Honorable Delegates of the Security Council,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations Security Council. It is in this committee that will work together in order to maintain peace and security in the world. As director, I hope to provide an accurate and worthy simulation of our real counterpart. My name is Jesus Sanchez and I am an international student from Venezuela, pursuing my bachelor’s degree in International Affairs. I am currently in my junior year, and glad to provide years of experience in both college and high school level Model UN. So if you have any doubt or questions feel free to approach myself or any member of the chair for help, whatever your doubt may be. Although this is a committee for experienced delegates, I don’t expect you to be world class negotiators but due to the relatively small size of the committee I hope we can all establish a fluent debate and produce a resolution that we can all be proud of. The topics I have chosen are designed to challenge you and engage you in creative thinking so that you may come up with solutions to problems that still evade the international community as in the case of Syria, and in the case of the second topic to maintain stability in a fragile peace. Finally, I encourage you to come prepared to this committee and not conform to the information provided in the background guide, but also do research of your own. With that said, I wish you good luck and hope to see you soon.

Sincerely,

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History of the United Nations Security Council

 The Security Council is one of the five main organs of the United Nations. Its job is to maintain international peace and security. The Security Council’s specific powers include identifying international conflicts, calling special sessions due to the emergence of crises, and suggesting actions to be taken in order to resolve them. While they are a major deciding body in the world their suggestions are not necessarily binding, and go through a democratic voting process to have action taken.

 Possible decisions are voted on by the fifteen members of the Security Council, and they require nine votes to pass. China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States were chosen to be the five permanent members because of their role in establishing the United Nations and their role in international security is emphasized because of this. Other members are elected for two year terms. Any of the five permanent members can veto what was voted on if they deem it necessary, nullifying passage even if it obtains the nine necessary votes.

 Most recently, the crisis in Syria caused UN Security Council Resolution 2118 to be introduced and passed unanimously in September of 2013, because "the proliferation of chemical weapons, as well as their means of delivery, constitutes a threat to international peace and security," and called for the destruction of those chemical weapons by mid-2014. Crises such as these require immediate attention, and over 2100 resolutions have been introduced since 1946. These ideas range from sending peacekeeping groups into Somalia because of its civil war to condemning the September 11 attacks to sanctioning Iran’s nuclear program.

 The Security Council and the General Assembly go hand in hand, as issues not dealt with by the Security Council are carried over to the General Assembly and its 193 members. The Security Council also calls emergency sessions of the General Assembly when it is deemed necessary.

 The Security Council’s ability to oversee and make decisions about all of the world’s conflicts makes it a necessary entity in maintaining peace and security. The world would have a much harder time dealing with international crises without the input of the Security Council.

I. Situation in Syria

*“If confirmed, the use of chemical weapons by any side under any circumstances must be held accountable and would constitute an international crime, [...] anyone responsible must be held accountable.” UN Secretary General*

General Overview

The current situation in Syria: an uprising that evolved into a prolonged civil war has continued to drag on for two years now at the expense of tens of thousands of dead Syrians despite various attempts by the international community to stop the conflict and find a peaceful solution. The Syrian uprising was originally part of the series of uprisings in the Middle East known as the Arab Spring, which led to government changes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, the latter of which came about as a result of a shorter civil war and intervention by the international community. In contrast with Libya, the international community has failed to reach consensus among the Security Council’s P5 to pass a decisive resolution which would result in definite action or resolve to the conflict, past draft resolutions calling for sanctions have been vetoed by China and Russia since they argue that they are partial to favor the opposition.

Although last year we saw several attempts by the international community to stop the onslaught in Syria, most notably the Security Council’s draft resolutions and the Six-Point Peace Plan, both failed either because they were partial towards the opposition or they didn’t exert enough pressure on Bashar al-Assad’s government. The international community’s efforts in putting an end to the conflict have further gathered more controversy when this last June the United States confirmed that they had definitive proof that Assad’s government had used chemical weapons in limited amounts, crossing what Barrack Obama called the “red line”, and still no immediate action has been taken after this escalation. The diplomatic gridlock and continued escalation of the conflict in Syria has only ensured that the conflict will continue to carry on unchecked, with unilateral action by each side to continue support to their respective parties in Syria, most importantly as the conflict drags on it threatens to spill over into neighboring nations and further undermine the stability of the region.

Even though the Security Council has failed to pass any resolution regarding the Syrian conflict; examples of how the Security Council has dealt with previous situations can be found in the UNSC’s Resolution 1973 regarding the Libyan Civil War which established the legal basis for able nations to intervene without sending ground forces to the conflict in order to avoid civilian casualties and establish a cease-fire. In Libya’s case a cease-fire was never achieved and the sanctions were put in place, which in turn resulted with the rebel side emerging victorious. The problem with Syria is that Russia and China are looking to avoid another Libya-like scenario, where military intervention helps overthrow the current regime in the country.

