

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL

Dear Delegates of **HEYBELIMUN**,

Welcome to the conference, also known as the annual gathering of sleep deprived teenagers who somehow believe international diplomacy can be solved with 3 coffee breaks and a Google Doc. As your Secretary General, I'm honored to lead this *beautifully chaotic* experience.

In the coming sessions, you will witness things no human should ever have to see: alliances forming at the speed of gossip, delegates rewriting history to win arguments and the heartbreak of watching your carefully written clause get deleted by someone who didn't like the "vibe" of it. You may also witness chairs slowly losing their sanity and at least one delegate trying to turn every topic into a personal TED Talk or actually starting to cry during their speech.

Note these down;

- If your resolution sucks, gaslight everyone into thinking it's *avant-garde*,
- If you forget your country's policy, just say "*my delegation believes...*" and pray,
- If you use pen and paper = you're *70% cooler* than the rest of the committee,
- If the committee becomes unhinged, just *embrace* it. This is your life now...

But through all the craziness, also remember this: MUN is supposed to be fun. Speak up. Be bold. Make friends. Cause *educational* drama. And please please do your research and follow your politics. We **beg** you. And above all, expect the unexpected because even *I* don't know what's going to happen even tho I planned this thing.

Thank you for joining this diplomatic fever dream. **May your speeches be loud, your chairs merciful, and your committee full of crisis.**

With love,
Asuela Işıklı

LETTER FROM CO-UNDER SECRETARY **GENERAL**

Dear delegates, as the Co-Under Secretary General of **NGO: Social Politics**, I would like to begin my letter with a special thank to our delegates. It is with great pleasure to meet with every single delegate. As a USG who has experienced every corner of a Model United Nations conference, I can simply say everything will be in our control and will be taken care of. In the conference we would like to know your every problem, feel free to ask your problems and questions to me. I would like to close my letter by wishing you luck in your committees. Yours Sincerely, Ayliz Duru ÇALIŞKAN



INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE

NGO: Social Politics committee is prepared to *make the public aware* of what's going on around the world. We promised to make the world a better place, to reconstruct it to be all **EQUAL**. **WE ARE HERE TO HELP COMMUNITIES REVOLT!**

History of NGOs;

A **non-governmental organisation (NGO)** is an entity that is **not part of the government**. This can include non-profit and for-profit entities. An NGO may get a significant percentage or even all of its funding from governmental sources. An NGO typically is thought to be a non-profit organization that operates partially independent of government control. Non-profit NGOs often focus on **humanitarian or social issues** but can also include clubs and associations offering services to members.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a vital role in **improving the lives of people who have been affected by natural disasters or are facing other challenges**. NGOs can act as implementers, catalysts, and partners to provide essential goods and services to those in need. They work to mobilize resources, both financial and human, to ensure that aid is delivered in a timely and effective manner.

NGOs also play a critical role in **driving change by advocating for policies and practices that benefit disadvantaged communities**. They often work in partnership with other organizations, including government agencies, to address complex challenges that require a collaborative approach. **One of the key strengths of NGOs is their ability to work at the grassroots level and to connect with communities directly**. This allows them to gain a deep understanding of the issues facing people and to tailor their services to meet the specific needs of each community.

Operational

Operational NGOs seek to **"achieve small-scale change directly through projects"**, **mobilizing financial resources, materials, and volunteers to create local programs**. They

hold large-scale fundraising events and may apply to governments and organizations for grants or contracts to raise money for projects. Operational NGOs often have a hierarchical structure; their headquarters are staffed by professionals who **plan projects, create budgets, keep accounts, and report to and communicate** with operational fieldworkers on projects. They are most often associated with the delivery of services or environmental issues, emergency relief, and public welfare. Operational NGOs may be subdivided into relief or development organizations, service-delivery or participatory, religious or secular, and public or private. Although operational NGOs may be community-based, many are national or international. The defining activity of an operational NGO is the implementation of projects.

Advocacy

Advocacy NGOs or campaigning NGOs seek to "**achieve large-scale change promoted indirectly through the influence of the political system**". They require an active, efficient group of professional members who can **keep supporters informed and motivated**. Campaigning NGOs must plan and host demonstrations and events which will **attract media, their defining activity**.

Campaigning NGOs often deal with issues related to **human rights, women's rights, and children's rights, and their primary purpose is to defend (or promote) a specific cause**.

Public Relations

Non-governmental organisations need **healthy public relations** in order to meet their goals, and use sophisticated public-relations campaigns to **raise funds and deal with governments**. Interest groups may be politically important, influencing social and political outcomes. A code of ethics was established in 2002 by the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations.

Funding

NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) are usually **funded by donations, membership fees, selling services, grants, and corporate support**. Some NGOs rely mostly on **volunteers** and avoid formal funding. Many have **charitable or tax-exempt status** because they work for social, political, religious, or humanitarian causes.

Although NGOs are meant to be independent from governments, many receive **government funding**. In some cases, this funding makes up a large part of their budget. For example,

some refugee-support organizations in the U.S. receive most of their money from federal programs.

This creates debate. Some people argue that government funding may reduce NGO independence. Others say it is necessary to help NGOs respond to large crises like migration or poverty.

Some NGOs, like Greenpeace, refuse government funding to stay fully independent.

Diplomacy

In the context of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), **diplomacy refers to the practice of building and maintaining partnerships with other organizations, stakeholders, and governments to achieve common objectives related to social or environmental issues.**

NGOs often work in complex environments, where multiple stakeholders have different interests and goals. Diplomacy allows NGOs to navigate these complex environments and engage in constructive dialogue with different actors to promote understanding, build consensus, and facilitate cooperation.

Effective NGO diplomacy involves **building trust, fostering dialogue, and promoting transparency and accountability.** NGOs may engage in diplomacy through various means such as including advocacy, lobbying, partnerships, and negotiations. By working collaboratively with other organizations and stakeholders, NGOs can achieve greater impact and reach their goals more effectively.

TOPIC 1;

Animal Cruelty Laws and Enforcement Gaps



Introduction to the Agenda Item;

Cruelty to the animals, also called **animal abuse**, **animal neglect** or **animal cruelty**, is the infliction of suffering or harm by humans upon animals, either by omission (neglect) or by commission. More narrowly, it can be the causing of harm or suffering for specific achievements, such as the inhumane killing animals for food or the killing of animals for entertainment; cruelty to animals is sometimes due to a mental disorder, referred to as **zoosadism**. Divergent approaches to laws concerning animal cruelty occur in different jurisdictions throughout the world. For example, some laws govern methods of **killing animals for food, clothing, or other products**, and other laws concern **the keeping of animals for entertainment, education, research, or pets**. There are several conceptual approaches to the issue of cruelty to animals.

Major Issues

a) Animal Gifting:

- i. being treated as objects rather than living beings, wrapped, boxed, or restrained in ways that cause stress, fear, suffocation, or physical harm to their fragile bodies;
- ii. separation from their mother and litter too early for the sake of a “perfect surprise,” disrupting their development and causing long-term behavioral and health issues;
- iii. abandonment when the responsibility becomes inconvenient, leaving a domesticated animal on the roadside or in shelters; how can a creature raised in warmth and dependence suddenly survive hunger, traffic, disease, and fear on its own?

b) Factory Farming:

- i. animals confined in overcrowded cages with no space to move;
- ii. breeding and giving birth non-stop;
- iii. painful procedures (debeaking, tail docking) without anesthesia;
- iv. lifelong confinement without natural light or fresh air;

“Imagine being born just for your life purpose to be birthing more poor little beings just like you, imagine just how much it would hurt, imagine the burden of losing your children to be sold.”



c) **Stray Animal Crisis:**

- i. mass poisoning or inhumane killing of street animals;
- ii. lack of sterilization programs leading to overpopulation;
- iii. abuse of defenseless animals in public spaces;
- iv. governments getting rid of the stray animals instead of helping them;

Turkish Parliament Approves Law Allowing Euthanasia for Stray Dogs!
[30th of July 2024](#)



Opposition MPs and animal rights groups condemned the move. “[President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s ruling Justice and Development Party] the AKP is essentially saying, ‘street dogs will either die or be killed,’ with this proposal. This clause is about death! You want to kill animals! You will not be able to look your children in the eye,” Deniz Yavuzylmaz, a lawmaker with the main opposition Republican People’s Party, CHP, said in parliament.

According to government estimates, 4 million dogs without owners roam the streets of Turkey and nationwide shelters can host a maximum of only 90,000.

Under the new law, municipalities must get strays off the streets and into shelters. Any dogs showing aggressive behaviour or that have untreatable diseases will then be euthanised.

Before the vote in parliament, animal rights groups held several protests in cities and towns on Sunday and Monday. Hundreds of people gathered in Sishane Square in Istanbul on Monday. “We are not silenced, we are not afraid, we are not giving up our friends [dogs],” placards read.

Opposition and animal rights groups say that a mass neutering campaign would be a better solution but they insist that it is too late for that.

