

League of Arab States (LAS) Committee Guide
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Message from the Committee Directors	p. 2
Introduction to the Committee.....	p.3-4
Topic A: Foreign Military Presences.....	p. 5- 8
Bibliography and References.....	p. 9-10
Topic B: The Question of Women's Rights.....	p. 11- 15
Bibliography and References.....	p. 16-17

Message from the Committee Directors

We, the Chairs of the League of Arab States (LAS) of LIMUN 2012, would like to extend our warmest welcome to all delegates attending this session of the LAS, which we hope will be both an exciting and fruitful one.

It is with much hard work and discussion that we have chosen the topics for debate and put this study guide together. We sincerely hope you find it useful, and that you use it for what it is designed for – as an introduction to the issues of Foreign Military Presences and The Question of Women's Rights only.

The contents of this guide are meant to provide a sense of direction and a starting point for further research only. Debate should not be limited to the areas of discussion this guide comprises, and delegates are strongly advised to enhance their understanding and capacity to represent by extensive study of both topics.

A great part of LIMUN tradition may be sleepless nights of partying and resolution writing, but the Conference is also about diplomacy and harmony. So, as Chairs with plenty of LIMUN experience of our own, we hope that you talk to each other, mingle before, during and after the Conference, and finish the weekend with friends for life.

Should you have any questions or queries in the course of your research, we are your first port of call and will help you to the best of our abilities – our role as Chairs is to guide you, and we offer our support and direction willingly.

Here's to a magnificent three days!

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Introduction to the Committee

Officially known as the League of Arab States, but more conventionally referred to as the Arab League, League, LAS or AL, the Arab League is a regional organisation that brings together 22 Arab states including Palestine, comprising of some 350 million people, and 6 observer states.

Originally founded in March 1945 in Cairo with seven member states – Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Yemen – the LAS may be seen as the amalgamation of several interlinked movements: the expression of Arab nationalism and pan-Arab identity, a reaction to the establishment of Israel and a belief in the need for more effective co-ordination in response to it, severe military defeat, the aftermath of colonialism, and individual nationalistic feelings.



Fig. 1, Flag of The League of Arab States.

The main goal of the League has always been and remains today the strengthening of relations between member states and greater political co-ordination, all the while maintaining the sovereignty, integrity and local differences of individual member states.

Perhaps the main difference between the Arab League and other similar organisations – such as the European Union – is that the League is not rooted in geography. In that area, member-states are remarkably diverse. Rather, the Arab League is rooted in a sense of belonging, a sense of community based on a separate Arab culture and language. Also unlike the European Union, decisions made by the League are binding only upon those who voted for them, regardless of whether or not those decisions form part of the Arab League's stated aims.

It must be remembered that the 22 member states listed includes Syria, whose membership has been suspended as of November 2011 due to the events of the so-called Arab Spring. In a vote, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen voted against the suspension with Iraq the only abstention. Since then, Syria has frequently been in the news and it is strongly recommended that Delegates keep up to date with LAS involvement there.

It must also be remembered that the key players remain Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and that contrary to popular conceptions neither Iran nor Israel are members of the LAS.

The list of observer states includes Chad and Eritrea. Along with Israel, these remain the only significantly Arabic-speaking states outside the League. South Sudan, although assured full membership or observer states should it seek it.



Fig. 2, Map of Member States.

Topic A – Foreign Military Presences

Introduction

The issue of foreign military presences (FMPs) may at first glance seem like a two pronged one; that is to say, referring to non-Arab forces within member state borders, and Arab forces within non-member state borders. However, unlike the EU or the UN, The League of Arab States has no defined, cohesive, and mobile military force.

Although the League has deployed peacekeeping forces in the past, for example to Iraq and Sudan in 2007, it is the aim of the League to preserve a common Arab peace, identity and sense of belonging. In recent times, the preference has been for observation. It is under no circumstances to invade, violate or rule.

The past two decades have witnessed an almost constant threat to League members by FMPs: the Gulf in particular has become inundated with FMPs, at least 8 LAS members have FMPs to some degree, and the majority of these are US military personnel. These countries and their FMPs by origin are as follows:

<u>LAS Member</u>	<u>Origin of FMPs by country</u>
Bahrain	USA, UK
Djibouti	USA, France, Germany
Iraq	USA, UK, 30 other countries represented in the multinational force (MNF) Operation Iraqi Freedom
Kuwait	USA, UK
Oman	USA, UK
Qatar	USA, UK
Saudi Arabia	USA
United Arab Emirates	USA

It is often difficult to define the extent of FMPs in a particular region or country, as it is not static due to regional conflicts, internal politics, and changing alliances which may remove the need for access, or provide new opportunities to create access. It is therefore up to individual delegates to be aware of their relative states of occupation and the roles FMPs play. It is also up to delegates to

determine their relative positions on the involvement of FMPs in local, regional and pan-Arab politics.

What had already been done?

