

2016 CSS MUN V Conference Background Guide



Human Rights Security Council

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Introduction and Background to the Human Rights Council:

In 2006, the United Nations Human Rights Council was founded to strengthen and promote human rights and to protect them more effectively. The council consists of forty-seven United Nations member states and replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The UNHRC replaced the older United Nations Commission for Human Rights, and currently is a subsidiary body of the United Nations General Assembly. The council was created with the purpose of “being responsible for promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner.” The mandate of the UNHRC requires the council to:

- Promote human rights education and learning
- Serve as a forum for dialogue on thematic issues on all human rights
- Make recommendations to the General Assembly in development of international law in regard to human rights
- Promote the full implementation of human rights obligations undertaken by the states and to follow them up
- Contribute to the prevention of human rights violations

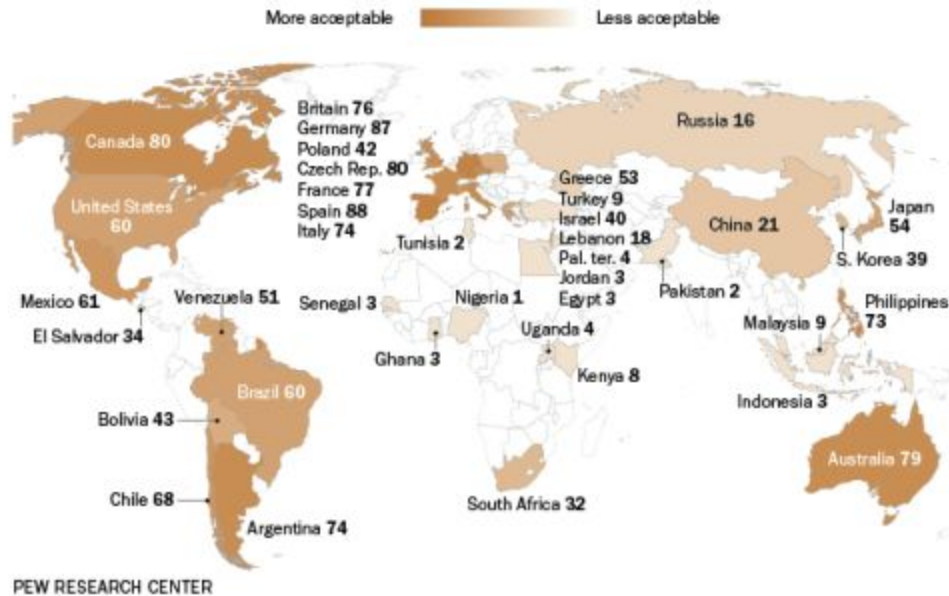
Topic 1: Discrimination and Violence Against LGBT Individuals in Africa; case study: Uganda

Background of Topic

LGBT rights have globally been a long contested issue, and there are great divides as to how the issue should be treated or dealt with. Though more countries are supporting gay rights than ever, only about 25 countries allow gay marriage and even fewer offer the same legal rights as they do for straight couples. However, there are still 76 countries where homosexuality is illegal. Regardless of whether this divide is based in tradition, religion, or just the culture of a country or region, there have long been arguments over whether LGBT people should be considered equal or given the same rights as their non-LGBT counterparts. Particular regions, such as Europe, look more favorably on gay rights whereas regions such as Africa and the Middle East are much more likely to be opposed. Still, each is not without its exceptions. As LGBT rights have gained support in other European and western countries, Russia has become more and more opposed. Similarly, Malawi’s president has expressed her desire to repeal anti-gay laws in the country despite two thirds of African countries still opposing LGBT rights. Many African countries opposed to or outlawing homosexual relationships were at one point or another colonized countries. The bans on homosexuality are often remnants of colonial law from the 19th century. Due to homosexuality being criminalized since British colonial rule and the rapid spread of Christianity and Islam through Africa, many Africans are convinced that homosexuality should be eradicated, causing the issue to be not only legal but also cultural. Many Africans believe that homosexuality does not exist, and is merely a western invention. However, more and more influential individuals are coming out as either LGBT or as supporters, such as the Kenyan author Binyavanga Wainaina. As pro-LGBT laws and acts are being passed in the international community, the backlash from the opposition is becoming harsher and more draconian, not only through laws but through violence as well. With the recent developments in

