



JAPAN  
METROPOLITAN  
MODEL  
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NATIONS

## Security Council (SC)

Background Guide Topic:  
Solving Conflicts During the  
COVID-19 Pandemic



Senzoku Gakuen Model United Nations  
jmmunadmin@senzoku.ac.jp

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## Director's Note

Dear Delegates,

My name is Shizuka Nishijima, and I am so excited to supervise the Security Council. I cannot wait to meet all of you soon for our online conference.

I am a high school student in Senszoku Gakuen High School. I joined the MUN club when I was a junior high school student. Aside from the club activities, I have also attended several debate competitions. As I have attended many global events outside of school, I am interested in discussing global issues. Though this is my first time chairing a MUN conference, I am currently the president of the student government at Senszoku and will use my experiences in working through COVID-related issues at school to give delegates advice and guidance. I have also participated in speech contests which cemented my interest in engaging discussions surrounding key topics in global politics. In this Security Council, you will be analyzing the major approaches to the domestic conflicts caused by COVID-19. While you will ultimately be engaging with this topic from the perspective of the country you represent (whether or not your views align with the country position you must advocate), I hope you will come away with opinions of your own shaped by this conference.

I am very much looking forward to hearing your ideas at the conference. Remember that this committee is intended to engage all voices and generate lively conversation on the topics at hand, and that your shared perspective and talents are essential to this endeavor. You can reach out to me if you have any questions, or if there is anything that you would like to share before we have our online conference.

Sincerely,



Shizuka Nishijima  
Director, Security Council  
160162ii@senzoku-gakuen.ed.jp  
Japan Metropolitan Model United Nations 2020

## **Introduction to/ History of the Security Council**

The Security Council consists of ten member states. The five permanent members are China, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and the Russian Federation. The election of non-permanent member states are, according to the rules of procedure, held by secret ballot.

The Security Council held its first session on 17 January, 1946 at Church House, Westminster, London. Since its first meeting, the Security Council has taken permanent residence at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. It also travelled to many cities, holding sessions in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1972, in Panama City, Panama, and in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1990.

A representative of each of its members must be present at all times at UN Headquarters so that the Security Council can meet at any time as the need arises.

According to the United Nations Charter signed in 1945, the main functions of the Security Council are the following:

1. to investigate any dispute or situation which might lead to international friction and to recommend methods of adjusting such disputes or the terms of settlement.
2. to determine the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression and to recommend what action should be taken.

3. to formulate plans for the establishment of a system to regulate armaments
4. to call on Members to apply economic sanctions and other measures not involving the use of force to prevent or stop aggression
5. to take military action against an aggressor (United Nations Charter, 1945).

### *Status Quo: Conflicts in a Pandemic*

The citizens of conflict-affected countries are especially vulnerable to the outbreak of diseases. This is because health systems are not readily prepared for COVID-19 because of ongoing wars and prolonged unrest. Internationally, displaced populations and refugees also face a wide variety of difficulties due to the pandemic. Since the disease could weaken the capacity of international institutions to support conflict-affected areas, those areas are often the most vulnerable.

Although COVID-19 has placed great stress on societies and political systems, the threat of the disease could possibly suppress new outbreaks of violence. For example, anti-Beijing protests declined in China. Moreover, the number of protesters challenging government corruption has declined in Algeria, and the Russian opposition acquiesced in the authorities' move to block protests against President Vladimir Putin's decision to rewrite the constitution to extend his tenure in office. (COVID-19 and Conflict; Seven Trends to Watch, 2020)

However, an exception occurred in Niger where demonstrators marched in the streets against rules barring protests. While COVID-19 had given many governments a reason to seize emergency powers and repress certain populations, it has also caused citizens to protest against new regulations introduced by governments in other places such as Niger. The line between regulations meant to repress people and those meant to protect public health is often a thin one.

Many government officials are confused by the danger of the outbreak, and the ability to make decisions about both health issues and other ongoing crises is weakening. Moreover, COVID-19 has infected political elites in some nations such as Brazil, Iran, Burkina Faso, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Moreover, COVID-19 has a huge economic impact. Restaurants, theaters, and tourism industries suffer huge loss due to the decrease of customers. Many people are spending less and saving more which results in bankruptcy and fall in stock prices. History has taught us that when the world faces recessions and depressions, civil unrest and global conflicts can occur. Economists have said that it will take a decade for some parts of the world to fully recover from the economic damage of this pandemic. When people suffer long periods of economic difficulty, they become more susceptible to radical ideology and more likely seek an enemy--someone to blame for their financial woes.

Effects of COVID-19 are magnified by the fact that globalization is proceeding. The

U.S., who has influence on other countries, has mishandled its domestic response to COVID-19. This means that the countries who had to take a lead on solving the problem failed to bring other nations together.

