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## UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2013

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to Arab League committee. The Arab League was founded in March of 1945. It consists of 22 countries and their aim is to improve relations between the Arab nations whilst keeping their sovereignty. Other than its unity on its denunciation of Israel, the Arab league is notorious for its disunity on many of the issues presented to them and its overall poor governance. However there have been circumstances that have thrust the Arab league into relevance. This is due to the Arab Spring protests that occurred in 2011 and 2012. There have been positive developments that have happened that show that the League can work together on issues like the no-fly zone over Libya and the steps that it has taken on the issue of Syria.

In the beginning the Arab league consisted of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Jordan (then Transjordan), Iraq and Lebanon. It has since grown to include the rest of Northern Africa and parts of the horn of Africa and of course, the rest of the Middle East. Also added to the league are observer nations that are allowed to offer ideas and advise the body but ultimately cannot vote. They are India, Brazil, Venezuela and Eritrea. All four of these nations are influenced by the affairs of the Arab world and vice versa.

The body, in 1950, created a Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation agreement in order to coordinate military measures and throughout the 1970s created a joint Arab Chamber of Commerce with Europe, especially their biggest trading partner, the United Kingdom. Their charter, known as the Alexandria Charter, is to seek closer cooperation on a whole gambit of matters such as economy, communication, culture and social welfare. The member states also have pledged to collaborate on military affairs as well. The charter established their Headquarters in Cairo with meetings biannually. None of their resolutions are binding but are generally adopted into law by Arab league members.

The past two years have been a very busy time for the league due to the wave of protests in 2011 and the removal of several dictatorships in the region, as well as the ongoing crackdown of Syria's President on its protesters. The violence in Syria has escalated since the original protests in early 2011. This is one of the biggest issues that the Arab League faces.



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In light of the recent violence between Israel and Palestine the amount of refugees fleeing to other countries to escape has increased. Most refugees are fleeing into neighboring countries like Lebanon, which is where the league is focused. The Arab Spring saw many regimes fall, but what happens after is up to the league to help decide how to work with these countries that are in the process of rebuilding after revolution.

Before I send you off to prepare for the conference I shall introduce myself. I am Derick Johnson and I am a double major in Anthropology and International Relations in my second year. As person interested in culture especially within political organizations and committees the Arab League has fascinated me due to the many things that they have had to deal with over the past two years and so I hope you will love being in the Arab League as much as I do.

I hope that you enjoy the topics chosen and passionate to debate them. I look forward to meeting you all during the conference.

Sincerely,  
Derick Johnson  
Director of the Arab League committee  
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## Topic 1 Syrian Conflict

### Introduction

The Syrian conflict has been a bloody affair between the dissidents that are trying for reforms and a better government as opposed to the harsh dictatorship of Bashir al Assad. Bashir al Assad took power from his father in 2000. After taking office, Assad sought to present himself as a reformer and he pledged to fix the economy and pushed the need for political criticism. The country initially underwent a degree of political liberalization with hundreds of political prisoners being released, dissidents allowed to speak openly and a few tentative steps towards easing media restrictions. However, the pace of change soon slowed if not reversed and subsequent years saw the creation of "liberalized authoritarianism" rather than democratic rule. Protests against the government began in March 2011, inspired by the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt; orders were given to crush the dissent. By May of that same year tanks enter cities all across Syria including the capital, Damascus, to crush the protests. An influx of refugees began to leave and enter Turkey. More than 10,000 people left Syria in June of 2011 and that number has since increased dramatically. There are about 348,000 refugees registered in the neighboring countries and another million internally displaced. The brutal crackdown by Syria's security forces has not, however, stopped the uprising and many believe it is only a matter of time before President Assad is overthrown. The danger of the fighting setting off regional conflict appears to rise every month, with destabilizing effects seen in Lebanon and Iraq. But it was the possibility of a clash between Syria and its former ally Turkey that drew the most worry, particularly after Turkey instigated military action in October 2012 after a Syrian mortar attack killed five of its civilians. Since Turkey is a NATO member, the fighting there could deepen international involvement.