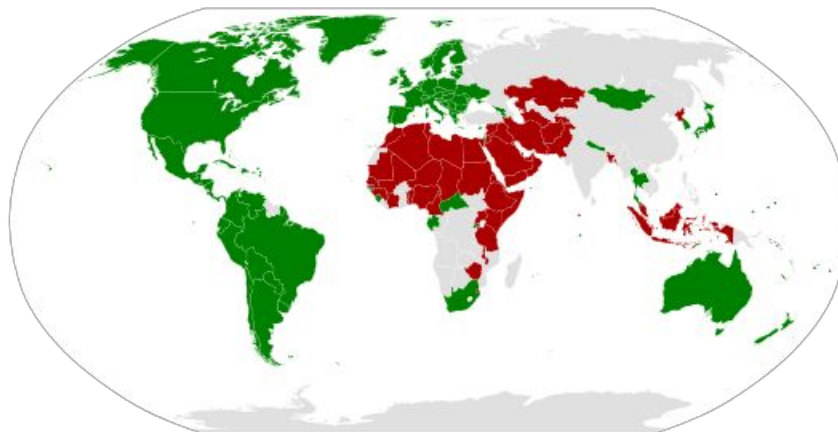
pride marches and changes in laws for or against homosexual and transgender people, the debate is more alive now than ever.

Percent who say homosexuality should be accepted by society



State of the Issue and its History

LGBT rights have been largely divided geographically, with some regions being significantly more likely to be opposed or in favor. Because of this geographic split, many countries opposed to LGBT rights view movements in favor of gay rights as a product of Western influence. Such is the case for both Nigeria and Uganda, who received pressure from their Western donors to cease their efforts to punish homosexuality with life-long imprisonment. Culturally, many African countries as well as Middle Eastern countries believe that homosexuality is a Western construct and does not actually exist, which has made discussion of issue significantly more difficult as well as divisive.



About half of the ten countries where homosexuality is punishable by death are in Africa. Though only four of Africa's fifty-four countries have the death penalty against homosexuality, the majority of African countries are still opposed and violence is commonplace against LGBT individuals. This has been an ongoing conflict in many African countries, such as Nigeria, which signed its Same Sex Prohibition Law in 2014. After the signing of the law, Nigeria saw an increase in violence against LGBT individuals under what is known as "mob justice," or community justice against criminal acts. Through this response to crime both in numerous African countries, individuals have been beaten to death for perceived crimes, such as theft or other petty crimes. Though most African countries only punish homosexual acts with jail time, community violence yields a very dangerous and serious threat to both the human rights and to the security of individuals in the affected countries. For this reason, many see laws prohibiting homosexuality as dangerous, due to providing justification for these mob justice groups to commit violence against others based solely on sexual orientation.

Not only have laws against homosexuality triggered violence in communities, it has also jeopardized many African countries' relations with the Western world, which has tended to be more accepting towards gay rights. Such is the case with Uganda, which recently signed a law imposing severe penalties for homosexual acts despite the appeals of its Western donors. Though Uganda overturned its Anti-Homosexuality Act in 2014, many Ugandan refugees who fled persecution still do not feel safe to return home. This had led to an influx of displaced persons, particularly in neighboring countries such as Kenya. Even the camps have proved too hostile at times and the U.N. Refugee Agency has prioritized resettlement for LGBT refugees during the crisis.

Not only has the opposition against homosexuality in Africa led to violence and refugee crises, it has also been a major setback in improving public health efforts throughout the continent. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has published that AIDS has recently become the leading cause of death among Africans aged 10 to 19 years old. Given that public health efforts against HIV/AIDS lack efficacy when discriminatory, laws banning or discriminating lesbian, gay, or bisexual individuals pose a serious threat and an obstacle to an already pressing issue. Because LGBT individuals risk jail time for admitting their sexual orientation, very few, if any, get tested for sexually transmitted diseases, leading more and more Africans to contract HIV or AIDS.