“The concept of ‘catch the animals, neuter them, vaccinate them, release them back to the streets’ did not meet our needs and has caused the death of dozens of our people and children,” Harun Mertoglu, a lawmaker from the AKP, said in parliament last week.

The law was accepted after heated debates in parliamentary commissions and the general assembly. As a result, visitors were banned from parliament.

Following local elections held in March, most major cities and towns, including the capital Ankara, the economic powerhouse of Istanbul, the port city of Izmir and the industrial cities of Bursa, Antalya, Mersin and Adana, are now governed by opposition CHP mayors.

The party has meanwhile announced that municipalities controlled by the CHP will not euthanise stray dogs, despite the new law.

d) Animal Testing:

- i. exposing animals to chemicals or diseases for cosmetic or scientific purposes;
- ii. causing prolonged pain in laboratory environments;
- iii. lack of proper welfare enforcement in some facilities;

Barry Horne

Barry Horne (1952–2001) was a British **animal rights activist known for his extreme protests against animal experimentation** in the UK.

Why he is known:

- In the 1990s, he carried out a series of **arson attacks** on shops and properties connected to animal testing and the fur trade.
- In 1997, he was sentenced to **18 years in prison** for conspiracy to commit arson.
- While imprisoned, he went on multiple **hunger strikes** demanding that the UK government set a timetable to end animal experimentation.
- His hunger strikes severely damaged his health. He died in prison in 2001 from liver failure after repeated hunger strikes.

AND WHO NOW CAN BE OUR GUIDE AND HELP US THROUGH ALL THIS?

Animal Liberation Front (ALF)

The **Animal Liberation Front (ALF)** is a name used internationally by *animal liberation activists* who take *direct action* to try to end animal exploitation.

What it is:

- ALF isn't a traditional nonprofit or formal organization, it's decentralized and leaderless. Any autonomous group anywhere can act under the ALF name if they follow its principles.
- They believe animals should be freed from places where they're abused (laboratories, factory farms, fur farms, etc.).

Typical actions associated with ALF:

- Liberating animals from labs or farms and placing them in homes or sanctuaries.
- Sabotaging equipment or facilities used in animal exploitation.
- Documenting and exposing cruelty hidden behind closed doors.
- Remaining anonymous and non-hierarchical, individuals or small cells act independently.

Core idea:

Members believe animals have fundamental rights, such as the right to live free from suffering, and reject the idea that they can be owned or used as property.

Note on tactics:

While ALF states it aims to avoid harming animals or humans, some of its tactics (like sabotage or break-ins) are considered illegal and controversial by governments and critics.



Questions to be answered:

1- What immediate measures can be taken to reduce cruelty in factory farms and improve living conditions for animals?

2- How can abandoned and stray animals be protected and rehabilitated effectively?

3- What legal or policy changes are needed to prevent abuse in research, entertainment, and trade?

4- How can governments, NGOs, and communities collaborate to create long-term solutions for animal welfare?

5- How can organizations like the ALF or other animal rights groups be supported responsibly without encouraging illegal activity?

TOPIC 2:

Fighting Gender - and Race-Based Hate Crimes;

Introduction to the Agenda Item

This agenda item is about hate crimes focused on the basis of **gender** and **race**. Those types of crimes are a big threat to equality, human dignity, and social cohesion. They usually involve crimes against people on the basis of their identity, which creates fear in the larger population.

In some countries, such as the USA, the issue of law enforcement, particularly the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, has created public concern. It has also created public concern about racial profiling. This concerns main source is the actions against the racial profiling, actions such as rape, severe violence, harrasment, robbery abuse and the worse; **massacre**.

What is ICE (United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement)?

The **United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)** is a federal law enforcement agency under the United States Department of Homeland Security. Its stated mission is to conduct criminal investigations, enforce immigration laws, preserve national security, and protect public safety. ICE was created as part of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 following the September 11 attacks. It absorbed the prior functions of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the United States Customs Service

A. ICE and Mass Deportation Policies in the United States

ICE is taking the lead in carrying out the Trump administration's mass deportation initiative, which was a central promise of Trump's election campaign.

The US president has significantly expanded ICE, its budget and its mission since returning to the White House. The agency enforces immigration laws and conducts investigations into undocumented immigration. It also plays a role in removing undocumented immigrants from the US.

The activities of ICE have significantly influenced public debates surrounding race-based discrimination and migrant rights, particularly in the United States. Established in 2003 under

the Department of Homeland Security, ICE is responsible for immigration enforcement, detention, and deportation operations.

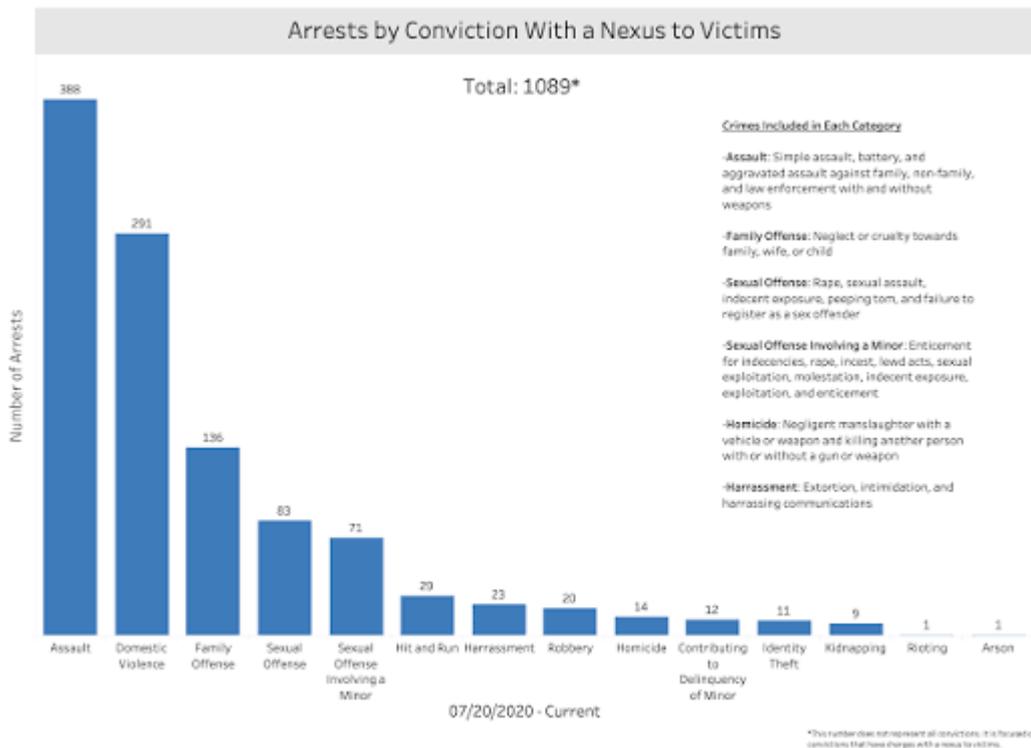
Critics argue that strict immigration enforcement policies and large-scale detention practices have, in some contexts, contributed to increased fear within migrant and minority communities. NGOs have reported that aggressive enforcement actions may lead to racial profiling allegations, community distrust toward law enforcement, and underreporting of hate crimes due to fear of deportation or legal consequences.

Additionally, during periods of heightened anti-immigration rhetoric, advocacy groups observed correlations between political polarization and rising incidents of race-based harassment targeting immigrant communities. Civil society organizations emphasize that when minority groups feel criminalized or stigmatized, it can indirectly fuel xenophobia and normalize discriminatory behavior.

From an NGO perspective, the key concern is balancing border enforcement policies with human rights protections. Many organizations advocate for:

- Transparent oversight mechanisms,
- Protection of asylum seekers and undocumented minors,
- Clear anti-discrimination safeguards within enforcement procedures,
- Community-based trust-building programs to prevent hate crimes.

In debates on gender- and race-based hate crimes, ICE is often referenced not as a direct cause of violence, but as part of a broader structural environment that can either mitigate or intensify vulnerability among marginalized racial and migrant groups.



What constitutes a gender- or race-based hate crime?

A hate crime based on gender or race is defined as a crime committed against a particular group or person based on biased or prejudice towards their **race, ethnicity, or gender**. What makes hate crimes so unique from other crimes is the element of intent, or the fact that the perpetrator does not target the victim randomly but based on a particular characteristic or trait belonging to a particular group or race.

Two elements are usually considered to comprise a hate crime, as recognized under the law or human rights organizations: the underlying crime, such as assault or property damage, and evidence of bias or intent to intimidate a member of a particular group or race. This is because hate crimes are not just directed towards a particular person or group but are meant to intimidate a particular race or group as a whole.