### Tried tactics

The uprising has led to many deaths in the nearly two years of fighting although there is mounting pressure for Assad to step down as President, it seems like the fighting is going to continue unless more action is taken. About 20,000 people have died, the majority of whom have been civilians, and a further 2.5 million are in need of aid says the UN. Most countries and supranational states like those of the EU have decided to sanction the regime. The Arab league has done the same as well as suspending Syria from participating in the league. As of October of this year the UN

and Arab league have met to discuss how to stop the violence. The UN has pressured the Syrian government to stop the fighting; even the ceasefire that happened later broke down due to the Assad regime continuing attacks. The control of the cities within Syria have been bouncing back and forth between control of the rebels and the government which makes the conflict even more dragged out since the rebels are too poorly organized and the government forces are too weak. Although the rebels are making tactical gains, its not making that much of a difference because they are not organized enough to take on the government, which remains strong in core areas.



Figure 1 Free Syrian Army Soldiers

The league itself has been trying different things to try to quell the violence. They imposed sanctions on Syria as well as suspended their membership from the league itself. The league started out with placing monitors in the country to try to negotiate with the dissidents, free the political prisoners and generally monitoring the progress between the protesters and the dissidents. This plan was put in to effect in December of 2011 but was immediately halted one month later due to the worsening violence. Although the Arab League has fully recognized the new coalition made up of some of the factions, there are still many divides between the Syrian people due to the ethnic tensions within the nation, which complicates matter severely.

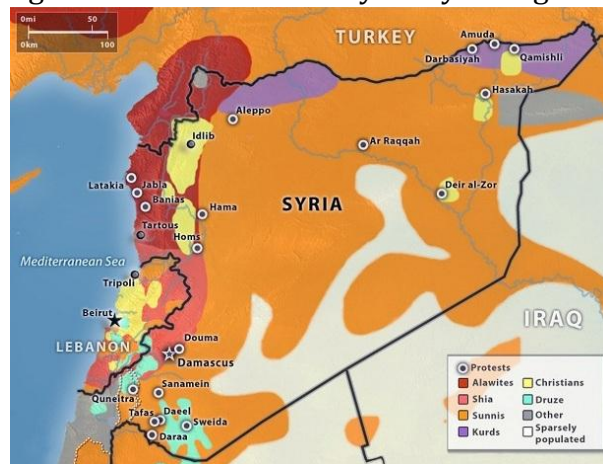


Figure 2 Map of the Ethnic Divisions within Syria

### Ethnic Divisiveness

Syria's ethnic divisions complicate the conflict. The Syrian people are divided into Sunni Arabs (65 percent), Alawis (12 percent), Christians (10 percent), Kurds (9

percent), Druze (3 percent), Bedouin, Ismailis, Turcomans, Circassians, and Assyrians. Divisions within many of these groups further complicate this demographic mosaic. The Christians, for example, are divided into eleven main sects, including the Greek Orthodox, Melkite, Syrian, Maronite, Chaldean, Armenian, and Catholic denominations. The Sunni Arabs range from the highly pious to the very secular and are divided between an urban elite and the rural masses that traditionally have had diverging political loyalties. The problem is that, within these religious and ethnic groups there are political divides that divide Syrians who want to align politics with religion against those who wish to keep them apart. Of all the groups, the Kurds and the Sunni Islamists are the greatest threats to the Syrian state because their political movements have the cohesion, established agendas, outside support, and sense of grievance to drive them to challenge central authority. The Assads and much of the nation's elite, especially the military, belong to the Alawite sect, a minority in a mostly Sunni country. Although the Alawites have access to more sophisticated weapons, over time, demographics should tip in their favor. Alawites constitute about 12 percent of the 23 million Syrians. Sunni Muslims, the opposition's backbone, make up about 75 percent of the population. Because of the many different warring factions that make up Syria, as well as other parts of the Middle East, it makes it very difficult to come up with one single solution that will satisfy every single group in the country.

### **Bloc Positions**

Not every country in the Arab League has voiced their opinion on the crisis in Syria. Most countries are either regional powers in the league and/or countries that border the country. Most other countries fall into the positions outlined below

Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia was quite forward in trying to get Syria on track. Of late, Saudi has been preparing to funding the Free Syria army as well as sending them arms. Talks between the US and Saudi Arabia have seen an increased handle in not only Syria but also the entire region.