In November 2011, the UNHRC completed its first report on the issue of discrimination relating to sexual identity, to determine what international laws and actions should be put forth to protect these individuals. The report, a result of South Africa's sponsored resolution, reminds member states of their obligation to uphold the International Human Rights Laws and calls on states to:

- Protect the right to life, liberty, and security of persons regardless of sexual or gender identity
- Prevent torture and other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment on the basis of sexual or gender identity

- Protect the right to privacy and against arbitrary detention on the grounds of sexual and gender identity
- Protect the right to freedom of expression, association, and assembly without discrimination

As of 2014, the United Nations passed a resolution condemning violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The resolution itself comes without enforcement capabilities and has been seen as more of a symbolic gesture, though still a meaningful one. This resolution is the second time that the UN has directly referred to LGBT rights as human rights. The resolution's main purpose is to call for a report from the UN High Commissioner on abuses of LGBT rights. Though it was received well for the most part, many countries found it to be "a divisive and controversial initiative" and "an attempt to impose uniculturalism" as stated by Pakistan's representative and Saudi Arabia's representative, respectively, who both viewed it as unacceptable of countries with differing cultural or religious beliefs. Others viewed the resolution as a great step to reaffirm that everyone is equal in right and dignity and that it supports the UN's key principles of equality.

Uganda has been a particularly volatile country in regards to gay rights, and provides an example of the ongoing efforts to end discrimination in Africa. Homophobia has been prominent in Uganda since the 1950s, under prohibition, but the president Yoweri Museveni recently signed a law compelling citizens to report any suspected homosexual behavior, which has in turn heightened prejudice, discrimination, and violence against the LGBT community. Though it was annulled only a few months later, as the bill was passed without the requisite quorum, it still caused many Ugandans to flee, fearing subsequent discrimination and violence. The law proposed life imprisonment for "aggravated homosexuality" and banned "promoting homosexuality," which in itself caused several donors to cut aid to Uganda. Ugandan officials have defended the law, stating that they wished to demonstrate Uganda's independence. Uganda has been and still is an incredibly conservative culture and homosexuality has always been life imprisonment, but earlier drafts of the anti-homosexuality act would have made it impossible to be openly gay, but the clause was removed. However, the law is not without its impacts and it has made the existing laws stricter. Lesbians, who were not previously addressed, were finally addressed and those living in a same-sex marriage could be imprisoned for life. Though the law failed, it sparked more opposition and caused many gay Ugandans to flee the country, feeling that they are being persecuted. The law only failed in technical terms, not morally or ethically, so many gay Ugandans are wary, despite activists' enthusiasm over the annulment.

The opposition is cultural. Many Ugandans simply do not believe that homosexuality is genetic, and view it as a "bad habit." Such is the case with politician Medard Bitekyerezo, who sees homosexuals as threats to his children. He believes that homosexuals recruit children to teach them homosexuality, and is a strong proponent of the anti-homosexuality legislation, believing that it would help to stop the spread of homosexuality. Those caught "promoting" homosexuality could be imprisoned up to seven years according to the law. Conservatives within the country are striving to reinstate the law, and are making efforts to pass it. Still, the annulment