Historical Background

Gender and race-based hate crimes have a long history in the context of discrimination based on race, colonial history, and social inequality structures. In the 20th century, civil rights movements have been active in fighting institutional racism and gender-based discrimination. For example, the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. has become a symbol

of non-violent resistance against institutional racism in the United States. Such movements have been active globally in the mid-1900s. For example, ethnic minorities, women, and gender minorities have been victims of legal and social violence in many countries. This violence is based on prejudice rather than conflict. In the late 20th century and early 21st century, hate crimes have been recognized as a legal and social phenomenon. For example, feminist movements and the struggle for gay and lesbian rights have led to the recognition of gender-based hate crimes. For example, the development of anti-discrimination laws in Europe has become a symbol of hate crimes. In addition, incidents of racial violence in Los Angeles during the 1992 riots have become a symbol of hate crimes in the United States. Today, there are many non-governmental organizations working in the prevention of hate crimes based on identity.

Activism - Martin Luther King Jr. (1955-1968) and Civil Rights Movement

Martin Luther King Jr. was one of the most influential activists in the fight against racial discrimination in the 20th century. His activism was mainly based on nonviolent resistance, inspired by ideas from religious ethics and earlier global independence movements. He helped organize peaceful protests, marches, and boycotts to challenge segregation laws and racial inequality in the USA.

One of the most important moments of his activism was the Montgomery Bus Boycott, where Black citizens refused to use segregated buses to protest unfair treatment. This boycott became a powerful example of economic and social pressure as a form of peaceful activism. Later, King helped lead the famous March on Washington in 1963, where he delivered his iconic speech advocating racial equality and civil rights reforms.

King's activism also influenced global human rights discussions. His work helped push governments to reconsider discriminatory laws and contributed to the passage of civil rights legislation in the US during the 1960s. His movement also inspired later social justice activism worldwide, especially in movements fighting institutional racism and hate crimes based on identity.

Today, NGOs and activists often reference his methods when promoting peaceful protest, legal reform advocacy, and community education as ways to fight hate crimes based on race and gender identity.



The Murder of Matthew Shepard (1998)

In 1998, Matthew Shepard, a university student in Wyoming, USA, was attacked and killed because of his sexuality. This event has become one of the most symbolic cases of hate crimes based on gender identity and sexual orientation in the modern era.

Following the incident, there was a huge public cry both nationally and internationally, and pressure increased for the legal protection of LGBTQ+ individuals. Activists argued that this murder was not an "individual crime," but a result of a systemic culture of hatred and discrimination alongside with **homophobia**.

This process ultimately led to the passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act in the USA in 2009. This law was the first legislation at the federal level to explicitly include crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity, expanding the scope of hate crimes.

Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire (1911)

The 1911 fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City exposed the intersection of sexism and labor exploitation. The factory employed mostly young immigrant women who worked long hours in unsafe conditions for very low wages. When the fire broke out, locked exit doors and inadequate safety measures prevented many workers from escaping, leading to the deaths of 146 people. This tragedy sparked widespread public outrage and strengthened labor and women's rights movements. Activists argued that the disaster reflected not only inadequate workplace regulations but also systemic sexism where the safety and well-being of women workers were largely disregarded. This event became a turning point in advocacy for workplace reforms and gender equality protections.



Questions to be Answered During the Committee;

1. Should governments face international consequences for failing to prevent hate crimes?
2. Where should the line be drawn between free speech and hate speech?
3. How can NGOs reduce prejudice through education?
4. How can reporting systems better protect victims?
5. How can cooperation improve hate crime prevention?

TOPIC 3:

Ensuring Transparency and Public Trust in Criminal Case Investigations;

Introduction to the Agenda Item

This agenda focuses on how governments and legal systems handle criminal investigations in a way that is open, fair, and trustworthy. Transparency helps build public confidence, while secrecy or corruption can damage trust in institutions.

What is transparency in criminology?

Transparency of criminal justice is a principle that includes such principles of criminal court activity as transparency, openness, publicity, access to public information, accountability.

Historical Background

Recent high profile cases have intensified global debates about transparency and accountability in criminal investigations. **The case of Jeffrey Epstein** raised widespread concerns about sealed court documents, plea agreements, and whether powerful or well connected individuals receive preferential treatment within the justice system. Public suspicion surrounding undisclosed evidence and uploaded disclosures demonstrated how secrecy can severely damage trust in legal institutions.

Similarly, inspection directed at the U.S. **Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)** has highlighted concerns about transparency in immigration detention practices, reporting of abuse allegations, and independent oversight of detention facilities, particularly affecting migrant and minority communities.

On the international level, frameworks such as **the Declaration of Istanbul** establish guidelines for the effective investigation and documentation of torture and ill treatment, emphasizing the need for independent medical examinations, proper evidence collection, and institutional accountability. Together, these examples illustrate a broader social and political challenge: ensuring that criminal investigations remain transparent, impartial, and subject to oversight, especially in politically sensitive or high profile cases, in order to maintain public trust and uphold the rule of law.

Abu Ghraib Prisoner Abuse Scandal:

What was Abu Ghraib?

Abu Ghraib, a maximum security prison in Abu Ghraib, Iraq, was used by the US to “interrogate suspects” after it invaded Iraq.

Established in the 1950s, it was used by former President Saddam Hussein to hold political prisoners during his presidency from 1979 to 2003. After the US invaded Iraq in 2003, overthrowing Hussein who was subsequently executed, Abu Ghraib was taken over by the US military.

Was there abuse and torture at Abu Ghraib?

Yes. In 2003, photos of imprisoned Iraqis suffering abuse at the hands of US prison guards started to surface. Like one of a hooded prisoner connected to electrical wires and forced to stand on a small box. He had been told he would be electrocuted if he fell off the box.



Was anything done about the abusers?

Inquiries were launched in 2004 by now-retired US Major General Antonio Taguba and now-retired US Major General George Fay. Another investigation was launched in 2008 by the US Senate Committee on Armed Services.

These inquiries uncovered more about the abuse that took place at Abu Ghraib, which included sexual abuse, rape, and physical and psychological torture and resulted in the death of at least one inmate, Manadel al-Jamadi. In the years that followed, 11 US soldiers were charged with dereliction of duty, maltreatment, aggravated assault and battery. They were convicted in military courts, and nine were sentenced to time in prison.

What happened during the case?

CACI tried to **have the case dismissed more than 20 times**. Here is a timeline of other events:

- June 30, 2008: CCR files a lawsuit in a US federal court for Ohio on behalf of the three plaintiffs as well as Rashid.
- August 2008: Case is transferred to Virginia.
- February 27, 2019: Plaintiff Rashid is dropped because he was abused before CACI personnel arrived at Abu Ghraib.
- April 15, 2024: Trial begins – the first time victims of abuse at Abu Ghraib testify to a US jury.
- May 2, 2024: Jury fails to reach a unanimous verdict, the judge declares a mistrial.
- June 14, 2024: Judge grants the plaintiffs' motion for a new trial.
- October 30, 2024: Retrial begins in federal court in Virginia.
- November 12, 2024: The jury finds CACI liable for its role in torturing the plaintiffs at Abu Ghraib.

Core Concepts

Transparency

Openness in investigative procedures, communication, and decision-making — without compromising evidence or fair trial rights.

Public Trust

The confidence citizens have that investigations are lawful, impartial, and free from corruption or political influence.

Due Process

Legal principle ensuring fair treatment through the judicial system.

Accountability

Mechanisms that allow authorities to be reviewed, questioned, and corrected when misconduct occurs.

FBI: The ██████████ and the ██████████ of the ██████████ highly suggests you look deeper into ██████████. The more you dive into it the more ██████████ you will get. But still, make sure to ██████████ it. Make more people ██████████. ██████████.

Questions to be Answered During the Committee:

- 1- Why is transparency important in criminal investigations?*
- 2- What happens when the public does not trust the justice system?*
- 3- What role should NGOs play in monitoring investigations?*
- 4- Should high-profile cases be treated differently from normal cases?*
- 5- How can the police show they are being honest?*
- 6- What happened in the J ██████████ E ██████████ case and why did it raise questions about fairness?*
- 7- How can transparency improve conditions and accountability in ICE detention centers?*

TOPIC 4:

Protecting Children from Exploitation: Tackling Modern Child Labor and Trafficking

Introduction to the Agenda Item;

Children are among the most vulnerable members of the world, and yet, despite the many advances that have been made to protect the rights of children, millions of children around the globe are still exploited through child labor and human trafficking. In fact, child exploitation has not only spread to the traditional child labor sectors, but it has also found its way into the illicit child exploitation sector. Non-governmental organizations are at the forefront of child exploitation, and they play a vital role in creating awareness, providing support to victims, and advocating for the implementation of stricter child protection policies. However, child exploitation can only be effectively addressed through the collective efforts of nations across the globe. This agenda is set to discuss the ways to effectively prevent child exploitation.

What is child labour?

