



## **HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

### **Background Guide**

#### **Introduction**

The United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) is a United Nations body whose mission is to promote and protect human rights around the world. The Council has 47 members elected for staggered three-year terms on a regional group basis. The headquarters of the Council are at the United Nations Office at Geneva in Switzerland.

The Council investigates allegations of breaches of human rights in United Nations member states and addresses thematic human rights issues like freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of belief and religion, women's rights, LGBT rights, and the rights of racial and ethnic minorities.

The Council was established by the United Nations General Assembly on March 15, 2006 to replace the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR). The Council works closely with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and engages in the United Nations special procedures.

#### **Important Links:**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/home>

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter>

## **CRISIS IN AFGHANISTAN**

The state of Afghanistan is experiencing what the United Nations describes as the largest humanitarian crisis in the world with 24 million Afghans in need of vital humanitarian relief due to numerous natural disasters, decades of conflict, a collapse in economy, and a sudden change in political rule. The human rights situation was very concerning for decades prior to the Taliban seizing control of the country in August 2021; since then, it has significantly deteriorated.

In August of 2021, after 95% of American troops were withdrawn, the Taliban seized the country's capital and the Afghan government collapsed. Following the U.S. withdrawal, more than 120,000 Afghans were airlifted and relocated around the world. Those who remain in the country under Taliban rule have watched the regression and reversion of any gains in liberal and democratic rights and freedoms over the last twenty years. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that by the end of 2021, 3.5 million people have been displaced within the country.

The effects of extreme weather and natural disasters have destroyed crops and arable land, exposing the country to increased food shortages, and leaving six million people on the brink of famine. The acute hunger in the country rose from 14 million in July 2021, to 23 million in March 2022 and 95 percent of Afghans are not getting enough to eat, this number being nearly 100 percent in female-headed households. This has caused households to resort to desperate measures to feed themselves and their families.

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan has also been exacerbated by an economy on the verge of collapse and international isolation due to sanctions and the termination of economic development. The price of foods and goods have skyrocketed due to short supply and crippling inflation.

The violence, political turmoil, and natural disasters in Afghanistan have caused the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. Our issue is how to combat the ever-growing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and how to help all the internally and externally displaced Afghans without recognizing the Taliban as a legitimate political power. This help may range from access to safe foods, water of drinkable quality, accessible health care, as well as access to adequate shelter. The urgent business is to come together and plan on how to improve the quality of life in Afghanistan.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. How can the United Nations give relief to the population of Afghanistan?
2. What is the best route for the UN to take to resolve the cause of this crisis?

3. How can the UN assist Afghanistan in preventing further Taliban control?

**Important Links:**

<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/afghanistan-emergency.html>

<https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/afghanistan-crisis-facts#fast-facts>

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113982>

<https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc15038.doc.htm>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/afghanistan-un-expert-warns-human-rights-crisis-presages-authoritarianism>

## **DETENTION CAMPS**

The number of detention camps have been growing in recent years. Many people associate detention/concentration camps with World War II, but there are more recent examples of groups of people doing this. During World War II, groups based mostly on religion were forced into these camps but other groups like gypsies, homosexuals, and others were sought after as well. The same thing is happening all around the world with similar groups. All the concentration camps end up violating basic human rights and need to be stopped. Some examples of modern day detention camps are explained below.

In Chechnya, more than 100 men have been rounded up and brought to old military bases and police buildings. These men were kidnapped because they were believed to be bisexual or homosexuals. Many of these men were taken from their homes because concerned friends or family called the captors because they were scared. During their time at these new era concentration camps, they experienced torture, electrocution, emotional abuse, indefinite detention, and forced quasi-sexual acts. This is the first time since World War II that homosexual men have been rounded up and kept in camps.

Armed groups in Libya have created detention camps that hold thousands of people and have been submitting them to torture and other human rights violations. It has been estimated that 6,500 people are being held in these official prisons, but more are being held in facilities that are run by authorities or directly run by the armed groups, some of which are affiliated with the state. At the largest compound, roughly 2,600 people are facing torture, unlawful killing, poor detention conditions, and little to no access to healthcare. Many of the people that are detained have been in these prisons since 2011 due to conflict that overthrew the president at the time.

Another example of modern-day detention camps would be the immigrant children detention camps near the United States' southern border. Due to the conditions of the camps, many people

have referred to them as “concentration camps.” The camps themselves are in terrible shape and do not supply basic human needs. Many of these camps were made to be short-term facilities but have been prolonged due to the political climate in the United States. Many of these camps foster families that are being deported due to their illegal citizenship status. The camps that are of most concern are the ones that are holding young children that have been taken away from their families.

During the Geneva conference, China stated that they were going to end poverty in their country by 2020 by establishing the largest education, social security, and healthcare systems in the world. Their idea of ending poverty does not infringe on human rights, but the way they have decided to implement education has. China has established “educational” centers that have been primarily detaining Muslims and other minority groups. They have said that these centers are for humane job-training for their poverty-stricken citizens. During the conference, countries urged the United Nations to investigate the rights of minorities in China. Statements about these education centers have painted them as prisons for the citizens that reside in them. It is believed that the education camps rely on brainwashing the people there. China’s delegate said that the Xinjiang centers offer alternatives to terrorism and extremism by providing training, helping with language learning, and combating those who feel lured into terrorist acts. The delegate insisted that the centers have nothing to do with religion.

The countries at the conference expressed concerns for basic human rights, like freedom of assembly, religion, and expression, which they believe are being stripped away from the Chinese all across the country.

At the beginning of 2022, China combated the release of reports by the UN Human Rights office claiming Western countries were attempting to damage their reputation. These reports revealed that more than a million Uyghurs and members of other Turkic minorities have been detained in Xinjiang camps as part of a forced-assimilation policy that may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. How do detention centers threaten basic human rights?
2. What steps can be made to eliminate the existence of detention centers?
3. How can the United Nations investigate detention centers to ensure they are not discriminatory?

## **Important Links:**

<https://www.news.com.au/world/europe/at-least-100-gay-men-have-been-rounded-up-and-thrown-in-concentration-camps-in-chechnya/news-story/89553c2517a227ff20c57bef35cd78b3>

<https://sites.psu.edu/cilena/2017/04/12/modern-day-concentration-camps/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-gay\\_purges\\_in\\_Chechnya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-gay_purges_in_Chechnya)

<https://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k4/download/7.pdf>

<https://qz.com/1308141/are-us-immigrant-child-detention-centers-concentration-camps/>

<https://gizmodo.com/americas-detention-centers-added-to-wikipedia-list-of-c-1826944008>

<https://www.icij.org/investigations/china-cables/un-reports-china-may-have-committed-crimes-against-humanity-in-xinjiang-camps/>

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/11/1025061>

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/04/1006981>