

*I-HMUN*

**United Nations Human Rights  
Council  
(UNHRC)  
Chair Report**

**Agenda: Ensuring the Rights of Ethnic  
Minorities**

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## **[ About UN ]**

The United Nations (UN) is the largest intergovernmental organization that aims to maintain international peace and security, protect human rights, deliver humanitarian aid, promote sustainable development, and uphold international law. It consists of 193 member states, with the latest addition of South Sudan in 2011.

The United Nations took its first step in April 1945, when 50 governments met in San Francisco to start drafting the UN Charter. As it was adopted on 25 June 1945 and took effect on 24 October 1945, the UN began its operations. It has been the center of discussion for multilateral issues such as general disarmament, international security, multilateral cooperation, international economy, human rights affairs and sustainable development. The United Nations is operated under six major organs and has also assigned other specialized agencies in reach for international peace and security.

Sessions of committees pertaining to the United Nations carry heavy responsibilities of perpetuating peace and humanitarian rights. Delegates of member states represent their designated nation and form an international consensus on numerous agendas.

## **[ About Committee ]**

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is an intergovernmental organization, founded in 2006, consists of 47 States of the United Nations system. The 47 States responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe are elected every three years on a regional group basis. The UNHRC works to enhance and ensure basic human rights worldwide and its headquarter is in Geneva, Switzerland.

The United Nations Human Rights Council works on important thematic human rights issues; freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of belief and religion, women's rights, LGBT rights, and the right of racial and ethnic minorities. It has the ability to discuss and share opinions on human rights issues and circumstances that need special attention from the UNHRC.

In addition, the council established subsidiaries such as open-ended intergovernmental working groups and institution-building packages. Each instrument works to provide efficient help to wherever their help is needed, through a well-organized system and policies.

## **[ Agenda Introduction ]**

Ethnic minorities are small parts of people that have different ethnic characteristics from the main group of the country. Some minority groups live in harmony with the majority groups while others want independence from the country where they are located. Notwithstanding the diversity of indigenous and ethnic minority groups around the world, they share common challenges. The major problem is that many ethnic minority groups have been targets of discrimination and persecution for a long time. A shared history of exclusion and discrimination has led to higher levels of poverty.

Although the situation of many indigenous people and members of ethnic minorities has improved in recent years, some are still left behind. In addition, the conflicts between majorities and minorities are getting worse day by day, and some of them have even resulted in warfare. Because of the minorities' numerical inferiority, human rights violations have occurred frequently to them, and there are still many ethnic minorities suffering from those violations. The unequal and anti-humanitarian persecution based on ethnic groups still shows that the rights of minorities are still easily neglected in parts of the world.

The United Nations Human Rights Council aims to avoid ethnic discrimination in every multi-ethnic countries around the world and to create a world where everyone is united and peaceful.

In I-HMUN 2021, delegates will debate the solutions to prevent all kinds of ethnic discrimination and human rights abuse.

## [ Key Terms ]

### Ethnic Discrimination

Ethnic discrimination refers to treating a group of people differently in a worse way from the way in which you treat other people because of their ethnic identities.

### Discrimination / Segregation

As definition, discrimination is the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, while segregation is the setting apart or separation of things or people. Segregation also refers to the enforced separation of different racial groups in a community. Both of them have the meaning of treating different types of people or things in a worse way from others, but what is different is that segregation has the meaning of setting apart. Therefore, speakers can use both 'discrimination' and 'segregation' but have to use the word 'segregation' if they need to express the meaning of dividing something or somebody.

### Majority / Minority

A majority is a group of people that takes up the highest percentage of population in a country. Not only it indicates most members there, but also there are mainly in a better position than the minorities in terms of politics, economy, and culture, which can lead to conflicts between majorities and minorities.

On the other hand, a minority is any category of people distinguished by either physical or cultural differences that society has subordinated.

### Ethnicity / Race

'Ethnicity' and 'Race' can be confusing. The actual difference is that 'Ethnicity' is culturally determined, whereas 'Race' is biologically so.

Ethnicity means a shared cultural heritage. For example, ethnicity could be 'Korean', 'Mexican', or 'Swedish'. Many other ethnicities share both genetic traits and, often, religious or cultural holidays or traditions that tie the group together. And usually share the same races, too.

Race, on the other hand, is a category of people that share biologically transmitted traits that are obvious and considered important. The examples are 'Asian', 'African American', and 'Latino'. The same race has certain types of features like skin color, the color of eyes, size of nose, or height. But for most cultures, skin color is considered to be the most important trait when it comes to race. Therefore we easily understand race as 'Skin color'.

### Human Right Abuse

Human Rights are the basic rights that are based on shared values like dignity, fairness, equality, respect, and independence, which are defined and protected by law. And 'Human Right Abuse' refers to the violation of the basic rights of people by treating them wrongly.

### Torture

Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity.