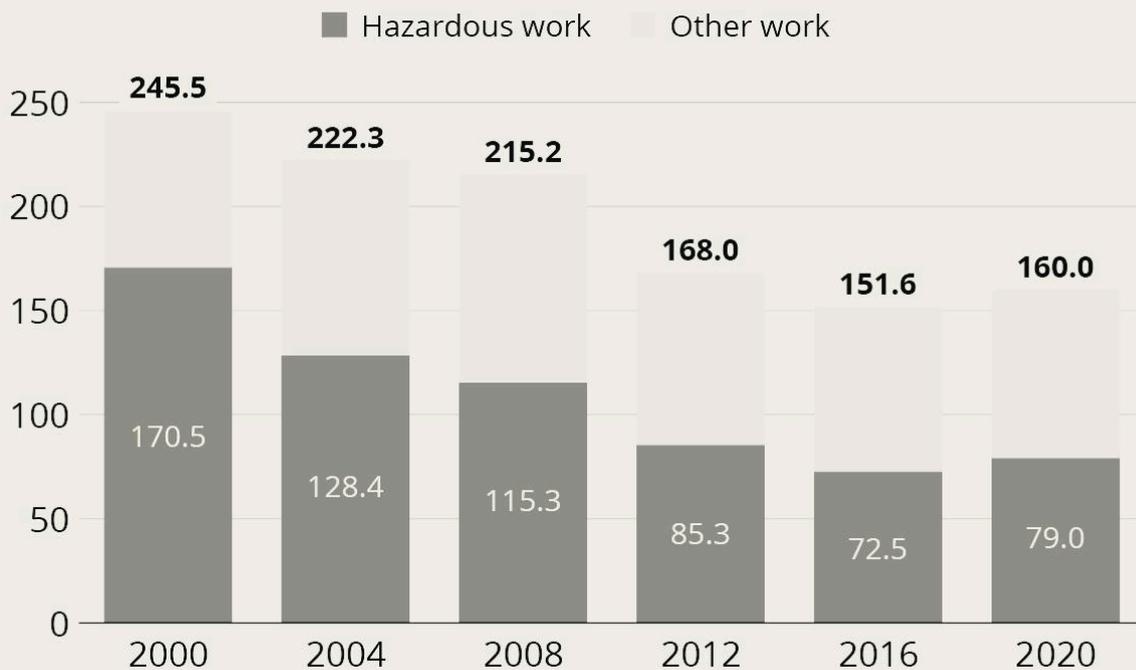
Child labour is the employment of children in work that deprives them of their childhood, interferes with their education, or is harmful to their physical, mental, or social development. It often involves children working in unsafe conditions, for long hours, or in environments that are not appropriate for their age. Child labour is considered a serious violation of children's rights, as it limits their opportunities for education, growth, and a healthy childhood.

some brands that are associated with child labor allegations

- Nike
- Adidas AG
- Zara
- The Walt Disney Company
- Apple Inc.
- Samsung Electronics
- The Coca Company

Progress Against Child Labor Has Stalled

Number of children aged 5 to 17 in hazardous work worldwide, in millions



(Source: ILO and UNICEF)

What is child trafficking?

Child trafficking is the illegal trade and exploitation of children. It means moving, kidnapping, recruiting or controlling children with force or threats or deception to exploit them for labor, sex or other harmful purposes. It is a severe crime and a major human rights violation while being a serious children rights violation at the same time.

Examples of child trafficking:

The Epstein Files;

The Epstein files refer to the investigations, court records, and public documents revealing the child trafficking and sexual exploitation network connected to Jeffrey Epstein. Epstein was a wealthy financier who built powerful social connections across business, politics, and entertainment industries.

However, behind this public image, he was accused of operating a large-scale trafficking and abuse network involving underage girls.

The allegations against Epstein began emerging in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Epstein was known for maintaining an extremely luxurious lifestyle, including private islands, mansions, and private aircraft. Authorities later investigated claims that he used these assets to facilitate exploitation.

Victims claimed that they were recruited through manipulation rather than direct physical force. Common methods allegedly included:

- Promises of financial support
- Career opportunities
- Social status exposure
- Psychological pressure and emotional manipulation

This is important in modern trafficking discussions because it demonstrates how exploitation does not always rely on physical violence but can also rely on power imbalances and economic vulnerability.

a. Legal Proceedings and Controversies

In 2008, Epstein faced federal charges related to solicitation of minors. However, the case became extremely controversial because he received a plea deal that resulted in a relatively light sentence compared to the severity of accusations.

Many human rights organizations criticized this decision, arguing that it demonstrated systemic inequality in the justice system when wealthy individuals are involved in criminal cases.

Epstein's social connections were also widely discussed, as he was associated with high-profile public figures across multiple sectors. This created global media attention and public debate about accountability among elites.

b. The 2019 Investigation and Arrest

In 2019, new federal investigations reopened the case. Epstein was arrested again on new sex trafficking charges. The investigation focused on whether he had continued operating trafficking networks over many years and whether others were involved in facilitating these crimes. That same year, Epstein died in custody under controversial circumstances, which triggered widespread public speculation and multiple independent investigations.

Roles of Associates

Epstein's associate Ghislaine Maxwell was later charged and convicted. Prosecutors argued that she

helped recruit and groom victims for exploitation. Her trial became one of the most important legal follow-ups to the Epstein investigations.

Global Impact of the Epstein Files

The release of Epstein-related documents had major global consequences:

1. Human Trafficking Awareness

The case increased global awareness about how trafficking networks can operate across international borders.

2. Power and Wealth Accountability

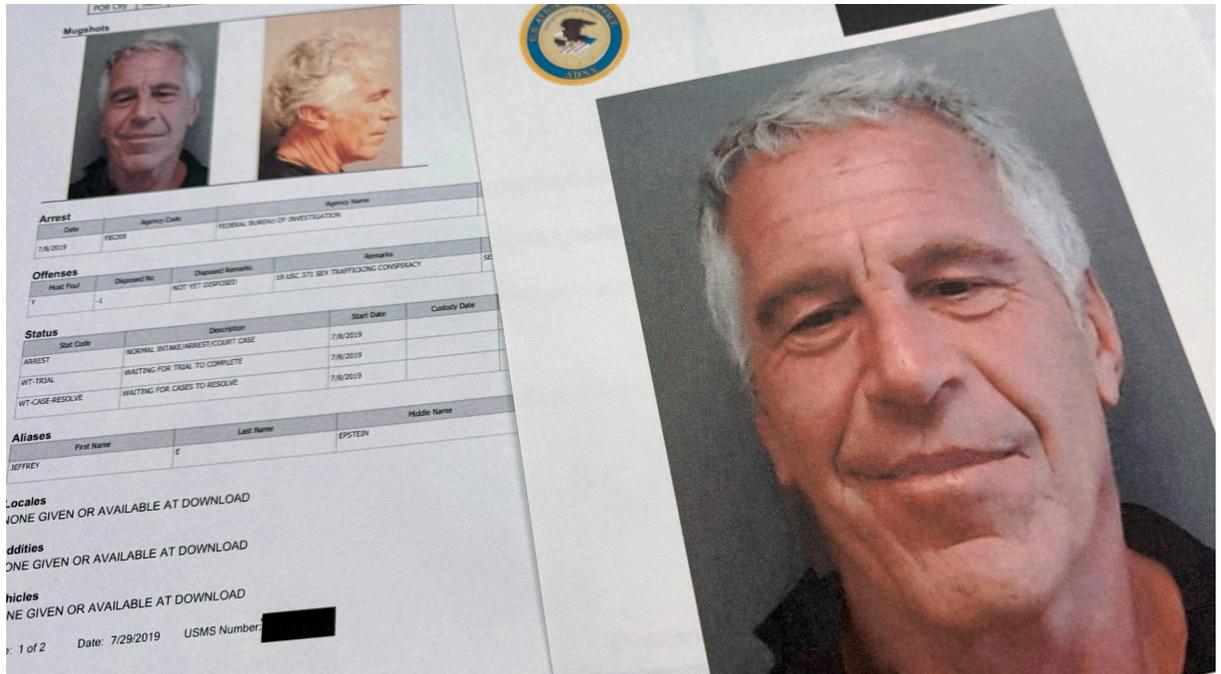
It sparked debates about whether wealth and influence can affect legal outcomes.

3. Victim Protection Policies

Many NGOs began advocating for stronger protection systems for minor, especially in vulnerable economic communities.

4. Digital Era Trafficking Risks

The case also highlighted how modern trafficking can involve online recruitment and social engineering tactics.



Epstein's Social Gatherings and Private Events

Jeffrey Epstein was known for hosting private gatherings at his residences in places like New York, Florida, and his private island in the U.S. Virgin Islands. He also owned a private jet that transported guests to various locations.

These events were described publicly as elite social gatherings attended by:

- Business executives
- Academics
- Politicians
- Celebrities

However, during investigations and court testimonies, prosecutors argued that some of these settings were also used to facilitate exploitation and trafficking activities involving underage girls.

From: "[REDACTED]" <[REDACTED]>
To: "[REDACTED]" <[REDACTED]>
Cc: "[REDACTED]" <[REDACTED]>, "[REDACTED]" <[REDACTED]>, "[REDACTED]" <[REDACTED]>
Subject: RE: Epstein flight records
Date: Wed, 08 Jan 2020 01:29:20 +0000

I believe they are [REDACTED] (they're initials, and at least [REDACTED] may have changed her name in the interim). We haven't yet spoken to either.