of the law has led gay rights groups to work more freely and eviction of gay tenants by landlords has eased. Many gay rights activists credit some of their moral support from US president Barack Obama's visit to Kenya, where he called the treatment of homosexuals "wrong." Though the politicians in Uganda wish to demonstrate separation and independence from western countries, citizens within the country are less opposed to the western influence, so even as politicians seek to toughen laws, citizens are slowly altering their views on homosexuality. This was evident at an Ugandan pride march this past August, when a 400 person rally marched thirty miles, but wasn't met with opposition or trouble. Despite the slow improvements, there still is a great amount of turmoil and the risks are incredibly high. The march was originally intended to consist of 1000 people, but only 400 showed up due to fear of prosecution and social discrimination. Uganda is currently facing a dilemma between attempting to pass the law or to protect its relationship with Western donors. Uganda's dilemma towards gay rights has implications for other countries prohibiting homosexuality and also begs the question of how much should be left to national sovereignty and what degree to protect LGBT rights (as human rights) to, even when the country itself is opposed. It is also worth noting that even though Uganda has received a lot of international attention - other countries including Nigeria have similar if not more stringent laws restricting the rights of gay citizens, which beyond leading to the legal repression of the gay population, they also have undoubtedly contributed to a significant amount of violence and discrimination across all levels of society.

Country Positions

Africa: The majority of African countries oppose equal rights for homosexuals, due to their religious, cultural, and legal tradition. The countries opposed view any international efforts to support gay rights as Western pressure to impose cultural imperialism. This has become particularly striking in African democracies, as many use opposition to gay rights as a platform to help them win elections, due to many countries' pride of resisting Western influence in the name of independence and self-sufficiency. Many people across Africa not only oppose gay rights, but they also see themselves as getting caught in the middle of an American Culture-War. Conservative Christian groups have openly encouraged African leaders to adopt harsh anti-gay laws and current Democratic leadership has responded by threatening to cut development aid if the same laws are not repealed - many Africans, whether pro or anti gay rights see this in the same light—as an abuse of power.

It is also important to note that a few exceptions exist within Africa as a region, namely South Africa and a few smaller countries, such as Rwanda and Sierra Leone, which support international efforts to end discrimination. In particular, South Africa initiated the resolution that led to the 2011 HRC report on the issue.

Arab League: The Middle East may be the most uniform region in opposing UN efforts to create a resolution to enforce equal rights for LGBT people. Their position usually consists of maintaining that this issue is best resolved through domestic political processes and that it should

be left up to a country's own government. They criticize efforts by pan-american and Western efforts to press the issue, which similarly to Africa they cite as evidence of cultural imperialism.

China: China may be one of the least known positions on LGBT rights, due to its usual ambivalent stance on resolutions. China tends to abstain on resolutions and refuses to join statements, which may be a tactic to maintain good relations with its trading partners in Africa and the Middle East. Despite China's refusal to vote on LGBT related issues, adult, consensual, and non-commercial homosexuality has been legal in China since 1997.

Russia: Though homosexuality was decriminalized in Russia as of 1993, discrimination is still a large issue in the country. The stricter laws followed Putin's return to command in 2012, and in June 2013, new Russian laws on homosexuality created restrictions "to protect the younger generation from the effects of homosexual propaganda." The country is currently considering making laws to deny adoption to homosexual couples and refuses to support anti-discrimination measures within the UN.

European Union: The EU has been a driving force in efforts to end discrimination towards LGBT peoples, and has been a major presence in creating resolutions and statements on the issues. Many countries in the EU also provide asylum to individuals facing severe discrimination in their home countries, due to being LGBT.

Latin America: Practically all Latin American states support international action to end LGBT discrimination and have supported efforts to emphasize LGBT rights equally as human rights. Latin America has been crucial to the passing of the 2014 HRC resolution, as Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Uruguay introduced the resolution. That being said, some countries, such as Cuba, have been slower to reform and charges of arbitrary imprisonment still remains an issue.

United States: The United States is actually intensely divided on LGBT issues on a societal level and in domestic politics. In its foreign policy it has recently been quite pro-Gay Rights. The USA has been a leader in anti-discrimination efforts, and has legalized gay marriage within the nation. Though President Barack Obama, has spoken out against countries criminalizing homosexuality, the United States is still hesitant to take a lead in the issue, preferring other countries to take the lead. Still, the country speaks out in favor of anti-discrimination efforts and equal legal treatment.

Possible Further Action

Because the UN is so sharply divided over the issue, the question remains as how to address the issue more effectively. Though the issue certainly has been moving forward, especially with the 2014 resolution, many countries view the resolution as more of a symbolic rather than a functional document that has mainly served to make LGBT rights a more readily discussed topic.

