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| **Forum:** | Human Rights Council |
| **Issue:** | Protecting equal rights of minorities |
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**Description of the issue:**

"All human beings are born
free and equal in dignity and rights.
They are endowed with reason
and conscience
and should act towards one another
in a spirit of brotherhood."

- United Nations, Charter, 1945

*Biography online*

A minority is defined as a culturally, ethnically, or racially distinct group that coexists with but is subordinate to a more dominant group. In social sciences, this subordinacy is defined by characteristics given by an authority, e.g. the government. Therefore, minority status does not necessarily correlate to population. In some cases, one or more so-called minority groups may have a population many times the size of the dominating group, as was the case in South Africa under apartheid (*c.* 1950–91).

Minority rights can only be ensured by a public acknowledgement of the helpless position of members of minority groups, in contact with different gatherings in the public area by the larger population, and by shielding individual members of a minority from separation, osmosis, arraignment, an antagonistic vibe or savagery as a result of their status. It has to be said that minority rights do not establish benefits, but should guarantee equivalent regard for individuals from various networks. These rights serve to make helpless gatherings safer and possible in the first place, as well as to grant all citizens a base degree of fairness in the activity of their human and major rights. European history has indicated that the assurance of national minorities is one of the

basics to steadiness, popularity-based security, and harmony in this mainland. A pluralist and truly fair society should not just regard the ethnic, social, phonetic and strict character of every individual within a national minority yet additionally create suitable conditions empowering them to communicate, protect and build up this personality. The creation of an atmosphere of resilience and exchange is important to empower social decent variety to be a source and a factor, not of division, but of improvement for each society.

**Background information:**

Three main categories of fundamental rights central to ensuring the effective protection of minority rights can be established:

- The rights aiming to protect minorities from extinction and discrimination. As far as compatible with the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, minority communities shall not be denied the right to be recognised as a group, enjoy their own culture and religion, use their own language, establish their schools, and receive teaching in the language of their choice.

- The rights designed to preserve and safeguard the ethnic and cultural identity of the group. A pluralist and genuinely democratic society should not only respect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of each person belonging to a national minority, but also create appropriate conditions enabling them to express, preserve and develop their identity.

- The rights aimed to empower minority communities. Minority communities need to have the authority to determine its own affairs and to be able to actively participate in state affairs. To put it simply, the state needs to create the conditions necessary for the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social, economic and public affairs, particularly on issues directly affecting them. This includes achieving proportional representation in government positions, and active and equal participation in public affairs.

**Increasing the understanding of minority issues in the context of promoting social inclusion and ensuring stable societies**

Minority rights, inclusion and equality play an important role in promoting political and social stability and peace. This has been recognized at the highest level of the UN and stated in the outcome document of the 2005 World Summit of Heads of State and Government, approved by the General Assembly. The implementation of law and policy relevant to inclusion and equality, and effective strategies for social cohesion, are therefore important goals. Exclusion, discrimination and racism directed at minority groups may result in social unrest based on inequality. There is a need to better understand the causes and prevalence of discrimination against minorities in order to put in place effective policies and practices to address such situations and avoid them. There is a need for

legislative and policy reform which seeks to promote effective strategies of social cohesion, equality and non-discrimination..

## Minorities and the Discriminatory Denial or Deprivation of Citizenship

Minorities often face discrimination and exclusion, and they struggle to gain access to their human rights, even under conditions of full and unquestioned citizenship. Denying or stripping them of citizenship can be an effective method of compounding their vulnerability and can even lead to mass expulsion. Once denied or deprived of citizenship, minorities are inevitably denied protection of their basic rights and freedoms, including minority rights as established in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, close to 15 million people in more than 49 countries are stateless, and numbers appear to be increasing. Many minorities live in a precarious legal situation because, even though they may be entitled under law to citizenship in the State in which they live, they are often denied or deprived of that right and may in fact exist in a situation of statelessness. While many conditions give rise to the creation of statelessness, including protracted refugee situations and State succession, most stateless persons today are members of minority groups.

https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/SRMinorities/Pages/Increasetheunderstanding.aspx