The United Arab Command

In response to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the fledgling 1961 Arab Joint Security Pact decided on a set of guidelines for a collective security force called the Joint Arab Command. This was unanimously superseded by the establishment of the United Arab Command in 1964. The UAC was conspicuously ineffective following subsequent conflicts such as the Six-Day War in 1967, and has been considered, for all intents and purposes, dissolved. Today, the theoretical might of the combined military forces of the LAS put it third in the world; ahead even of the USA by almost a factor of 2. But it is just that: theoretical.

The Arab Charter

In May 2004 a summit of the League of Arab States adopted the Arab Charter on Human Rights, which committed the League to protecting *“the national identity of the Arab States and their sense of belonging to a common civilization,”* (Article 1) in the following Articles;

- *“To place human rights at the centre of the key national concerns of Arab States, making them lofty and fundamental ideals that shape the will of the individual in Arab States and enable him to improve his life in accordance with noble human values,”* (Article 1.1)
- *“To teach the human person in the Arab States pride in his identity, loyalty to his country, attachment to his land, history and common interests and to instill in him a culture of human brotherhood, tolerance and openness towards others, in accordance with universal principles and values and with those proclaimed in international human rights instruments”* (Article 1.2)
- *“To prepare the new generations in Arab States for a free and responsible life in a civil society that is characterized by solidarity, founded on a balance between awareness of rights and respect for obligations, and governed by the values of equality, tolerance and moderation,”* (Article 1.3)

- *“To entrench the principle that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated,” (Article 1.4)*
- *“All peoples have the right of self-determination and to control over their natural wealth and resources, and the right to freely choose their political system and to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development,” (Article 2.1)*
- *“All peoples have the right to national sovereignty and territorial integrity,” (Article 2.1)*
- *“All forms of racism, Zionism and foreign occupation and domination constitute an impediment to human dignity and a major barrier to the exercise of the fundamental rights of peoples; all such practices must be condemned and efforts must be deployed for their elimination,” (Article 2.3)*
- *“All peoples have the right to resist foreign occupation,” (Article 2.4)*
- *“In exceptional situations of emergency which threaten the life of the nation and the existence of which is officially proclaimed, the States parties to the present Charter may take measures derogating from their obligations under the present Charter, to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation, provided that such measures are not inconsistent with their other obligations under international law and do not involve discrimination solely on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion or social origin,” (Article 4.1)*
- *“No one shall be subjected to physical or psychological torture or to cruel, degrading, humiliating or inhuman treatment,” (Article 8.1)*
- *“All forms of slavery and trafficking in human beings are prohibited and are punishable by law. No one shall be held in slavery and servitude under any circumstances,” (Article 10.1)*

Links to the copy of the Charter used here may be found in the bibliography section of this guide.

Policy Options

Depending on the operational function of the FMP in each country, be it for enhancing host nations military capacity, reconstruction, security, research, or information sharing, the response to the FMP will differ. For those countries with, or that have recently had, active military involvement by a foreign force, a striving towards independence and the preservation of the Arab identity in line with Charter obligations is the ultimate aim.

Possible Bloc Positions

LAS members have shown unanimous support for any Charter sanctioned actions that lead to the liberation of Arab peoples.

Research Questions

- Is the presence of a FMP a hindrance to Arab unity?
- Should the Arab League be working towards a regional capacity building project to be able to do without FMPs?
- How closely related are individual FMPs with bi- and multi-lateral diplomatic ties?
- Is there a benefit to creating a well established Arab League military force to promote regional stability, and might it negate the need for FMPs?

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Topic B – The Question of Women's Rights

Introduction

'The Question of Women's Rights' is a catch-all title that includes within it a staggering range of issues. Having such a broad topic opens up discussions to a plethora of different issues, conflicts and resolutions, making women's rights a challenging but enjoyable topic of debate.

Delegates must remember to locate discussions the context of current events in member states, and realise that the Question of Women's Rights is a topic of great complexity, with a long history and real, tangible impact on individuals, states and ideas.

What had already been done?

The Arab Charter

In May 2004 a summit of the League of Arab States adopted the Arab Charter on Human Rights.

It was seen by the Arab League Secretary General as an instrument to bring the previous Charter of 1994 in line with international human rights law, and as part of a modernisation drive that includes a Peace and Security Council and interim Arab Parliament. Before its acceptance, however, substantial changes had to be made in order to accommodate some member states' positions on issues such as women's rights, freedom of expression and the death penalty (Rishmawi, 2009).

The Charter, *“rejecting all forms of racism and Zionism, which constitute a violation of human rights and a threat to international peace and security, recognizing the close link that exists between human rights and international peace and security, reaffirming the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and having regard to the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam”*, includes the following commitments:

- “To place human rights at the centre of the key national concerns of Arab States, making them lofty and fundamental ideals that shape the will of the individual in Arab States and enable him to improve his life in accordance with noble human values” (Article 1.1)