## **[ Historical Background ]**

### *The term of "Ethnicity" (~1960)*

Prior to the 1960's, few people except scholars would have recognized the term 'Ethnicity'. In that turbulent decade, the word "ethnic" became a pejorative label for urban immigrant groups who fostered the so-called white backlash against the civil rights, black power, and antiwar movements. These European immigrants had previously simply been called nationality groups, because of their strong support of the rising nationalism in their homelands during the World Wars, and to distinguish them from other minorities, such as Black people.

### *The term of "Ethnicity" (1960~)*

The term "Ethnicity" first appeared in W. Lloyd Warner and Paul S. Lunt's *The Social Life of a Modern Community*. In 1972, it found its way into the Supplement of the Oxford English Dictionary. "Ethnicity" is a sociological concept. It is meant to replace older, tainted terms such as "race," "nation," or "minority." In North America, terms such as "nation" or "national origin" did not

include African Americans and American-born descendants of first-generation immigrants. A new term had to be found: “ethnicity.” However, “race” cannot be replaced by “ethnicity.” Most researchers agree today that the distinction between “race” and “ethnicity” is not the distinction between the “cultural” and the “natural/physical,” because “racial” distinctions are culturally made. “Race” and “ethnicity” cannot substitute for each other. They play, as Stuart Hall put it in his W. E. B. DuBois lecture in 1994, “hide-and-seek” with each other. It has become clear that “race” remains an important category, especially for all historical analysis. Today, “ethnicity” tends to describe any group that is characterized by a distinct sense of difference owing to culture and descent. Especially in North America, less in Europe, “ethnicity” means general peoplehood and otherness, deviation and norm.

### *Voices to Stop the Oppression of Ethnic Minorities*

In the United States, slavery was abolished in 1865, and black discrimination had disappeared to some extent. Women's right to vote was guaranteed in the 1900s, which was when children's right to learn was also ensured. This means, the perception of "All human beings are equal." prevailed in most parts of the globe. Naturally, the rights of ethnic minorities became widely recognized, and many human rights groups began to argue that the oppression of ethnic minorities should be stopped.

## **[ Past Actions by Nations/NGOs/Organizations ]**

### *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)*

The Charter of the United Nations of 1945 proclaims that one of the purposes of the United Nations is to promote and encourage respect for human rights for all. With the energetic support of Eleanor Roosevelt, alongside figures such as René Cassin, Charles Malik, Peng Chun Chang and John Humphrey, States sought to set out in a single document, for the first time, the range of fundamental rights and freedoms that belonged to all by virtue of their status as human beings. These efforts resulted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly on 10 December 1948, henceforth Human Rights Day. This document, expressed as “a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations”, sets out a wide span of rights covering all aspects of life. Its article 1 famously describes the idea of fundamental human rights: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

### *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)*

When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, broad agreement already existed that the rights it contained should be translated into legal form as treaties, which would forcibly bind States that agreed to their terms. This led to extended negotiations in the Commission on Human Rights, a political body composed of State representatives. All the core human rights treaties reflect the general principle of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that the rights they set out should be enjoyed without distinction of any kind. Article 2 of the Declaration sets out a nonexhaustive list of prohibited grounds for discrimination:

• Race or colour; • Sex; • Language; • Religion; • Political or other opinion; • National or social origin; • Property, birth or other status.

The same list is included in article 2 of both Covenants. Subsequent treaties have expanded the list further. Three are specifically aimed at eliminating certain forms of discrimination: racial discrimination, discrimination against women and discrimination against persons with disabilities. 6 met annually in Geneva to discuss a wide variety of human rights issues. Given the political imperatives of the day arising from the apartheid regime in South Africa, the first treaty to be agreed, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, dealt with the specific phenomenon of racial discrimination. It was adopted by the General Assembly in December 1965. After defining racial discrimination, the Convention sets out in six detailed articles the obligations of State parties to combat this scourge. As well as the obvious requirements that the State itself, at all levels, must refrain from such acts, the Convention also requires a State to take appropriate measures against racial discrimination rooted in society, including the propagation of racist ideas advocated by groups and organizations. The Convention also sets out an extensive series of specific human rights—in the civil and political and in the economic, social and cultural spheres, most of which are enumerated in the Declaration—that must be guaranteed without distinction on racial grounds. Finally, the Convention establishes as a basic right an effective remedy, whether through the courts or other institutions, against acts of racial discrimination.

#### *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984)*

In 1984, another treaty was adopted to deal with torture and other ill-treatment. Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights already banned torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, but the Convention goes much further and develops a legal scheme aimed at both preventing and punishing these practices. After defining torture, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment makes clear that no circumstances of any kind, including orders from a superior, can justify an act of torture—the ban is absolute. Closely related to this is the key provision, in article 3, on “non-refoulement”: if there are substantial grounds for believing that an individual will be tortured in a country, that person cannot be extradited, deported or otherwise returned to that country. A State party must criminalize torture and punish it appropriately.