### *Political Tension due to the Lack of Equal Healthcare*

Healthcare for minority ethnic groups was a serious problem even before the emergence of the novel coronavirus; constant disputes between such groups and governments have prevented them from receiving adequate medical care.

The issue may seem to be the territory of the World Health Organization. However, delegates must note that there is an urgent political need to tackle such disparity to basic humanitarian aid and resources, which poses a threat to the peace that the Security Council aims to keep. With our global standards of peace and security existing in an ever-changing landscape, we must interpret the roles of the Security Council from a broader perspective (Maas, 2020). Moreover, given the severe state of healthcare and poverty that minor ethnic groups find themselves in, delegates must look for signs of political change and independence movements that could create political tension in their region. Two such examples will be explored in the next section.

### Case Study 1: Iraqish Kurds

After World War I and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the victorious Western allies made provisions for a Kurdish state in the 1920 Treaty of Sevres. However, the Treaty of Lausanne, which set the boundaries

of modern Turkey, made no provision for a Kurdish state. Kurdish people are now left with minority status in their respective countries (BBC, 2019). Currently, Kurds make up 7 to 10 percent of the Syrian population, with most of those who have long been denied their application for citizenship being robbed of basic rights; approximately 300,000 Kurds have been denied citizenship since the 1960s.

Recent movements have won Kurds a seat in the governance of Syria, and the Democratic Union Party (PYD), an all Kurdish party, is one of the results of many years of hard work. The PYD states that neither Kurdish people nor the PYD is seeking independence, but insists on gaining the legal guarantee for Kurdish rights recognition of Kurdish autonomy as well as their freedom to choose a political future.

Due to the strict isolation of the Kurdish region, there are only a handful of local hospitals and specialists that could deal with medical complications, and those that do exist have severely limited supplies (Cultural Survival, 2018). Countries and regions, especially those neighboring to Kurdish regions or countries historically related, must note the significance of the impacts of COVID-19 outbreak as well as the responsibility they are required to fulfill.

Problems such as these could lead to broad-scale civil unrest among the Kurds that would in turn affect global politics.

### Case Study 2: Nomadic Herders

Traditional herders in the Sahelian region are put under harsh circumstances due to the impacts of the pandemic. As a result of border closures decreed by governments across West and Central Africa to limit the spread of COVID-19, cattle herders in the Sahelian region have been robbed of their pursuit of tradition as well as their days' meal. The nomadic herders who, during the dry season, travelled between Mauritania and Mali are now left now stranded between borders without resources to feed their cattles (IOM, 2020). In addition to the Sahelian nomads, the Yoruks, Turkish semi-nomadic ethnic group, and their thousand-year tradition of migration to the north are similarly hindered by the ban on inter-provincial travel.

Groups such as this whose way of life is threatened by the pandemic could produce dissidents that would destabilize the region. As Turkey shares a border with Syria, a country engulfed in a long-term civil war, the Security Council needs to be wary of further conflicts breaking out in the same region as a result of COVID-19.

### *Healthcare in Battlegrounds*

In a video conference on July 1st, the Security Council adopted resolution 2532 (2020) expressing its support for the Secretary General, António Guterres's appeal for global ceasefire. To enable medical evacuations, the council called upon all the parties in order to make sure "armed conflicts engage immediately in a durable humanitarian pause ... to enable the safe, unhindered and sustained delivery of

humanitarian assistance, and provision of related services by impartial humanitarian actors, in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence” (Security Council, 2020). The council acknowledged the negative impact of the pandemic, especially socioeconomic impact on socially vulnerable people such as women, children, refugees, internally displaced people, and people with disabilities. By this resolution, the council called for concrete actions to minimize the impact and to respond sustainably to the pandemic. The Security Council is calling upon all the parties for a global ceasefire in order to respond fully to the pandemic.

#### Case Study 1: Yemen Crisis

The Arab Spring in 2011 was supposed to bring stability to Yemen, but it instead brought numerous political failures to the country during its political transition. President Hadi struggled to deal with problems inside the nation such as attacks by jihadists, a separatist movement in the south, and unemployment and food insecurity. Alarmed by the rise of an anti-government organization which was backed up by Shia Arab states (including Iran), Sunni Arab states (such as Saudi Arabia) started an air campaign which resulted in an end to Iranian influence in Yemen and the restoration of Mr. Hadi’s government.

What happens in Yemen can exacerbate regional tensions. Moreover, the conflict has shown the regional power struggle between Shia-ruled Iran and Sunni-ruled Saudi Arabia.