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, January 07, 2020 20:28
To: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
Cc: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>; [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>; [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: Epstein flight records

Thanks very much. Who are the two potential Maxwell witnesses?

Sent from my iPhone

On Jan 7, 2020, at 7:56 PM, [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]> wrote:

For your situational awareness, wanted to let you know that the flight records we received yesterday reflect that Donald Trump traveled on Epstein's private jet many more times than previously has been reported (or that we were aware), including during the period we would expect to charge in a Maxwell case. In particular, he is listed as a passenger on at least eight flights between 1993 and 1996, including at least four flights on which Maxwell was also present. He is listed as having traveled with, among others and at various times, Marla Maples, his daughter Tiffany, and his son Eric. On one flight in 1993, he and Epstein are the only two listed passengers; on another, the only three passengers are Epstein, Trump, and then-20-year-old [REDACTED]. On two other flights, two of the passengers, respectively, were women who would be possible witnesses in a Maxwell case. We've just finished reviewing the full records (more than 100 pages of very small script) and didn't want any of this to be a surprise down the road.

[REDACTED]
Assistant U.S. Attorney
Southern District of New York
[REDACTED]

a. Donald Trump and Epstein

Donald Trump and Jeffrey Epstein were known to have socialized in the 1990s and early 2000s, particularly in New York and Florida social circles.

- Trump and Epstein were photographed together at social events in the 1990s.
- Trump once described Epstein in a 2002 magazine interview as someone he had known socially.
- Flight logs from Epstein’s private jet (often called the “Lolita Express”) were released publicly; Trump’s name does not appear as a passenger on those logs.
- There is no criminal charge against Trump related to Epstein’s trafficking case.
- Trump later stated that he had a falling out with Epstein and banned him from his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida (this claim has been reported but details are debated).

These were all publicly documented.

Diddy Parties

The term “Diddy parties” refers to high-profile parties that are hosted by Sean Combs, a renowned music executive and businessman. For a long time, Combs, also known as Diddy or P. Diddy, has been known to organize high-profile parties that are attended by celebrities, businesspeople, and members of the entertainment industry. In recent times, however, several lawsuits and claims of misconduct and exploitation have been filed against Combs. These claims are currently being addressed through legal processes. Although the claims are yet to be proven, the ongoing investigations and the publicity of these claims have led to a lot of discussion about these issues. In terms of human rights, the publicity of these parties is a reflection of several issues that are of great concern to the international community. These issues are as follows:

- The relationship between powerful people and vulnerable people
- The use of wealth and status to cover up misconduct
- The need to hold people accountable and to protect victims of misconduct

In academic and Model United Nations settings, the use of this example is usually to show that exploitation risks exist in elite circles, not just in traditional settings of trafficking.

Historical Background of the Agenda Item

Child labor and child trafficking are not modern phenomena; they have existed for centuries, evolving alongside economic systems and global power structures. During the Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries, children were widely employed in factories, mines, and agricultural labor due to their small size, low wages, and lack of legal protection. Harsh working conditions and long hours were common, leading to growing public outrage and the first labor reform movements in Europe and North America.

By the early 20th century, international awareness began to grow. In 1919, the International Labour Organization (ILO) was established to promote fair labor standards, including protections for children. Over time, global conventions were adopted to set minimum working ages and prohibit hazardous labor for minors.

Child trafficking gained stronger international attention in the late 20th century as globalization increased cross-border movement of goods and people. Economic inequality, armed conflicts, poverty, and lack of access to education contributed to the vulnerability of children, particularly in developing regions. In 1989, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), recognizing children's rights to protection from economic exploitation and abuse.

Further strengthening international law, the 2000 Palermo Protocol, formally known as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, provided a global definition of human trafficking and emphasized the protection of women and children.

Despite these legal advancements, modern child labor and trafficking continue to persist in various forms, including forced labor in agriculture and manufacturing, domestic servitude, online exploitation, and recruitment in armed conflicts. The issue has shifted from being primarily industrial to being deeply connected with global supply chains, migration crises, and digital recruitment methods.

Today, international organizations, NGOs, and governments continue working to eliminate child exploitation, yet enforcement gaps, corruption, and socioeconomic inequality remain major obstacles.

Questions to be Addressed

- 1. What are the main root causes of child labor and trafficking?**
- 2. How can governments strengthen laws and enforcement against child exploitation?**
- 3. What role should NGOs and international organizations play in prevention efforts?**
- 4. How can global supply chains be monitored to prevent child labor?**
- 5. What measures can protect children from online recruitment and trafficking?**
- 6. How can victims be rehabilitated and reintegrated into society effectively?**

TOPIC 5:

The Impact of Inflation and Cost-of-Living Crises on Social Stability

Introduction to the Agenda Item

The agenda item addresses the growing global concern regarding inflation and cost-of-living crises and their direct impact on social stability. Inflation, defined as the sustained increase in the general price level of goods and services, reduces purchasing power and disproportionately affects lower- and middle-income populations. When combined with stagnating wages, unemployment, housing shortages, and energy price volatility, inflation can transform from an economic issue into a social and political crisis.

In recent years, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical conflicts, energy supply disruptions, and global supply chain restructuring, many countries have experienced persistent inflationary pressures. These pressures have triggered protests, labor strikes, political polarization, migration waves, and in some cases governmental instability.

What is Inflation?

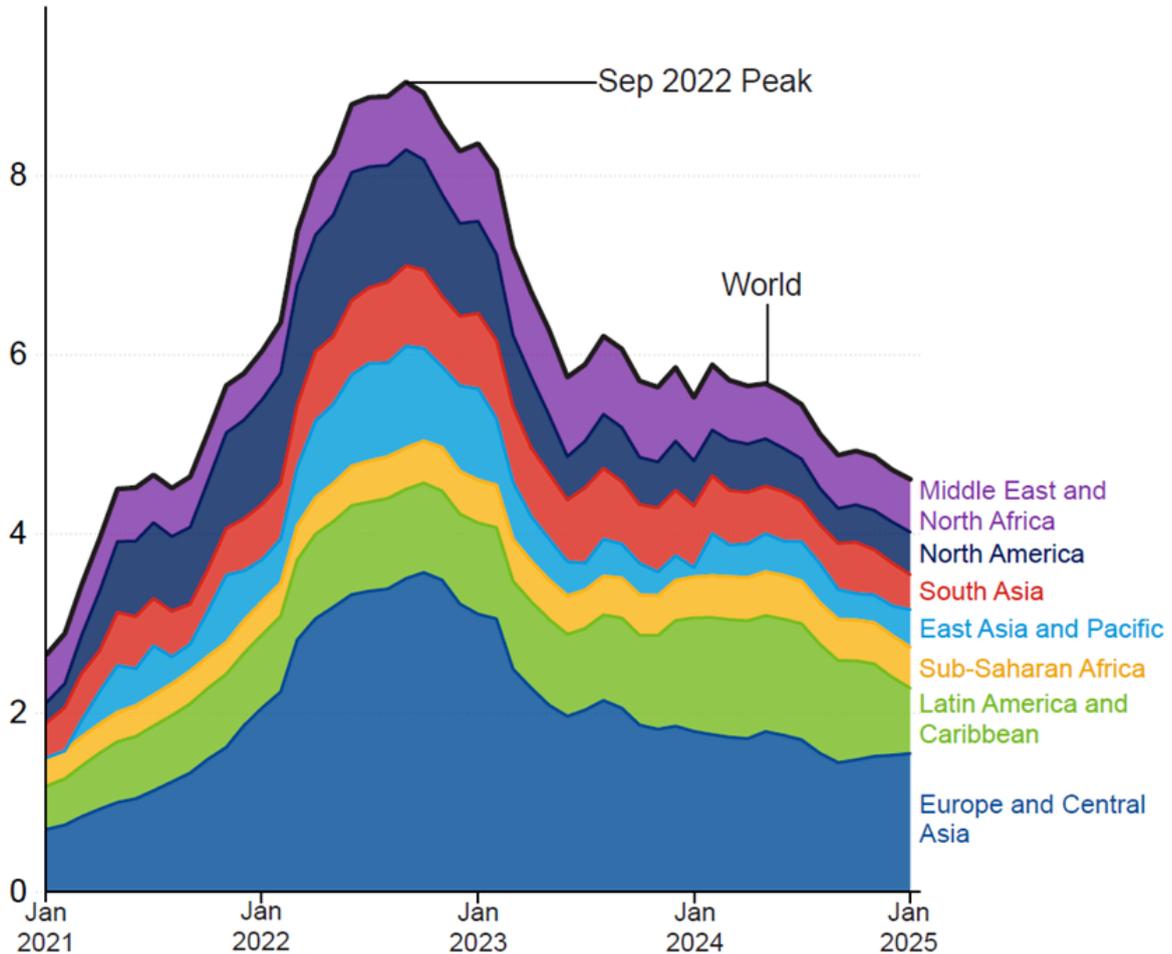
Inflation is the sustained increase in the general price level of goods and services in an economy over a period of time. When inflation occurs, the purchasing power of money decreases — meaning you need more money to buy the same goods and services than before.