Lebanon: Lebanon has had repeated incidents with the Syria ever since the uprising started in 2011. The violence has since spread south to the northern part of Lebanon. This has affected the livelihoods of many people in the region however the major concern is that the violence will spread to the rest of the country embroiling it in a conflict not unlike Syria.



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Egypt: Originally when the conflict started, Egypt was quite about their position on Syria due to their political issues at home. However, later this year wants to be a neutral mediator calling on meetings between Syria, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran to solve the crisis.

Jordan: Jordan has been taking Syrian refugees and has begun to harden its stance on the Assad regime. The king of Jordan is calling for more UN aid to help with the refugees coming to not only Jordan but to other countries in the region.

### **Questions to consider**

Is force now the only option to put an end to the violence or are there more solutions that we haven't tried?

As there are many issues pertaining to ethnic and religious groups within, is there are a way to move forward without tearing the country apart?

What is the best way to stop this from becoming a regional conflict?

How should the transition of Syria look? Should we broker a deal with Assad to coax him out of power?

Should there be shared governance between the rebels and the Assad government? What form of government and power sharing should be established?





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## Topic 2

### Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

#### Introduction

The refugee crisis in the Palestinian Authority has been a major issue that the Arab league faces because all the neighboring nations can only support so many people inside of its borders. Lebanon is no exception. Ever since the conflict began the amount of refugees has increased.

The State of Israel was proclaimed on May 14, 1948, but the Arab states rejected the partition of Palestine and the existence of Israel. The armies of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Trans-Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Egypt attacked but were defeated by the Israeli army.

While the Jewish people were successful in creating their homeland, there was no Palestine and no internationalization of Jerusalem either. In 1948 for example, Palestinians were driven out of the new Israel into refugee camps in Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and other regions. At least 750,000 people had been driven out. It should be noted that many Jews were also expelled from surrounding Arab countries. Zionist organizations and even some Arab nations also encouraged many Jews to immigrate to Israel. As with Palestinians, expelled Jews often had their land and/or bank accounts and other property seized.

In 1978, the Camp David accords were signed between Israel, Egypt and the US, and Israel returned Sinai back to Egypt in return for peace between them. To many in the Arab world, Egypt had sold out to US pressure. To the US and Israel, this was a great achievement; Egypt was obviously not to be underestimated in its capabilities, so the best thing would be to ensure it is an ally, not an adversary.

In 1978, due to rising Hezbollah attacks from South Lebanon, where many Palestinian refugees still were, Israel attacked and invaded Lebanon. In 1982, Israel went as far up Lebanon as Beirut, as bloody exchanges followed between Israeli attempts to bomb Yasser Arafat's PLO locations, and Hezbollah retaliations. In 1985, Israel declared a strip of South Lebanon to be a Security Zone. This never recognized by the UN. Many civilians were killed on both sides. Israeli forces were accused of massacres on many occasions. After 22 years, Israel withdrew in May 2000.



Figure 3 Palestinian Refugees fleeing their homes

In the late 1980s came the Palestinian uprising—the *Intifada*. While there was a non-violence movement initially, the mainstream media concentrated on the violence. Young Palestinians confronted Israeli troops with nothing more than sling shots and stones. Thousands were killed by the Israeli military. Many suicide activists killed Israeli soldiers and caused other damage. Many innocent civilians were killed on both sides.

### Palestinian reaction

The 1993 Oslo Peace Accord saw Israel recognize the PLO and gave them limited autonomy in return for peace and an end to Palestinian claims on Israeli territory. This has been largely criticized as a one-sided accord that benefits only Israel, not the Palestinian people. It resulted in Israeli control of land, water, roads and other resources.