Now, Yemenis, already in a state of crisis, face the COVID-19 pandemic as well. According to Human Rights Watch, the government had only confirmed 1,950 cases and 564 COVID-19-related deaths, but the UN has warned that the actual number of cases and deaths is much higher. Due to the limited testing, a lack of healthcare centers, and severe shortages of medical supplies and personal protective equipment, the response to COVID-19 in Yemen has been hampered. Moreover, the political movement and armed group known as the Houthis have stopped all measures saying that the virus no longer poses a threat. Since May 2020, the Houthis have blocked medical supplies sent by the WHO. This has prevented the citizens from having enough personal protective equipment. According to a study by Human Rights Watch conducted in July 2020, current obstructions by the Houthi are leading to a chaotic pandemic in Yemen. This includes delays for approval of aid projects, blocking aid assessments to identify peoples’ needs, attempts to control aid monitoring and recipient lists to divert aid to those loyal to the authorities, and violence against aid staff and their property.

#### Case Study 2: Israeli-Palestine Conflicts

Israeli-Palestine Conflicts started when the Holy Land was divided into three parts, the State of Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. There were many minor shifts of territory because of the wars until the Yom Kippur War in October 1973. Regional tensions were calmed by the Camp David Accords in 1979, but a surge in violence and uprisings among the Palestinians began thereafter, and this led

to formation of the first *intifada* (Arabic for a period of sustained uprising against political oppression). The 1993 Oslo Accords mediated this conflict by establishing relations between the newly established Palestinian Authority and Israel's government. However, in 2000, the second *intifada* began.

The Trump administration has made achieving an Israeli-Palestinian deal a priority, but has yet to release its long-awaited proposal for a peace process. Trump's decision to relocate the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, reversing longstanding U.S. policy, was met with applause among the Israeli leadership but condemned by Palestinian leaders and others in the Middle East and Europe. Israel considers the "complete and united Jerusalem" its capital, but Palestinians claim East Jerusalem for the capital of their future state.

There is concern that a third *intifada* could break out. Since renewed tensions could escalate into large-scale violence, the United States has an interest in achieving a lasting deal between Israel and the Palestinian territories, which would improve regional security.

In Israel, the number of confirmed COVID-19 infections is 54,663, and these cases (though small in margin compared to other parts of the world) have affected the political situation. Nickolay Mladenov, the UN's special envoy for Middle East peace, told the UN Security Council that "we are far below the level of coordination that existed in the beginning of the year, when the first wave of

the virus hit" (UN: COVID-19 efforts hampered amid Israeli-Palestinian breakdown, 2020) The UN has tried to play the role of an intermediary between Palestinians and Israelis to help the response to COVID-19 and assist in the medical care of the patients from the Gaza Strip. However, raids are still taking place.

The main COVID-related problem in the area is the lack of medical institutions. Their primary focus remains the ongoing conflict, not COVID-19. "The Israeli occupation looks like it is seeking to spread the virus in the city," states the landlord, Meswada (UN: COVID-19 efforts hampered amid Israeli-Palestinian breakdown, 2020).

## Past UN Action

The UN Secretary-General has launched the UN Comprehensive Response to COVID-19 to save lives, protect societies, and to recover from economic crisis. The actions and communications made to member states by the UN for the response to COVID-19 are listed in this site. <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/un-secretary-general#reports>

The UN is speeding up research and development by taking three actions: helping countries prepare and respond to the changes due to COVID-19, coordinating the global response, and communicating how people can protect themselves and others.

In the UN Security Council, Secretary General, Antonio Guterres called for a global ceasefire to tackle the pandemic on March 23rd. This draft resolution demanded

“immediate cessation of hostilities” in order to enable the unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid and medical evacuations. In the press conference it was revealed that his appeal was endorsed by nearly 180 countries and 20 armed groups. The draft has been put to a vote and made into resolution 2532 on July 1st. UN Spokesman Stephan Dujarric stated that council resolution is very important “since the Security Council has primacy in the UN over the peace and security, a strong unified statement supporting the secretary general’s call for a global ceasefire would go long way in making a call for a ceasefire a reality” (Mainichi Japan, 2020).

## Questions to Consider

- 1) Was the conflicts in your nation triggered by the COVID-19 outbreak, or has it prevailed from before?
- 2) How can your country and nations around the world prepare for next possible epidemics similar to coronavirus pandemic?
- 3) What people in your region have been most vulnerable during the pandemic and what political influence do those groups have?
- 4) Compared to neighboring countries or countries that resemble yours, has your country’s reaction to the novel coronavirus been successful? Can the same plans be applied to other countries? Has your country acted differently to prepare for conflicts such as the ones mentioned above?
- 5) How can your country’s domestic conflict relate to and/or affect other countries?
- 6) How have your country’s government and the population reacted to the outbreak of coronavirus?

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