- “To prepare the new generations in Arab States for a free and responsible life in a civil society that is characterized by solidarity, founded on a balance between awareness of rights and respect for obligations, and governed by the values of equality, tolerance and moderation” (Article 1.3)
- “To entrench the principle that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated” (Article 1.4)
- “Each State party to the present Charter undertakes to ensure to all individuals subject to its jurisdiction the right to enjoy the rights and freedoms set forth herein, without distinction on grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religious belief, opinion, thought, national or social origin, wealth, birth or physical or mental disability” (Article 3.1)
- “The States parties to the present Charter shall take the requisite measures to guarantee effective equality in the enjoyment of all the rights and freedoms enshrined in the present Charter in order to ensure protection against all forms of discrimination based on any of the grounds mentioned in the preceding paragraph” (Article 3.2)
- “Men and women are equal in respect of human dignity, rights and obligations within the framework of the positive discrimination established in favour of women by the Islamic Shariah, other divine laws and by applicable laws and legal instruments. Accordingly, each State party pledges to take all the requisite measures to guarantee equal opportunities and effective equality between men and women in the enjoyment of all the rights set out in this Charter” (Article 3.3)
- “Sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes in accordance with the laws in force at the time of commission of the crime and pursuant to a final judgment rendered by a competent court. Anyone sentenced to death shall have the right to seek pardon or commutation of the sentence” (Article 6)
- “The death penalty shall not be inflicted on a pregnant woman prior to her delivery or on a nursing mother within two years from the date of her delivery; in all cases, the best interests of the infant shall be the primary consideration” (Article 7.2)

- “Forced labor, trafficking in human beings for the purposes of prostitution or sexual exploitation, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or any other form of exploitation or the exploitation of children in armed conflict are prohibited” (Article 10.2)
- “All persons are equal before the law and have the right to enjoy its protection without discrimination” (Article 11)
- “Every citizen has the right to freely pursue a political activity, to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives, to stand for election or choose his representatives in free and impartial elections, in conditions of equality among all citizens that guarantee the free expression of his will, to gain access, on an equal footing with others, to public office in his country in accordance with the principle of equality of opportunity, to freely form and join associations with others, and to freedom of association and peaceful assembly. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of these rights other than those which are prescribed by law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others” (Article 24)
- “Everyone has a guaranteed right to own private property, and shall not under any circumstances be arbitrarily or unlawfully divested of all or any part of his property” (Article 31)
- “The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society; it is based on marriage between a man and a woman. Men and women of marrying age have the right to marry and to found a family according to the rules and conditions of marriage. No marriage can take place without the full and free consent of both parties. The laws in force regulate the rights and duties of the man and woman as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution” (Article 33.1)
- “The State and society shall ensure the protection of the family, the strengthening of family ties, the protection of its members and the prohibition of all forms of violence or abuse in the relations among its members, and particularly against women and children. They shall also ensure the necessary protection and care for mothers, children, older persons and persons with special needs and shall provide adolescents and young persons with the best

opportunities for physical and mental development” (Article 33.2)

- “The right to work is a natural right of every citizen. The State shall endeavor to provide, to the extent possible, a job for the largest number of those willing to work, while ensuring production, the freedom to choose one's work and equality of opportunity without discrimination of any kind on grounds of race, colour, sex, religion, language, political opinion, membership in a union, national origin, social origin, disability or any other situation” (Article 34.1)

The Charter has been accepted by ten Arab States – Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Libya, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen – and came into force in March 2008 (Rishmawi, 2009).

Links to the copy of the Charter used here may be found in the bibliography section of this guide.

Policy Options / What Needs to be Addressed

Women's rights are usually provided for in the laws of Arab League member states, and in the Charter cited above. Many members have also ratified key international human rights and other documents, which contain commitments to women's rights, such as the Cairo Declaration and ILO conventions on discrimination.

However, there is often a gap between commitment and practice and as with Topic A, there are more issues that need to be discussed than space to list them here. Even where laws are favourable to women's rights as enshrined by international law, more traditional or nationally and locally dominant paradigms exert a strong influence on actual behaviour.

Taking the right to work as an example, most labour laws in Arab League states are supportive of an economic role for women and encourage equal remuneration for work of equal value. They include maternity leave benefits and protect women against unemployment in case of marriage or pregnancy. Yet many of these provisions are not used. Therefore Committee discussions can include everything from childcare provisions and employment law to the right to travel as far as they fall under the remit of the League of Arab States as well as how the League can act to encourage the fulfilment of legal obligations by individual states.

This example is but one among many. It is up to Delegates to research, examine and discuss in detail the Question of Women's Rights as it is relevant to states (including religious perspectives and ideologies) represented.

Possible Bloc Positions

It may be more appropriate to determine bloc positions on an issue-by-issue basis to accommodate the spectrum of views member states hold. It is the LAS' position that all states ultimate aim must be submission to and fulfilment of Charter obligations and the protection of the identity of Arab states and “civilisational” belonging.

States with a strong, positively recognised record on women's rights, are actively encouraged to express their views and share the details of their experiences in accordance with the Charter.

For those countries under pressure to reform, or whose leaderships has changed as a result of public or other pressure, this issue will be of particular importance.

Research Questions

- What rights does 'The Question of Women's Rights' entail and in what context should they be approached?
- What is the role of women according to the Charter, and is the Charter a sufficient tool for the protection and promotion of women's rights?
- Should the Arab League be working towards a singular vision of women's rights?
- Are there differences between conceptions of women's rights in LAS states, how are these differences expressed and how are they accommodated by LAS activities?

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