The Syrian conflict is not only affecting the people inside its own borders, but threatening to spill over into neighboring countries, most notably in Lebanon with the involvement of Hezbollah in support of Assad’s government, which in turn has caused clashes between pro and anti-Assad militias with the Lebanese Army and left a significant number of casualties. Minor clashes have also occurred along the border with neighboring Turkey, Iraq and Jordan which have also resulted in some fatalities. Besides deaths, the conflict in Syria has also affected millions of people who have been displaced and become refugees in neighboring countries with the latest report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) showing 1.7 million registered Syrian refugees with a total of nearly two million refugees if we include those awaiting registration.

 Adding more uncertainty to the international community willingness to act is the different factions that are fighting Bashar al-Assad’s government. The main one is the Free Syrian Army, but Islamists are also rising up against al-Assad; groups like the Al-Nusra Front that have been linked to al-Qaeda make the international community very nervous, and finally the Kurds have risen up and currently control most of Northeast Syria. Please see the figure on the right for more detailed information. If the international community is to intervene in favor of the opposition, the diversity of the various groups that have participated has to be considered in order to avoid infighting after the government is overthrown in the successive power vacuum, as it happened in Libya following Kaddafi’s ousting.

Key Questions for Consideration

1. Should the international community intervene militarily in Syria?
2. Should the international community intervene in a non-military way in Syria?
3. If the conflict ends in a peace agreement, how is order to be maintained in the following transition period?

Key Actors/Bloc Positions

As said before, the main reason why the international community represented in the Security Council has failed to pass a resolution is because it has failed to reach a consensus among all parties; specifically in the P5 between France, United Kingdom and United States, and China and Russia. Like in any resolution passed in the Security Council, all measures in the resolution must be supported by the P5 or at least they must not be completely opposite to those five countries views on the issue, and ultimately it must have simple majority among its fifteen members to pass.

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Topic 2: The Islamic Insurgency in the Maghreb

**Background Information**

 The Maghreb is a collection of North African countries that were once apart of the western frontier of the Muslim empires of the 8th century. *Maghreb* itself is an Arabic word meaning, “west or occident”[[1]](#footnote-1); and as such, historically the Maghreb has consisted of the Western Sahara, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia. Today, the Maghreb is considered to consist of the members of the Arab Maghreb Union, which include all the aforementioned countries as well as Mauritania.[[2]](#footnote-2) The vast majority of the Maghrebi population consists of Berbers and Arabs. As a result, the region is overwhelmingly practices Islam and speaks Arabic.[[3]](#footnote-3)

 Economically, the region is rather weak. Only Algeria and Morocco have gross domestic products above $100,000. Algeria has the highest, at $207,794 according to the International Monetary Fund in 2012, ranking it as the 48th strongest economy in the world. [[4]](#footnote-4) Youth unemployment across the region is staggeringly high. On average across the Maghreb, more than one in four people between the ages of 18 and 24 don't have a job. Since the population of the Maghreb is about 70,000,000, and roughly 19% of that population is between the age of 15-24, there are 13,300,000 people with nothing to do but become frustrated and disregard a potential future the longer they go unemployed.[[5]](#footnote-5) The fact remains that when young people have nothing to do, they have a tendency to turn towards unscrupulous activities such drugs, crime, or in this particular case, joining Islamic insurgencies that promise to provide for them. Furthermore, rampant corruption both in the private and public sectors of these countries deters foreign direct investment that could bring jobs to these countries.

 Historically, various Muslim empires have controlled the region since the sacking of Carthage in the 7th century. Since then, Islam and Arabic have remained a staple of Maghreb culture. It wasn't until the 19th century that portions of the Maghreb became colonized by European powers, namely France, Spain, and eventually Italy. Despite this, most people in the region do not speak the European languages to this day, and they are primarily reserved for the elite as a method of distinguishing themselves from the lower classes. Still, European influence can still be found throughout the Maghreb. The European powers granted most states in the region their independence in the 1950's and 1960's. Some transitions, such as in Algeria, were bloodier than others. [[6]](#footnote-6)

 Since then, the region has undergone several tumultuous events and coups, the most notable of which started in Tunisia on December 17, 2010, when a local fruit seller was not heard by his government, and decided to set himself on fire as a sign of protest.[[7]](#footnote-7) His action incited a sweeping wave of protest across the Maghrebi region and greater Arab world demanding their leaders grant their people better services and oversight or step down and reform. These revolutions weakened the Maghrebi government's ability to combat the growing threat of Islamic terrorism in their countries. As such, it has become a considerable problem that is threatening the stability of not just Maghreb, but greater North Africa.

 While Islamic insurgencies are rather widespread, the most noteworthy organization according to world powers is Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The group was formerly known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat. AQIM started out as an Algerian insurgency movement bent on overthrowing the Algerian government and installing an Islamic state in its stead.[[8]](#footnote-8) After a series of heavy crackdowns by the Algerian government since the group's inception in 2002, there has been evidence that the group has expanded its operations beyond Algeria and throughout the Maghreb in an effort to maintain finances in its efforts to overthrow the Algerian government. Their activities abroad, according to Algerian authorities, have included smuggling, protection rackets, and money laundering across the Maghreb.[[9]](#footnote-9) Furthermore, the group has claimed to have ties to Al-Qaeda proper as well as other known Islamic insurgent groups such as al-Shabaab in Somalia and Boko Haram in Nigeria.[[10]](#footnote-10) Western authorities fear that due to the lack of government oversight through the Maghreb and permeating poverty, Islamic fundamentalist groups are using the region to recruit and train their soldiers to be used across the world. For this reason alone, the continued existence of AQIM and other Islamic insurgencies in the Maghreb has become a global concern.