## Affirmative Action

Affirmative action is a controversial and strongly contested issue, which refers to the policies that take factors such as including race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or national origin into consideration in order to benefit and promote the rights and social inclusion of an underrepresented group (a minority group). This is usually justified as countering the effects of a history of discrimination. Affirmative action can, for example, take the form of a government program to provide immigrant or minority groups who primarily speak a marginalized language with extra teaching in the majority language, so that they are better able to compete for places at university or for jobs. Businesses and government entities implement affirmative action programs to increase the number of people from certain groups within companies, institutions, and other areas of society. The policy focuses on people who have historically had low representation in positions of leadership, professional roles, and academics. Its goal is to increase social inclusion of these

minorities as well as diversity and decrease discrimination. The critics of affirmative action point to a number of perceived failures in its policies—including the cost of the programs, the possibility of hiring less qualified candidates, and lack of historical progress in changing the representation of targeted groups.

## Glossary:

Minorities:

Who are minorities under international law?

„Adopted by consensus in 1992, the United Nations Minorities Declaration in its article 1 refers to minorities as based on national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity, and provides that States should protect their existence. There is no internationally agreed definition as to which groups constitute minorities. It is often stressed that the existence of a minority is a question of fact and that any definition must include both objective factors (such as the existence of a shared ethnicity, language or religion) and subjective factors (including that individuals must identify themselves as members of a minority)."

Source: www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/Pages/internationallaw.aspx

Oppression:

„Unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power"

"The exercise of authority or power in a burdensome, cruel, or unjust manner"

Source: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/oppression

Further general terms:

- MEDC/LEDC - more/less economically developed country
- Superior - higher in rank, status or quality
- Sovereignty- supreme power/authority
- Supremacy - superior to ALL others in authority, power or status
- Segregation - keeping people apart on grounds of i.e. skin colour
- Scarcity - not enough of, lack of something
- Amnesty International – NGO (non-profit-organization) for Human Rights

- <u>NGO</u> Non-governmental organization

- <u>NHRI</u> National human rights institution

- <u>OCHA</u> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

- <u>OHCHR</u> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

- <u>UNDP</u> United Nations Development Programme

- <u>UNESCO</u> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

- <u>UNHCR</u> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

## How to prepare as a delegate:

As for research, we would recommend looking up passed resolutions on the topic of minority rights debated/ passed by the UN (listed below).

For your position paper, you should firstly mention to what extent your country is, directly or indirectly, affected by the topic. Has it taken any measures?

Furthermore, consider other international incidents/programs your country might have been a part of. Try to get a real perspective and what the national bias/issue is about.

As a conclusion, try to come up with possible future measures to combat the issue at hand. How could your country contribute to plans on an international level? What is the current situation and is your country willing to change internationally?

For the resolution, try to further outline any ideas your country has for dealing with the issue. Do not worry if you do not have a complete, perfect resolution - you will be lobbying with others before coming to a final version of the resolution, yours should work as a first draft.

All delegates are required to write at least one draft resolution and two position papers on different topics, so that all topics of the forum are covered. This requirement also needs to be included in this part of your research report. The deadline to send in the documents is 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020. All documents sent in after the deadline will not be corrected by the Student Officers.

## UN resolutions:

- Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities  (Adopted by General Assembly resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992)
- Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance

  The 2001 Durban Conference and the Durban Review Conference held in 2009 reaffirmed non-discrimination as a core human rights principle and recommended various measures towards securing additional protection against racism. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action proposes concrete actions to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; addresses a wide range of issues; and contains far-reaching recommendations and practical measures regarding various groups which suffer from discrimination. Specific recommendations are formulated to combat discrimination against Africans and people of African descent, Asians and persons of Asian descent, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, minorities, Roma and other groups.

  https://www.un.org/WCAR/durban.pdf

**Sources/ Useful Liks:**

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- *Promoting and Protecting Minority Rights: A Guide for Advocates,* United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner, Geneva and New York, 2012
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- https://www.osce.org/hcnm
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- *The Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies & Explanatory Note,* OSCE/HCNM, 2012
- *Guidelines on political party regulation*, OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission, 2010
- http://politicalyouthnetwork.org/why-are-minority-rights-important-2/
- https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/201/law03-6.pdf?sequence=1
- Protection of National Minorities on Minority Rights Implementation: Thirteen Years after its Coming into Force