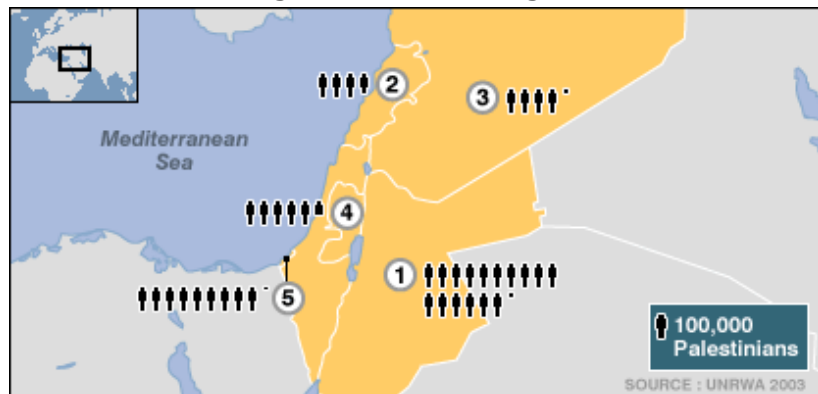


Figure 4 Map of the number of Palestinian refugees

Through the recent years, anger and frustration has mounted as the larger but poorer Palestinian population also find themselves with the less land. This has been further fuelled by Israeli bulldozing of many homes and attempts to kill extremist leaders which often end in death or capture of innocent civilians (including women and children). In addition, while Israel demanded that the ineffective Palestinian National Authority do something to crack down on suicide bombers and other terrorist elements within its territories, it continued bombing official buildings and compounds (making any attempts to crack down on such elements futile). This also increased the power, authority, and influence of more extreme groups such as





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Hamas, which did not like the idea of peace with Israel—it wanted the destruction of the Jewish homeland.

The start of 2006 saw the more extreme Hamas organization gain power. Many countries have listed Hamas as a terrorist organization, though others see it as an independence movement. However, its means are certainly terroristic in nature, often employing suicide attacks on Israeli civilians.

Due to the violence that is plaguing the Palestinian territories, it is little wonder that most try to get away. Although the Palestinians are able to move to neighboring countries such as Lebanon, the conditions there are not that much better.

### **Conditions within the Camps**

There are around 455,000 refugees registered with the UN Relief and Works Agency living in Lebanon today. Although there are probably many more that are unregistered, this make up a total of 10 percent of the population of the country. Most do not get the same basic human rights as the actual citizens of Lebanon which makes their lives even harder. Until recently Palestinian refugees were unable to work in as many as 20 professional positions such as engineering. This is because they are not part of any state so they get neither the rights of foreigners or as Lebanese citizens. One of the other things that the refugees face is the lack of health and educational facilities. Throughout the 12 camps around Lebanon there are only 68 schools and 28 primary health centres. This is a major problem because the UNRWA only can do so much in terms of providing health care, which is, healthcare is very costly. The Arab league has put most of its efforts into the UN effort to try to protect refugees but they haven't really done much to actually come together for the refugees in other countries just in the Palestinian territory itself.

The Arab league have focused mainly on trying to get Israel to relinquish its hold on the Palestinian territories to that the refugees can go back to their homeland which is something that has not gone very well. As opposed to actually fostering an actual peace settlement both sides are antagonistic with each other. Therefore nothing has gotten done.

### **Bloc Positions**

Jordan: Jordan is currently housing 1,951,603 refugees within its borders. At first they were granting both Palestinian refugees and their decedents Jordanian Citizenship it has since stopped because they don't want the now 80% majority of



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Palestinians to rise any more and has since outright stopped letting Palestinians entering altogether.

Lebanon: The Palestinian refugees began living in Lebanon since 1948 when the state of Israel was created. Most Refugees have not had the ability to work until 2010. Due to the delicate religious balance that is present within the country they have been reluctant to grant the refugees many rights.

Palestine: The Palestinians within Palestine as well as the refugees are not very impressed with the reaction of the rest of the Arab States in the way that they have been treated. The Palestinians claim a right of return meaning that they have the right to leave as refugees and come back and if that it not feasible, then receive compensation. Something that the other Arab states have not recognized.

Gulf States: The Gulf States are effectively treating the Refugees as visitors meaning that they are very restrictive in their operations. Most of the Gulf States feel that it should be the rest of the international community that should be helping to fund the refugees. Also tensions had been high because of the refugees support for Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War in 1991.

### **Questions to Consider**

In the short term, should the Arab League fund the construction of refugee camps and hospitals until talks with Israel occur or is that something that the UN should fund?

What is the role of refugees in the Arab world how can that role be changed for the better?