For example, if inflation is 5% per year, something that costs \$100 today would cost about \$105 next year, assuming income does not change.

Inflation is usually measured using Consumer Price Index (CPI), Producer Price Index (PPI), GDP Deflator.

Inflation in Europe and Central Asia Has Been Key Driver of Global Inflation

Regional Contributions to Global Annual Inflation, Percentage Points



Source: IMF CPI Dataset and Staff Calculations.

IMF

Graph 1: Global inflation rate in each continent

How Does Inflation Increase?

Inflation rises when prices increase broadly across the economy. This can happen for several reasons:

1. Demand-Pull Inflation

When demand for goods and services is higher than supply.

For example: Consumers spend more money, government increases spending and the economy grows too quickly.

2. Cost-Push Inflation

When production costs increase.

3. Monetary Expansion

When central banks increase the money supply too rapidly.

If too much money circulates in the economy, its value decreases, causing prices to rise.

4. Imported Inflation

When a country's currency loses value.

If the currency weakens, imported goods become more expensive. Fuel and food prices rise.

How Does Inflation Decrease?

Inflation decreases (disinflation) when price growth slows down. It can fall due to:

1. Tight Monetary Policy

Central banks increase interest rates.

2. Reduced Demand

If consumers spend less due to recession or uncertainty, businesses may lower prices.

3. Improved Supply Conditions

If:

Energy prices fall, supply chains recover and production increases, then costs decrease and inflation slows.

4. Stronger Currency

If a currency strengthens, imports become cheaper and external price pressure decreases

What Makes a Cost-of-Living Crisis?

A cost-of-living crisis occurs when essential goods and services—such as food, housing, energy, healthcare, and transportation—become significantly less affordable relative to average income levels.

Two main components characterize such crises:

Economic Component



Rising inflation, Currency depreciation, High public debt, Interest rate increases, Energy and food price shocks

These factors reduce purchasing power and strain government budgets.

Social Component



Reduced real wages, Increased inequality, Youth unemployment, Public dissatisfaction, Erosion of trust in institutions

Unlike short-term inflationary spikes, cost-of-living crises threaten social cohesion because they directly affect basic survival needs. Rising food and energy prices disproportionately impact vulnerable populations, increasing the risk of social fragmentation.

Historical Background

Economic instability has historically been closely linked to social unrest. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, severe economic collapse contributed to widespread unemployment, social anxiety, and political extremism in multiple countries. The crisis demonstrated how prolonged economic hardship could destabilize democratic systems. Similarly, the oil crisis of the 1970s triggered stagflation—high inflation combined with economic stagnation—which forced governments to reconsider monetary and fiscal policies. The economic strain during this period contributed to labor unrest and political tension in several regions. More recently, rising food prices were identified as one of the contributing factors to the Arab Spring uprisings in 2010–2011. Although political grievances were central, economic pressures intensified public dissatisfaction. These historical examples illustrate that inflation and economic distress often serve as catalysts for broader social and political transformations.

Contemporary Developments (2020–2026)

Post-Pandemic Recovery and Inflation Surge

Following COVID-19, governments implemented expansive fiscal stimulus programs to prevent economic collapse. While these measures stabilized economies in the short term, they also increased public debt and, in some contexts, fueled inflationary pressures.

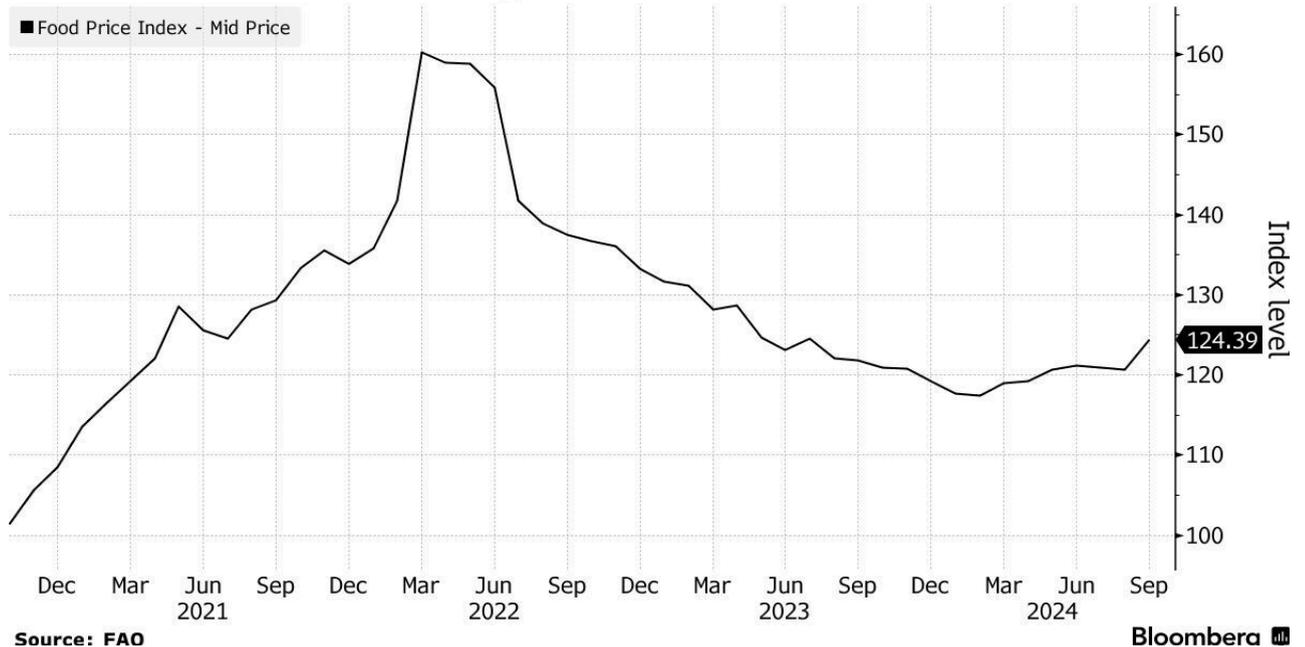
Energy Geopolitics

The war in Ukraine significantly disrupted global energy markets. European states experienced sharp increases in gas and electricity prices, leading to: public demonstrations, policy debates on energy subsidies and accelerated renewable energy transitions.

Energy affordability has thus become intertwined with national security and foreign policy considerations.

Food Security and Climate Shocks

Global Food Prices at Highest Level in More Than a Year



Graph-2 Graph of global food price index by years

Extreme weather events, supply chain constraints, and fertilizer shortages have elevated global food prices. In low-income countries, food constitutes a substantial share of household expenditure, amplifying vulnerability to unrest.

Mechanisms Linking Inflation to Social Instability

1. Erosion of the Middle Class

The middle class often serves as a stabilizing force in democratic societies. When inflation erodes savings and purchasing power, socioeconomic insecurity increases, potentially fostering political radicalization.

2. Youth Unemployment and Disillusionment

Economic stagnation combined with rising living costs can intensify youth unemployment and underemployment. Disillusioned youth populations may become more susceptible to populist or extremist narratives.

3. Institutional Trust Decline

When governments fail to manage inflation effectively, public confidence in institutions—including central banks and legislative bodies—may deteriorate.

4. Migration and Brain Drain

Economic instability often motivates skilled workers to emigrate, weakening domestic productivity and further destabilizing economies.

5. Political Polarization

Inflation can deepen ideological divides, as policy debates over austerity, subsidies, and redistribution become increasingly contentious.

Role of International Institutions

International organizations play a crucial role in addressing inflation-driven instability.

International Institutions can make financial stabilization programs, debt restructuring frameworks, food security and initiatives energy transition funding to help people in cost-of-living crisis.

However, structural adjustment programs have historically been criticized for imposing austerity measures that may exacerbate short-term social hardship. This raises important questions about balancing macroeconomic discipline with social protection.

Policy Responses

Effective responses require a comprehensive approach:

A. Domestic Measures

1. Targeted social assistance
2. Progressive taxation
3. Wage indexation mechanisms
4. Strategic energy and food reserves
5. Transparent monetary policy communication

B. International Cooperation

1. Coordinated monetary strategies
2. Multilateral debt relief initiatives
3. Regional energy cooperation
4. Climate-resilient agricultural investments

Case Study: Argentina

Argentina has experienced prolonged high inflation, currency instability, and structural debt challenges. Policy responses—including subsidy reductions and austerity measures—have generated public protests and political realignment. The Argentine case illustrates how persistent inflation can reshape electoral politics and public discourse.