Possible solutions and stances:

- A resolution to *limit international leadership* on the issue, leaving future of policies on such issues entirely up to the states themselves.
- *Encourage states to alter their domestic laws*, by establishing clear international standards and criteria for domestic legislation to end discrimination based on sexual or gender identity
- *Target specific practices* that perpetuate discrimination that the HRC encourages states to eliminate or correct
- *Identify particular states* with policies and practices that the HRC demands to be ended or reformed
- *Establish* uniform standards among UN member states

Topic Two: Xenophobia in South Africa

Xenophobia is defined as an intense or irrational fear or dislike of people from other countries. In the case of South Africa, it has spread beyond its original definition and has come to encompass racism within the country, not just against foreigners but against minorities. Because of this distinction, it has become a danger to South African citizens who are perceived as foreigners, not only to migrants alone.

Background of Topic

The history of Xenophobia in South Africa dates is deeply rooted in its status as the most industrialized country in Africa. The country, known for its diversity, attracts thousands of foreign nationals on a yearly basis, seeking liberation from poverty, war, and governmental corruption. The conflict began in the 1980s when South Africa was home to an estimated 350,000 refugees from Mozambique. Though 20 percent have returned to their home country, the number of refugees has increased over the past years. The majority of refugees and immigrants within South Africa are undocumented and uncounted as South Africa did not recognize refugees until 1993. Because of the country's failure to acknowledge refugees for so long, undocumented migrants have been both a controversial and a long-standing issue. The South African economy relies heavily on immigrants for cheap labor in farms and mines. Hence, as many as 60,000 to 80,000 migrants annually seek asylum in the country, despite the ongoing violence. According to the UNHCR, the number of refugees and asylum seekers is expected to rise to 310,000 by the end of 2015.

UNHCR 2015 planning figures for South Africa					
Type of population	Origin	January 2015		December 2015	
		Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR
Refugees	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	15,000	3,000	16,000	3,200
	Ethiopia	9,600	1,920	11,600	2,320
	Somalia	24,000	4,800	27,000	5,400
	Various	20,400	4,080	22,900	4,580
Asylum-seekers	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	8,500	1,700	9,000	1,800
	Ethiopia	4,600	920	4,400	880
	Various	189,900	37,980	194,600	38,920
	Zimbabwe	43,000	8,600	46,000	9,200
Total		315,000	63,000	331,500	66,300

Though greatly affected by the vast influx of migrants, South Africa's Xenophobia is a manifestation of racism that not only affects foreigners but also citizens outside of the dominant ethnic groups, who are neither Zulu nor Xhosa. The white population within South Africa is not viewed as foreign in regard to xenophobic sentiments, and much of the discrimination within the country is based on skin tone alone. Numerous South Africans have been attacked for being "too dark" to be South African. Reasoning behind attacks vary, with many founded on fears of competing with foreigners for scarce resources as well as jobs. Some view all foreigners as criminals and blame them for the spread of AIDS/HIV. Others attribute it to the country's violent past, inability to prevent community-based violence early, or inept local government involvement or assistance. Regardless of its origins, racial violence has taken a heavy toll on South Africa and many locals view refugees as threats.

State of the Issue and its History

There have been cases of xenophobic violence from the December attack in 1994 to the attacks in April 2015. As time goes on, the attacks are becoming more and more frequent. Previously, they had occurred years apart, but in 2015 alone there have been 6 distinct bouts of violence. These attacks were neither a beginning nor an end, but rather a continuous growth of rising tension. The most harrowing and impactful of these attacks was in May 2008, when military intervention was needed to quell the violence. Foreign nationals, namely from Somalia and Ethiopia, were dragged into the streets and "necklaced," an old form of execution where a rubber tire filled with gasoline is forced around the victim and then set aflame. Tens of thousands were displaced during the attack and forced to seek refuge. Though there are cases of violence against foreigners dating back to 1994, none were so deliberate or decisive as 2008. The violence in 2008 brought the issue of South African xenophobia into international news, but as Michael Neocosmos, the Director of Global Movements Research at the University of South Africa, has

said, “..xenophobia can exist without violence. And it’s not sufficient to simply recognize it when people start killing each other”.

