

Houston Area Model United Nations Standard Committee

SOCHUM



Chair | Nini Dang
Topic B: Media Censorship regarding
Political Bias in the United States
Houston Area Model United Nations 50
February 6 & 7, 2025

Note to Delegates

Howdy Delegates,

My name is Nini Dang and I'm super excited to be your chair for this year's committee. I am currently in school to become a doctor of Physical Therapy and I recently graduated with a Political Science degree from the University of Houston. I've been doing Model UN since my freshman year of high school and I've loved it ever since. HAMUN has been one of my favorite experiences so I hope I can make it as great as I can for all of you. HAMUN has given me the opportunity to meet a lot of the colleagues I work with/for today. This will be my fifth HAMUN as a chair so I hope that this experience will help you learn new skills, make new friends, or interest you further in national issues and finding solutions to our world's current issues. I'm very happy to be able to meet everyone in person as well as share the beautiful University of Houston campus with you. This conference is what you make of it so do your research, get out of your comfort zones and more importantly; have fun! If you have any questions before the conference or need advice, don't hesitate to contact me. I'm looking forward to it!

Nini Dang

Chair of SOCHUM

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Background Information

The Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM), also known as the third Committee, was established in 1947 as part of the United Nations General Assembly. It addresses global social and humanitarian issues, focusing on vulnerable populations such as children, women, indigenous peoples, the elderly, those with disabilities, and incarcerated persons. SOCHUM also tackles issues like racial discrimination, the international criminal justice system, crime prevention, and the global drug problem.

SOCHUM played a key role in creating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and has led efforts to end practices like female genital mutilation. The committee has over 50 outreach programs, including special rapporteurs that address geographic and cultural issues, often providing on-the-ground assistance and gathering independent human rights inquiries.

In recent sessions, SOCHUM has discussed resolutions related to women's rights, child protection, criminal justice, and refugee treatment. It continues to shape international policy through its draft resolutions, impacting human rights worldwide.

Statement of the Issue

Media censorship is a huge issue and can be a multitude of topics of conversation. In this year's SOCHUM committee, we will be primarily discussing Political Bias in the United States and how it can affect media coverage and formulation of audience in opinion. I urge and encourage you to utilize your own lives and how you perceive media and keep in mind of how your country takes a stance on what media is allowed and broadcasted. What can be defined as media censorship? Media Censorship is the act of altering, adjusting, editing, or banning of any or all media resulting from the presumption that its content is perceived to be objectionable, incendiary, illicit, or immoral by the applicable legislative authority or Government within a specific jurisdiction. The ideology, methodology, and measures or determination regarding media subject to Media Censorship exists in conjunction to the vast expanse of the varieties of media in existence; this can include – but is not limited to books, publications, expressions, products, services, radio broadcasts, televised broadcast, Internet-based broadcasts, films, movies, pictures, images, videos, and speech.

Some questions you can answer or keep in mind are

- 1) What is censorship in media look like?
- 2) What is political bias?
- 3) Does your country implement censorship in your citizen's daily lives?
- 4) Should there be legislation around media?
- 5) How as the UN can we solve media censorship in the United States?
- 6) What are some of the most pressing issues regarding media in the United States?
- 7) How could we prevent deliberate distortion of information in the age of fake news?
- 8) Should rhetoric and publications inciting racial hatred and xenophobia be protected as a form of free speech by the state?
- 9) Which measures must be taken in order to ensure the elimination of unjust incarnation of journalists and that crimes committed against journalists are punished?
- 10) Which should be the role of international or transnational media in breaking censorship barriers in restrictive states?





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The media censorship and the violation of rights of journalists are provoked not only by the ongoing rise of populism in the West due to growing socio-economic inequality and technological evolution but also by the increasing lack of trust of unbiased information which undermine the independence and integrity of the media. In the same time, as a result, increased restrictions on human rights are enabled in countries where freedom of expression in media have been traditionally fragile. Furthermore, increased authoritarianism poses a threat to the preservation of freedom of expression as individual leaders are looking to secure their authority through restraining opposition voices.

The concept that the press should be free emerged only after the press itself had become commonplace. The invention of mechanized printing led to the proliferation of books, newspapers, and other publications that spread ideas faster and farther than ever before. Despite this fact, the potential for these ideas to challenge official power structures, made some political and religious authorities actively suppress publications that they considered subversive.

The problem of censorship has proven to be abiding within the ages. If we move back in time the rulers of the Soviet Union were responsible for the longest lasting and most extensive censorship era of the 20th Century. The USSR imposed its strict censorship system on all occupied countries and satellite-states, many of whom had been subject to the censorship of imperial Russia. In 1917, the Soviet government signed the Decree on Press, an order usually having the force of



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law, which prohibited publishing any articles criticizing the Bolsheviks' authority. In 1946, the BBC started broadcasting radio services for Soviet citizens. Voice of America, Radio Liberty, and Deutsche Welle all followed suit a couple of years later . The USSR, though, possessing the most powerful "anti-radio" system in the world, started blocking these radio frequencies used by foreign stations.

The rise of social media brought the question of media censorship once more into discussion with people supporting the view that they contribute in making information accessible to everyone. Despite this new prospect, recently some major social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube took down material posted by conspiracy theorist Alex Jones. The contrast between the freedom of expression that social media seem to promote and the obligation of media companies with to

curate information on their platforms raises the issue of whether controlling the flow of information online is feasible and acceptable .