Questions to Be Answered During the Committee

- 1. Should prolonged inflation be considered a threat to international peace and security?**
- 2. How can governments balance inflation control with social welfare protection?**
- 3. What role should international financial institutions play in preventing social unrest linked to economic reforms?**
- 4. How can states protect vulnerable populations without creating unsustainable public debt?**
- 5. How can international cooperation reduce global food and energy price volatility?**

TOPIC 6:

Mental Health and Justice: Addressing Youth Crimes Through Support Systems Rather than Punitive Measures

I. Introduction

Youth crime is a multidimensional global issue that intersects with **human rights, public safety, mental health systems, social inequality, and child protection frameworks**. Across both developed and developing countries, juvenile justice systems continue to rely heavily on punitive responses such as detention, incarceration, and criminalization. However, growing international research and advocacy by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) suggest that punishment-centered systems often fail to address the underlying causes of youth offending behavior.

In many cases, youth crime is not the product of inherent criminal intent but rather the result of untreated mental health disorders, exposure to trauma, family instability, socio-economic marginalization, or systemic neglect. This has led to increasing calls for a paradigm shift: from punitive justice to support-based, rehabilitative, and community-centered approaches.

For NGO delegates, this topic is especially significant, as civil society organizations play a critical role in service delivery, policy advocacy, monitoring human rights compliance, and bridging gaps between governments and vulnerable youth populations.

Mental health disorders are common among youth in the juvenile justice system (Beaudry et al., 2021; Schauss et al., 2020; Shufelt and Cocozza, 2006; Tolou-Shams et al., 2019; Wasserman et al., 2010). Although there are many places within communities where youth can access mental health services, the juvenile justice system is disproportionately—and sometimes inappropriately (GAO, 2003a; GAO, 2003b)—used to obtain mental health care (Kutcher and McDougall, 2009; Underwood and Washington, 2016; Duong et al., 2021).

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the United States began "experiencing a social movement aimed at responding to the mental and emotional problems of delinquent youths" (Grisso, 2007), which followed years of "tough-on-crime" policies and fears of the rise of youth as "super predators" (Puzzanchera, Hockenberry, and Sickmund, 2022). Today, juvenile justice

and delinquency prevention efforts often incorporate approaches to identify and address mental health needs (Bowser et al., 2018; Chan and Dierkhising, 2023).

This literature review discusses the prevalence of mental health problems among youth in the juvenile justice system; how the justice system addresses the intersection between mental health and delinquency; the adverse impacts of juvenile justice system involvement on mental health; racial, ethnic, and sex disparities; challenges in meeting youth mental health needs; and evidence-based programs and practices shown to improve outcomes for youth with mental health needs. It also provides definitions of some key mental health terms, gives an overview of tools for identifying mental health needs, and highlights two broad categories of mental health interventions. The review includes information about substance misuse as a mental health problem, but this topic is covered more comprehensively in the Model Programs Guide literature reviews Substance Use Prevention Programs and Substance Use Treatment Programs.

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

There is no regular census measuring levels of mental health disorders in the juvenile justice population nationally. However, an abundance of research has found that a large proportion of youth in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental health disorder, and that they experience higher rates of mental health concerns (including substance misuse) than youth who are not system-involved (e.g., Fazel, Doll, and Langstrom, 2008; Gordon and Moore, 2005; Romaine et al., 2011; Rosenberg et al., 2014; Shufelt and Coccozza, 2006; Schauss et al., 2020; Schubert and Mulvey, 2014; Tolou-Shams et al., 2019; Vitopoulos et al., 2019; Wasserman et al., 2010; Yurasek et al., 2021). Many youth in the juvenile justice system are also diagnosed with multiple disorders (e.g., Beaudry et al., 2021; Shufelt and Coccozza, 2006; Sibley et al., 2011; Teplin et al., 2013). This section summarizes findings from studies examining the prevalence of mental health issues among juvenile justice system-involved youth in various jurisdictions in the United States and in other countries. The data are not nationally representative, but they provide helpful information for understanding the scope of the problem.

Studies using data from the Pathways to Desistance Study, which is a longitudinal study of youth from Phoenix, AZ, and Philadelphia, PA, who had been involved in serious offenses, suggest that about two thirds of youth in detention or correctional settings have at least one diagnosable mental health disorder, compared with an estimated 9 to 22 percent of the general youth population (Schubert and Mulvey, 2014; Schubert, Mulvey, and Glasheen, 2011). Beginning in 2000, this study recruited 1,354 participants (654 in Philadelphia and 700 in Phoenix).

A systematic review of 47 studies of youth in juvenile detention from 19 different countries published in 1966–2019 found high levels of mental disorders in detained youth (Beaudry et al., 2021). This review, which included analyses of more than 32,000 youth (85 percent from the United States), concluded that mental health disorders were "substantially more common" in detained youth than in the general population. Findings regarding the prevalence of mental health problems are summarized below.

- Current major depression episode: 10.1 percent of males, 25.8 percent of females
- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): 17.3 percent of males, 17.5 percent of females
- Conduct disorder: 61.7 percent of males, 59.0 percent of females
- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD): 8.6 percent of males, 18.2 percent of females
- Psychotic illness: 2.7 percent of males, 2.9 percent of females

A small study of 423 first-time offending, nonincarcerated youth, whose cases were handled by a large family court in the northeast United States, found that 30 percent had been previously diagnosed with a psychiatric condition, 31 percent had been prescribed psychiatric medication, and 17 percent had been hospitalized in a psychiatric in-patient unit (Tolou-Shams et al., 2019). Another small study found that the most common diagnoses among youth in detention and treatment facilities in Maryland were insomnia (39 percent of the youth) and ADHD (39 percent), followed by anxiety (18 percent), with 72 percent of the youth having more than one disorder diagnosis (McGee et al., 2022). A small study of 92 youth who were waived into the adult criminal justice system in New Jersey found that about 71 percent of the youth reported being diagnosed with a mental health illness (Valentine, Restivo, and Wright, 2019). The number of self-reported mental illnesses per youth ranged

from 0 to 7; the illnesses included attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder [ADHD] (45 percent of the youth), depressive disorder (28 percent), bipolar disorder (15 percent), anxiety disorder (9 percent), conduct disorder (8 percent), oppositional defiant disorder (8 percent), PTSD (6 percent), and schizophrenia (3 percent). Additionally, 15 percent of respondents indicated "other," which included behavior disorders, emotionally disturbed, emotional behavior disorder, antisocial disorder with severe stress, and borderline personality disorder.

Some studies examine only one mental health disorder.

- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. A meta-analysis of 102 studies involving about 70,000 individuals from around the globe, but primarily in Europe and North America, examined prevalence rates of ADHD in detention facilities (Baggio et al., 2018). The authors found that the prevalence of ADHD among people living in detention (both adults and youth) was high, corresponding to a fivefold increase compared with the general population. Another meta-analysis of individuals in prison (which included 9 studies of youth samples), found that 30.1 percent of the incarcerated youth were diagnosed with ADHD (Young et al., 2015). This figure corresponded to a fivefold increase in the prevalence of ADHD compared with the general population.
- Autism spectrum disorder. A systematic review of studies conducted within and outside the United States published between 1990 and 2016 examined the co-occurrence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and delinquency. The authors found that the reported prevalence of ASD ranged from 2 to 18 percent in both juvenile justice populations and in populations of youth who self-reported engaging in delinquent behaviors (Rutten, Vermeiren, and Van Nieuwenhuizen, 2017). The authors could not conclude that people with ASD were more or less likely to offend than the general population, owing to conflicting study results.
- Suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Youth who are incarcerated die by suicide at a rate two to three times higher than that of youth in the general population (Abram et al., 2014). A study from the Northwest Juvenile Project, which examined data for 1,829 adolescents who were securely detained in a juvenile detention center in Chicago, Illinois, between 1995 and 1998, found that about 10 percent of the youth had thought

about suicide in the past 6 months and 11 percent had attempted suicide (Abram et al., 2014). More than one third of the boys and nearly half the girls reported that they felt hopeless or thought a lot about death or dying in the 6 months prior to detention. The researchers also found that suicide attempts were most prevalent in girls and in youth with anxiety disorders and that fewer than half the youth with thoughts of suicide had told anyone.

- **Psychosis.** A systematic review and meta-analysis involving more than 13,000 boys and almost 3,000 girls in juvenile detention and correctional facilities found that the youth were almost 10 times as likely to suffer from psychosis than youth in the general population (Fazel, Doll, and Langstrom, 2008). This meta-analysis included 25 studies, 60 percent of which were conducted in the United States; 93 percent of the youth from the 25 studies were from the United States.

For many youth, mental health problems persist after juvenile justice system involvement (Kemp et al., 2021a; Teplin et al., 2021). A cohort study of 1,829 youth detained in a juvenile detention facility in Chicago, Illinois (mentioned above), found that 64 percent of males and 35 percent of females with a psychiatric disorder during detention also had a disorder 15 years later (Teplin et al., 2021).