#### *UN declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)*

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted by the General Assembly on Thursday, 13 September 2007, by a majority of 144 states in favour, 4 votes against (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) and 11 abstentions (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burundi, Colombia, Georgia, Kenya, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Samoa and Ukraine). Years later the four countries that voted against have reversed their position and now support the UN Declaration. Today the Declaration is the most comprehensive international instrument on the rights of indigenous peoples. It establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world and it

elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of indigenous peoples.

## **[ Status Quo ]**

Nowadays, there are a lot of ethnic minorities around the world, facing discrimination and exclusion, and they are struggling to gain access to their human rights under conditions of full and unquestioned citizenship. There are also members of ethnic minorities who couldn't withstand discrimination and persecution toward them, and are wandering around. However, because of the COVID-19 outbreak, they are not easily accepted by other countries due to concerns over infection, which results in many difficulties.

But for the protection of minorities, it is necessary not only to treat them equally with the general public, but to respect their religion, language, and customs traditionally maintained by the minority. This requires concerted efforts of the majority. And still, various conflicts against minorities and majorities are occurring, which could result in worsening emotions among ethnic groups and terrible wars and genocide. Therefore, it could be said that the conflicts at hand require the attention of the international community.

## **[ Stances Major Countries ]**

### *People's Republic of China*

China, a multi-ethnic nation, officially has 55 minority ethnic groups while Han Chinese are making up over 90% of China's population. Today, China's main minority regions, including Xinjiang and Tibet, are technically known as "autonomous regions." These regions, where historically the population has been ethnically and culturally distinct from China's Han majority, have been given the semblance of local stewardship. But decisions are still made centrally, with the assumption that Beijing knows best. China is the most controversial country around the world for Han majority's suppressing minority groups.

### *The Republic of the Union of Myanmar*

Myanmar officially recognises 135 ethnic groups in their country. The Barmar, also known as Burman people, is the majority, and they take up 68% of the national population. However, there are several ethnic conflicts in Myanmar, and the Rohingya conflict is the most serious one. Rohingya people were considered illegal aliens after 1823, when the government enacted a law stating that only people who can prove they had lived in the area can attain citizenship. And in August 2016, when ARSA attacked the Myanmar government post, Myanmar's military carried out a massive human right abuses against civilians, including murder, arson and rape. Because of this, the village was destroyed and thousands of people were killed.

### *Republic of Turkey*

There is a conflict between Turkey and the Kurdish groups, which demanded separation from Turkey in order to create an independent Kurdistan or to have autonomy and greater political and cultural rights for Kurds inside Turkey. And since, Turkey has oppressed more than 15 million Kurds in the country.

### *Republic of Indonesia*

As one of the most ethnically diverse societies, Indonesia consists of 1,300 ethnic groups with at least 95 percent native to the archipelago. For a country that presents itself to the world as a moderate Muslim-majority democracy that respects diversity and enjoins religious and ethnic harmony, Indonesia has faced increasing criticism for rising intolerance and sectarianism.

### *The United States of America*

The United States of America is a multicultural country and it has many different ethnic groups in the country. The fact gave the US its title, 'Salad bowl'. Ingredients in a salad are mixed, yet they remain individual components of a larger group too. Similarly, different ethnic groups in the US live together, while they maintain their cultural identities. However, big and small conflicts (the 'Black Lives Matter' protests, for example) do not cease to break out between them and it is becoming so serious a problem that the US should resolve as soon as possible.

## **[ Possible Solutions ]**

In I-HMUN 2021, delegates should make resolutions of troubles that ethnic minority groups face. What is important is that both minorities and majorities should be satisfied with the outcome.

To solve ethnic minority problems, each country should understand that all human beings are equal. Ethnic groups, even though they look or live different, should not pose problems while they live together. To protect the ethnic minorities around the world, governments should not only treat them equally with the general public, but also include the respect of religion, language, and customs of the minority at hand. Human right abuses should be tolerated no more. A country where economic inequality persists for ethnic minorities, discrimination in rights can lead to material discrimination. Furthermore, the situation becomes much more serious when ethnic minorities in resource-rich areas become subject to rights restrictions and economic disadvantages. For this reason, international institutions should sign treaties to protect the economic rights of ethnic minorities and also provide various material supports.

However, delegates should also consider the stances of majorities. It is important to do so because ethnic minorities may be making unreasonable demands, and in some cases they may have offended the majority first. Delegates should check both the viewpoints of the majority and minorities, and help them seek compromise. Producing satisfactory results for both sides, therefore, is the key.



## [ Questions to Consider ]

- In the case of COVID-19 outbreak, what difficulties do ethnic minorities suffer from?
- What kind of treaty should be signed to prevent human rights abuses of ethnic minorities?
- How can we listen to the standpoints of minorities without the pressure of majorities?
- Will ensuring the independence of minorities really guarantee the improvement of their quality of life?
- Which country should accept refugees from persecution of minorities?
- How can we help endangered ethnic minorities around the world?

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