One main argument that is expected to surface in the debate of the protection of freedom of the press is the argument on a nation's sovereignty. Most of the countries where heavy censorship exists rely on the argument of the protection of sovereignty of the state and the protection of their political agendas. Media have been blamed regularly for having a political bias, but the link between politics and censorship is harder to spot. Any information that may threaten to adversely affect sovereignty is censored. For example, the government of China, although the country's constitution guarantees to its citizens the right to freedom of expression, exercises extreme control in all forms of media, while there are a lot of cases of journalists who are imprisoned in harsh conditions . The news that are

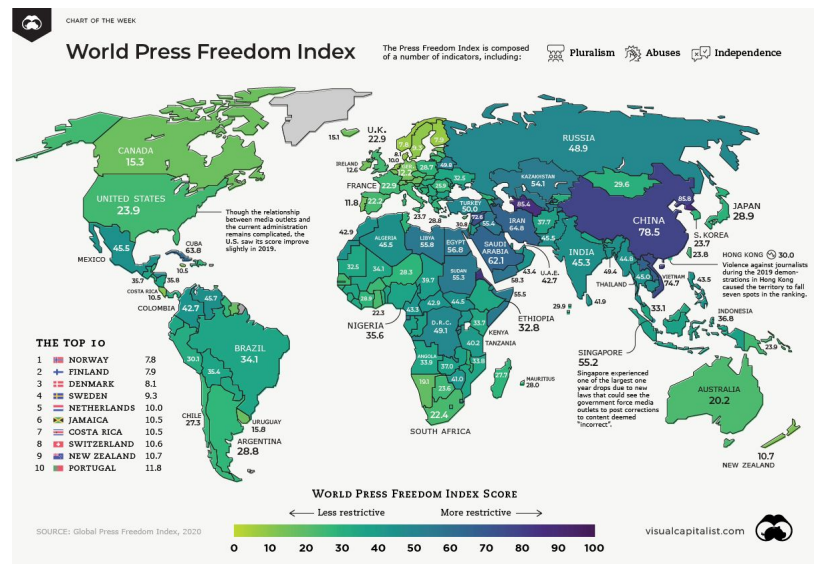


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broadcasted reflect the ideology of the Communist Party, while the media censorship is even stricter in regions where separatist elements exist, like Tibet.

At the same time, restraining the right of freedom of the press when national security is concerned, is a frequent phenomenon. In some states the freedom of the press is constitutionally guaranteed, unless it involves releasing information that might compromise national security. In most countries this is a principle that it is constitutionally established. Greece is one of these countries, as article 14 of the Greek constitution declares the freedom of the media as long as it does not release information about the structure, the armory of the army or the protection of the country or having as a purpose the violent change of the constitution itself. Further limitation of the freedom of press is related to the argument of the

justification of media censorship in case of violation of religious norms. This practice is common particularly in countries in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar.





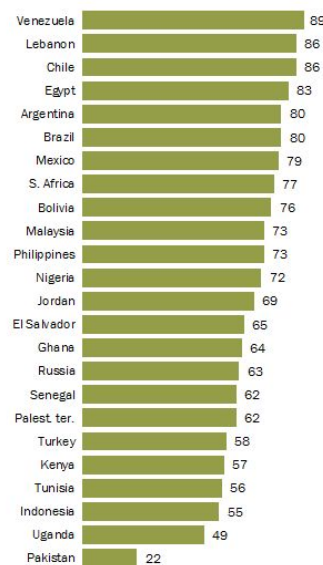
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Nowadays internet has become an inextricable element of our lives, while the integration of social media in daily life, rendered the public access to instant news extremely easy along with the danger of the spreading of fake news both in the online and in the actual world. With roughly 36% of the world's population owning a social media account, political regimes and cultures that do not uphold the principle of freedom of speech are becoming increasingly threatened by the power of social media to influence, giving rise to endless arrests, detentions, internet shutdowns and social media taxes.

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Most Want Uncensored Internet Access

% saying it is important that people have access to the internet without government censorship

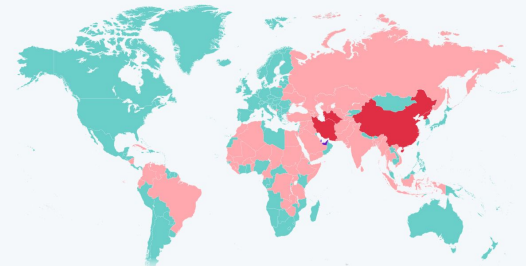


Source: Spring 2013 Global Attitudes survey, Q71.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Where Social Media is Suppressed

Countries which have blocked access to social networks since 2015

Blocked in the past No evidence of blocking
Currently blocking Currently blocking IM/VoIP



As of 12 January 2022
Source: Surfshark



statista

Where social media websites are suspended all over the world; Statista



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Some of the key issues the Council of Europe is addressing, are the protection and promotion of freedom of expression as well as free access to information online. Furthermore, it wants to develop standards based on human rights so as to protect the flawless cross-border exchange of Internet content. Moreover, it aims at balancing freedom of expression and safeguarding the dignity of the people involved. It goes without saying that it, also, aims at rendering the internet accessible to everyone while developing guidelines to assist governments to promote freedom access to pluralistic, quality-based and diverse sources of information.

Free, independent and diverse media are essential for democracy. Blogs, social networks, content aggregators and search engines enable individuals to access information and communicate with thousands of people in completely new ways. Together with traditional media, these new media actors are today essential sources of information. Media censorship is an issue that still sparks controversy. It goes without saying that pluralistic sources and the right to the freedom of expression should be protected. Furthermore, It is important, not only to find ways to ensure the existence of pluralism in the media, but also to protect the freedom of the press. The alarming number of journalists killed throughout the world not only worries on a human right level, as it threatens both freedom of expression and access to information, but it also prevents the international community from attaining the Sustainable Development Goals, especially No. 16.



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