fighting in Eastern Ghouta became so violent that it turned into one of the bloodiest months since the beginning of the Revolution. According to the World Health Organization, more than 25 hospitals and health centers were attacked on the first half of the month<sup>2</sup>. February 18 marked the beginning of the Rif Dimashq Offensive or Operation Damascus Steel of the Syrian Arab Army, which aims to capture Eastern Ghouta. Since then, the air campaign against Eastern Ghouta reached unprecedented levels. The day after, the Russian and Syrian forces launched several warplane attacks, resulting in the death of hundreds of citizens. In response to that and to the “devastating humanitarian situation” (UNSCR 2401)<sup>3</sup>, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 2401 on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February.

UNSCR 2401 was passed unanimously and called for a 30-day cease-fire throughout Syria (excluding certain groups such as *Daesh*, *Al-Qaeda* and the *Al*

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<sup>2</sup> WHO Eastern Ghouta update (18 - 22 February 2018), <http://www.who.int/health-cluster/countries/turkey/East-Ghouta-Attacks-on-health-care-Feb-2018.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Security Council Resolution 2401 (2018), <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2401>

*Nusra Front* and their affiliates) in order to send humanitarian assistance to Eastern Ghouta and ensure the safe evacuation of the civilian population. Since the aforementioned groups are also present in East Ghouta, Russia agreed to the implementation of a humanitarian corridor consisting of a daily 5 hour pause of the air bombings to allow said evacuation, starting February 27. As a requirement for the ceasefire to take the leaders of *Jaish al-Islam* demanded the evacuation of certain rebel members. And according to the spokesperson of the group, agreements between the Russian and Syrian governments and the rebel groups to meet those demands were made through the UN.

However, the conditions established in UNSCR 2401 were not respected nor implemented. Instead, reports have shown an increment of violence since the resolution was proclaimed. On February 25 the Syrian government launched a ground offensive on Eastern Ghouta, violating the terms of the resolution in just one day. Operation Damascus Steel continued. During those 30 days almost no evacuations took place and the expected aid did not have the impact it was expected to.

The Russian humanitarian corridor was not respected, “Moscow justified the continued bombardment of the area by saying extremists remained embedded in the towns and were preventing civilians from taking advantage of a designated evacuation corridor to flee the fighting.”<sup>4</sup> (The Guardian, March 10, 2018). Also, humanitarian aid has not been properly delivered to the affected areas. Convoys have been either postponed or did not even arrive. Medical equipment that was sent to help civilians was confiscated. Jens Laerke, spokesperson for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), told reporters at Tuesday’s regular press briefing in Geneva: “The UN is ready to move convoys into East Ghouta, and to evacuate hundreds of casualties, as soon as security conditions

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<sup>4</sup> *Syrian forces attacking eastern Ghouta ‘have surrounded rebels in Douma’*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/10/eastern-ghouta-syrian-forces-attacking-surrounded-rebels-douma>

permit. In the current situation, that is not possible.”<sup>5</sup> So far the only humanitarian convoy that has managed to arrive on March 5 was forced to cut its mission short due to heavy bombings. In the first two weeks after the ceasefire was announced at least 1160 deaths and more than 3,000 injured were registered, with the amount of people trapped under the debris still unknown.

The violations of UNSCR 2401 have led to outrage and frustration in the international community. The Security Council session of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, two days before the failed ceasefire was supposed to finished, was called a “day of shame” and “a humiliation” for the council for not being unable to help the Syrian population.<sup>6</sup>

### **Rising tensions**

The crisis in Eastern Ghouta has caused a rise in tensions between members of the international community, who are now pointing fingers and looking for someone to blame for the current situation.

The U.S. delegate has threatened with an intervention in Syria. Many members of the Security Council, especially France, have strongly condemned the actions taken by the Syrian government. Russia, which demanded many amendments done to UNSCR 2401, is now criticized for not following them and supporting Syria. The government of Iran accuses the United States and Israel of supporting the terrorist groups. In a similar way, the administration of Bashar Al-Assad has implied that the United States, France and the United Kingdom have financed and supported terrorist groups, which according to them, are the ones leading the attacks to which the Syrian Arab Army can do nothing else but respond with defensive countermeasures.

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<sup>5</sup> Syria: ‘Actions, not words’ needed to save lives in East Ghouta – UN humanitarian wing,  
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/02/1003722>

<sup>6</sup> US: Failure of UN Syria cease-fire demand ‘a day of shame’,  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/us-failure-of-un-syria-cease-fire-demand-a-day-of-shame/2018/03/27/12491d62-31eb-11e8-b6bd-0084a1666987\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.ff3a3fb3bc7f](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/us-failure-of-un-syria-cease-fire-demand-a-day-of-shame/2018/03/27/12491d62-31eb-11e8-b6bd-0084a1666987_story.html?utm_term=.ff3a3fb3bc7f)



Tensions reached their peak on April 7. Before that day there were reports of alleged use of chemical weapons against civilian population in Eastern Ghouta, however, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April at least 90 people were killed, and hundreds wounded in a chlorine gas attack targeting a hospital in Douma. The rebel group Jaish al-Islam has blamed the Syrian government for the attacks, and the Syrian State has denied any responsibility for the attacks and responded that those are fabricated allegations made in order to obstruct advances by the Syrian Arab Army. Meanwhile the U.S. State Department stated that “the Assad regime and its backers [especially Russia], must be held accountable”<sup>7</sup> (U.S. State Department, April 7, 2018) for the attacks.

### **Conclusion**

Currently, Syria is a war torn country. Children in danger of becoming a lost generation, lack of medical services and malnutrition are only a part of the horrors that Syrian population has to go through every day. Eastern Ghouta is in a state of terror. It is the duty of the Security Council to ensure peace and stability inside the region. Previous efforts have not been enough, some countries have made a mockery out of UNSCR 2401 and therefore also out of the council. Therefore, the council should focus on new ways to provide civilians with the much-needed humanitarian aid that couldn't be delivered during those 30 days, their evacuation and their security. Also, the Security Council must look for new ways to try to reach peace in the region. Still, taking into consideration previous violations of resolutions, it is important to consider the implementation of sanctions and more severe measures to ensure their rightful implementation.

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<sup>7</sup> *On the Chemical Attack in Douma*, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/04/280313.htm>



**Keywords:**

- . Syria
- . East Ghouta
- . Douma
- . Terrorism
- . Humanitarian aid
- . Chemical weapons
- . UNSCR 2401

**Questions to consider:**

- . What is your countries position towards the government of Bashar Al-Assad?
- . Which role has your Delegation played in the Syrian conflict?
- . What is your Delegation's position towards the violation of UNSCR 2401?
- . What are your countries views on terrorism and negotiating with terrorist actors or organizations?
- . In which way has your country provided help of any sort to aid Syria?
- . Which measures does your Delegation propose in order to cease the humanitarian crisis in Syria?

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