**Country Profiles**

 Every country in the Maghreb, except for Tunisia, has had brushes with Islamic insurgencies. Even Tunisia has been affected as a major ally of the US and France in the efforts to combat Islamic fundamentalism. In Libya, the former leader Muammar Qaddafi fought a brutal civil war that culminated in his capture and death with support from western military forces. Since then, a new democratic government has taken shape in Libya that has been slowly but surely trying to bring the country back to a state of normalcy. Despite this, the conclusion of Libya's conflict has only worsened other conflicts in the region due to a lack of effective monitoring and enforcement. Weapon smuggling through Libya into neighboring states is an outstanding issue.[[11]](#footnote-11) While many NATO donated weapons were destroyed at the conclusion of the civil war, Qaddafi's rather extensive stockpile of weapons has been looted and it is unknown how much of it is currently in circulation. Russia has since put forth resolution 2017 (2011) in an effort to restrict the illegal trafficking of these weapons, notably shoulder-fired missiles and chemical weapons. Mokhtar Belmokhtar, one of the leaders of AQIM, has been quoted as saying that his organization has been directly benefiting from loosely controlled arms from Libya. [[12]](#footnote-12)

 In Algeria, AQIM has been fighting the government since 1999. As of 2006, they have conducted operations against western targets including a series of kidnappings of foreign tourists and the theft of foreign assets in Algeria. From 1999 to 2002, Algeria fought a bloody civil war against Islamic fundamentalists that eventually splintered and became AQIM. While the Algerian government has attempted to defeat the organization, AQIM remains at large and through its ransomed kidnappings and other illegal commercial activities, has gained considerable wealth to continue its operations. [[13]](#footnote-13)

 In Morocco, there hasn't been any direct confrontation with any organized insurgency. However, in 2003, a series of suicide bombings in Casablanca provoked the government into a stringent crackdown on Islamic terrorists.[[14]](#footnote-14) Morocco has dealt with other terrorist attacks on its soil since the incident, though the people responsible were typically never found. Morocco is dealing with an open confrontation in the disputed territory of Western Sahara.[[15]](#footnote-15) While Morocco lays its claims to the entire territory after Spain granted it administration over the territory in 1975, a liberation group known as the Polisario Front has controlled the eastern third of the territory. The liberation movement claims to represent the Sahrawi people, a North African people that are Islamic. While the group itself isn't promoting Islamic fundamentalism, it can be considered apart of the overarching conflict against Islamic insurgencies. The group is based out of Algiers as a government-in-exile, and it has been a source of political friction between Algeria and Morocco for decades.

 Finally, there is Mauritania, which has had the least stability in the past decade of the other countries in the Maghreb. In the last two years, the country has undergone two coups. Despite the instability, the army has been fighting AQIM insurgents over the course of the decade, as AQIM uses the fragility in the country to conduct its financial operations, recruit new members, and carry out attacks against western targets.[[16]](#footnote-16) The military has largely been ineffective in dealing with the scourge, and the country is open to an international solution to dealing with AQIM.

**The Issue for the International Community**

 Overall, this Islamic insurgency in the Maghreb has been viewed as a regional problem that has caught the attention of the rest of the world. Islamic insurgencies are not endemic to the Maghreb region in Africa, however. There have been several instances of insurgency campaigns in Africa. The most prominent examples of this include al-Shabaab in Somalia, and the campaign against the Mali government that has brought French forces to the country. The fear is that these organizations will synchronize their efforts to yield greater results and further weaken the fragile stability of North and East Africa. Western governments fear that these organizations will form a partnership with al Qaeda and become the new headquarters for al Qaeda operations against the west.

 While international attention to the issue is salient, the conflicting interests come in the form of how to handle the problem. Western countries strongly support the efforts of all the Maghreb governments in mitigating the issue, but due to a lack of significant resources for these governments to deal with the issue-at-large, the international community must come to a consensus on a method to help bolster the effort. Every one of the major powers has dealt with Islamic fundamentalism in some form and will want to take preventive measures. There are several angles to deal with the problem ranging from political support to military options. Western countries will be more likely to engage in more aggressive policies than countries like Russia and China. An economic or political solution will be significantly easier to push through the committee than anything that includes a military option. However, a military option may be the most effective in dealing with AQIM. Be aware, that a military option does is not exclusively an all-out invasion of the Maghreb. In fact, this kind of move should not gain any support from any of the P5 countries. A more subtle military solution, such as logistical support, arms shipments and training, would be more acceptable. Bear in mind, that more than one resolution can pass in committee, and it would be a good way to diversify the resolutions so that they can each expand on a specific political, economic, and military solution; rather than having one super-resolution that is so large its purpose becomes convoluted.

**Further Reading**

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