How can we get the demographic tensions to a minimum in countries where Palestinian influence seems to threatening that balance

## Topic 3

### Stabilizing Nations post revolution

#### Introduction

The Arab Spring were very large-scale protests that occurred throughout the Middle East and North Africa. In February of 2011 the streets were filled with people protesting about having a better government that listened to the people. Starting in Tunisia, where the most of the protests began and moving both east and west, change began to seep into the Arab world. There were many regime changes in the wake of this wave of dissidence and opposition. Four countries in the Arab League saw new leaders implemented, the most notable being Egypt and Libya but also Tunisia and Yemen. The problem is that revolutions paved the way for the new governments and leaders to step in, however in some places like Libya, there have been issues with consolidating power in a way that makes everyone feel represented. This is not only a problem with countries post Arab Spring but also countries post-revolution that are still undergoing turmoil like Somalia.

#### Somali Example

Somalia is a country in the eastern part of Africa. It became part of the Arab League in 1974 and has had trouble with stabilizing its politics. After the revolution where in which the leader, Said Barre, was toppled in 1991, the ensuing power vacuum led to a civil war that lasted for two decades. The Arab League was slow to act during the civil war, which highlighted their dysfunctionality. During the periods after the major violence had died down, the Arab League gave aid and helped refugees. Although the UN helped in getting a new government in place, the league was working with the African Union to get help to stabilize the nation and to put a government in place. However most critics consider that the league should do more as Somalia is part of the Arab League. Somalia was a failure in the sense that the Arab League didn't help much to stabilize the nation. However, as of late the Arab League has put through a resolution to help





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stabilize Somalia such as creating a conference to try to broker peace in the area as well as uniting the autonomous section of Somaliland

### **Yemeni Example**

A more successful story in the stabilizing of nations is the post Arab Spring Yemen. The Arab League was very helpful in getting the country of Yemen back on its feet after the revolution. During the Arab Spring Protests the President, Ali Abdullah Saleh cracked down on the protesters in June of 2011 and although injured came back. The violence ensued until October of the same year. This is when the Arab League actually started to act. First off they threatened to suspend Yemen from the league in hopes of getting Saleh. The Arab League froze many treaties to keep Yemen from falling back into a dictatorship. The Arab League also appealed to the United Nations to help with the peace effort. As such peace was achieved in Yemen under a new transitional government with elections occurring in 2013.

### **Bloc positions**

Gulf States: the Gulf States are prepared to help stabilize the peninsula by force if need be as seen by Saudi Arabia's intervention in Bahrain. With their money are more than willing to forcibly quell violence. But a great many are open to peace talks such as the Yemeni peace talks that occurs between Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait UAE, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman to keep Yemen from breaking apart. This block would also be the ones to respond to any and all unrest that could occur in the region. The international community is hesitant about that occurring, however.

Africa: Most of the Arab League nations of Africa are unable to donate their man power towards force and so feel that diplomacy is the better option however most nations like Mauritania, Sudan and Somalia dislike international involvement for one reason or another. They also are more open to sanction as opposed to intervention.

### **Questions to Consider**

What do you think is the best way to broker peace? Sanctions? Force? Or diplomacy?

How do these post revolutionary conflicts arise, is it ethnic, religious, political or a mix of all three? How do we quell tensions before they escalate into violence?



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In what ways is there the ability to create a safe transition without threatening specific ethnic or religious tensions?

### Sources

UN resource on Palestinian refugees

<http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=72>

BBC's take on the Syrian Conflict

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-17258397>

BBC's Profiles on Arab Spring Countries

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-12482309>

NY Times timeline on the Syrian Conflict

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-12482309>

A more detailed timeline of Israel Palestine conflict

<http://www.mideastweb.org/briefhistory.htm>

Opinions on a whole gambit of issues affecting Middle East and other places as well

<http://www.fragilestates.org/2012/02/20/syrias-ethnic-and-religious-divides/>

Somalia's new government

<http://www.fragilestates.org/2012/08/21/somalias-20-year-experiment-in-hybrid-governance/>

Good background on Palestinian refugees

<http://www.du.edu/korbel/hrhw/researchdigest/mena/Exile.pdf>