A survey conducted in 1997, reported that only 6% of South Africans were tolerant of immigration, and another survey cited by Danso and McDonald in 2001, showed that 75% of South Africans held negative perceptions about black African foreigners(Aljazeera). A national survey from 2006 found that South Africans opposed making it easier for foreign nationals trading informally with South Africa (59 percent opposed), to start small businesses in South Africa (61 percent opposed), and to obtain citizenship (68 percent opposed), but the 2008 attack was still shocking and led the country into mourning. Despite its current prevalence, xenophobia in South Africa is not a new problem, and politicians have often used anti-immigrant sentiment to gain votes during elections, as citizens feel that they are losing job opportunities to foreign nationals. Much of the current violence is linked to unemployment within South Africa and 21.7 percent of all citizens live in extreme poverty and 53.8 percent survive on less than \$75 a month. The prejudice and discrimination based on skin color is a remnant of the Apartheid, and much of the country’s current unrest and inequality are rooted in its past. Still, many South Africans refuse to describe the violence as xenophobic and Thabo Mbeki, the president at the time, said that those describing the attack as xenophobic were “trying to explain naked criminality by cloaking it in the garb of xenophobia.”

The most recent resolution is the 2012 resolution calling for action against racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia. The resolution, in addition to suggesting possible action, cites many of the causes of xenophobia, such as poverty and lack of education. In South Africa, education provides an opportunity to correct ideas of racial hierarchy. Because much of South African xenophobia is rooted in fear of foreign nationals taking job opportunities, both education and improving the nation’s economy would help combat racial discrimination in addition to supporting the nation’s government in protecting their citizens’ rights. The resolution calls for member states:

- To develop and implement national plans of action to combat racial discrimination and promote diversity
- To consider using their development programs and prioritize improving the socioeconomic conditions of individuals and groups experiencing racial discrimination
- To invest in education to combat and correct ideas of racial hierarchy and superiority
- To introduce harsher penalties for crimes with xenophobic or racist motivation

Country Positions

On the issue of xenophobia, many countries speak out in opposition, though very few do not perpetuate the issue in practice. South Africa, for example, has extreme violence against foreigners despite the country’s leaders speaking out against and condemning xenophobia within



their country. There is certainly a lot of hypocrisy around the issue, so it's important to understand both the government's position as well as the people's position in each country.

Eastern Europe: Eastern Europe has currently been struggling with rising xenophobia, especially due to the recent migrant crisis involving Syrian refugees. Though there is a slant to South Africa, the refugee crisis is also incredibly relevant and will help determine how one's country would view the issue and support or oppose amendments.

Western Europe: Western Europe currently has some rising xenophobic movements, despite its mainstream politics being strongly opposed to xenophobia. Due to the history of Western Europe, such as World War Two and more specifically the Holocaust, the culture generally opposes xenophobia and racism, though there are more extreme right wing groups surfacing.

Scandinavia: Scandinavia is perhaps one of the most open regions to refugees and migrants, and has provided asylum for foreign nationals in need for decades.

Canada: Canada is strongly opposed to xenophobia and one of the most open countries to foreigners.

Russia and Japan: Both Russia and Japan are not very open to foreigners in practice, whether or not they support them legally.

What to consider to prepare for the council:

I encourage all delegates involved in the council to take time to read over the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is easily found on the United Nations' website. Reading over the document and even printing it to bring along to the meet will help to remind delegates of the UN's goals in the Human Rights Council and to have a point of reference in making amendments (not to the Declaration but to the resolutions for each topic.) Also, if you are struggling with finding your country's position on a particular topic, do research on similar events, as it will give you a sense of how your country would react. For example, it may be hard to find Serbia's stance on South African xenophobia, but it would be much easier to find its position and reaction to the current refugee crisis.

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