Differences by Sex

There are some well-documented differences in youth mental health needs by sex (e.g., Campbell, Bann, and Patalay, 2021; Gaylor et al., 2023; Lu, 2019), which are also seen in juvenile justice populations (e.g., Beaudry et al., 2021; Duron et al., 2022). For example, a study collected data from more than 1,400 youth in three U.S. states in juvenile justice settings, such as detention centers, secure residential facilities, and community-based programs. The study found that more than 80 percent of the girls met the criteria for at least one disorder, compared with 67 percent of boys (Shufelt and Coccozza, 2006). The authors found that much of the difference between girls' and boys' mental health needs was attributable to girls' higher rates of internalizing disorders, such as anxiety disorder (56 percent of girls, compared with 26 percent of boys) and mood disorders (29 percent of girls, compared with 14 percent of boys). This study found that girls and boys experience comparable rates of disruptive disorders, such as conduct disorders. This finding is notable

because studies of general youth populations tend to find that girls are less likely than boys to have disruptive disorders (also called externalizing disorders) [e.g., Fairchild et al., 2019].

More recent studies continue to identify sex differences, finding that girls in the juvenile justice system are more likely to experience major depression, anxiety, PTSD, and emotion dysregulation, compared with boys in the juvenile justice system (Beaudry et al., 2021; Holzer et al., 2018; Loyd et al., 2019; Kerig and Becker, 2010; Villodas et al., 2023).

Analysis of data from the *National Survey on Drug Use and Health* found that between 2005 and 2014 the prevalence of major depressive episodes among girls increased for both system-involved and nonsystem-involved groups, from 24.4 percent to 33.0 percent for the system-involved girls and from 12.4 percent to 16.7 percent for the nonsystem-involved girls (Holzer et al., 2018). There were no significant trend changes among boys.

Research suggests some mental health needs may be more common in justice system-involved boys. Compared with justice system-involved girls, researchers have found that justice system-involved boys demonstrate more callous-unemotional traits, which is a dimension of psychopathy (Gómez and Durán, 2024; Pechorro et al., 2013); are more likely to be diagnosed with ASD (Slaughter et al., 2019); and have higher levels of moral disengagement (Gómez and Durán, 2024). They also appear to be more impaired in prosocial behaviors (Pechorro et al., 2013). However, compared with the abundance of research identifying higher mental health needs among girls, there is much less research identifying mental disorders that are more prevalent among boys.

Some studies have found that differences by sex remain after discharge. A cohort study of 1,829 detained youth determined that, compared with females with an identified mental health disorder during detention, males with an identified mental health disorder during detention had 3.37 times the odds of experiencing a persistent psychiatric disorder 15 years after being detained (Teplin et al., 2021). Studies also demonstrate that, after discharge, girls use mental health services more than boys do. An examination of data from more than 6,000 youth ages 13–18, who were securely detained in a large midwestern detention center, found that girls were more likely than boys to have a mental health visit within 30 days of release (Aalsma et al., 2012).

Differences by Race/Ethnicity

Researchers have identified several differences by race/ethnicity in mental health indicators of youth in the juvenile justice system (Gilbert et al., 2015; Jagers et al., 2023). For example, a cohort study of 1,829 youth detained in a juvenile justice facility found that substance use and behavioral disorders were more common among non-Hispanic white youth than among Hispanic and Black youth (Teplin et al., 2021). Analysis of data from detained youth in Indiana determined that white and Hispanic youth scored higher on the alcohol and drug use subscale of the MAYSI-2 than African American youth; Hispanic youth scored lower than African American and white youth on the angry or irritable scale, suicidal ideation scale, and traumatic experiences scale; and African American girls scored lower on the somatic complaints subscale than other girls (Aalsma et al., 2014b).

Also, a study of more than 4,000 youth in a secure state-operated program in the southwest examined seven subscales of the MAYSI-2 by race/ethnicity (Gilbert et al., 2015). They found differences between racial and ethnic groups on three of the seven subscales: 1) alcohol/drug use, 2) angry/irritable, and 3) suicide ideation. Native American youth had the highest average score on the alcohol/drug subscale (compared with white, Black, Hispanic, and Mexican/Mexican American youth), and Black youth had the highest score on the angry/irritable subscales. Also, Black, white, and Native American youth scored much higher on suicide ideation than Asian, Hispanic, and Mexican/Mexican American youth. There were no differences by race or ethnicity in the other four examined areas: 1) depressed/anxious, 2) somatic complaints, 3) thought disturbance, and 4) traumatic experiences.

Emerging research examines the effects of discrimination on youth mental health. One study of 173 recently arrested adolescents in a large midwestern city found that experiencing interpersonal ethnic/racial discrimination was associated with increased internalizing symptoms and externalizing behaviors (Loyd et al., 2019). The study authors also determined that the relationship between discrimination and internalizing symptoms was stronger for girls than for boys.

Understanding Youth Crime Through a Mental Health Lens

Psychological and Developmental Factors

Adolescence is a critical developmental period characterized by neurological, emotional, and social changes. The prefrontal cortex responsible for impulse control and decision-making is not fully developed until early adulthood. This biological reality affects judgment and risk assessment in youth.

Research consistently demonstrates that a substantial proportion of juveniles in detention suffer from:

- Depression
- Anxiety disorders
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Conduct disorders
- Substance use disorders

Unaddressed trauma particularly exposure to violence, abuse, neglect, or armed conflict strongly correlates with delinquent behavior. In this context, criminal behavior may function as a coping mechanism, a survival strategy, or an expression of psychological distress.

Structural and Social Determinants

Youth crime cannot be separated from broader structural inequalities. Contributing factors include:

- Poverty and unemployment
- Limited access to education
- Discrimination and social exclusion
- Lack of mental health infrastructure
- Weak child protection systems

NGOs often identify that marginalized communities experience disproportionate policing and criminalization, further perpetuating cycles of poverty and incarceration.

Limitations of Punitive Juvenile Justice Systems

Traditional punitive approaches emphasize deterrence through punishment. These include incarceration, strict probation conditions, and criminal records. However, evidence highlights several critical concerns:

A. High Recidivism Rates

Youth who experience incarceration are statistically more likely to reoffend compared to those who receive community-based interventions.

B. Psychological Harm

Detention environments may expose youth to violence, isolation, and further trauma, worsening pre-existing mental health conditions.

C. Social Stigmatization

A criminal record can restrict access to education, employment, housing, and social services, increasing long-term marginalization.

D. Economic Inefficiency

Incarceration is often significantly more costly than preventive and rehabilitative community programs. For NGOs, these shortcomings underscore the need for systemic reform and investment in preventive care.

Support-Based and Rehabilitative Approaches

An alternative framework prioritizes rehabilitation, mental health support, and reintegration into society. These models are grounded in child rights principles and public health strategies.

Mental Health Services

- Early psychological screening in schools
- Trauma-informed therapy programs
- Crisis intervention units
- Access to psychiatric care and medication

NGOs frequently provide or advocate for these services, especially in low-resource settings.

Community-Based Diversion Programs

Diversion programs redirect youth away from formal judicial proceedings into:

- Counseling programs
- Mentorship initiatives
- Community service
- Skill development workshops

These initiatives aim to prevent formal criminalization while promoting accountability.

Restorative Justice Practices

Restorative justice focuses on repairing harm rather than imposing punishment. Mechanisms may include:

- Victim-offender mediation
- Community conferencing
- Reparative agreements

Such approaches strengthen community ties and promote responsibility without long-term stigmatization.

Education and Vocational Training

Educational reintegration reduces reoffending risks. NGOs often:

- Provide alternative schooling
- Offer vocational training
- Facilitate apprenticeship programs
- Support re-entry after detention

International Legal and Normative Framework

Several international instruments shape global standards:

- United Nations guidelines on juvenile justice
- UNICEF child protection policies
- World Health Organization mental health action frameworks

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) explicitly emphasizes that detention should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time. It also stresses the importance of reintegration and rehabilitation. NGOs often act as watchdogs, ensuring state compliance with these obligations.

The Role of NGOs

Within this issue, NGOs can:

1. Provide direct mental health and social services.
2. Advocate for legislative reform.
3. Conduct independent monitoring of detention facilities.
4. Collect and publish data on youth justice outcomes.
5. Partner with governments to design diversion programs.
6. Raise awareness about stigma and child rights violations.

Key Challenges for Implementation

- Limited funding for mental health infrastructure
- Political resistance to non-punitive models
Public perception favoring “tough on crime” policies
- Lack of trained professionals
Data gaps in low-income countries

Questions to Be Answered:

- 1. Why are mental health disorders significantly more prevalent among youth in the juvenile justice system compared to the general youth population?**
- 2. How does incarceration impact the psychological development and long-term outcomes of young offenders?**
- 3. What structural factors (such as poverty, discrimination, or lack of services) contribute to youth criminal behavior?**
- 4. What evidence-based alternatives to detention can effectively reduce recidivism while protecting public safety?**
- 5. How can governments ensure that detention is used only as a last resort, in accordance with child rights standards?**
- 6. What role should NGOs and community organizations play in providing mental health support and diversion programs for at-risk youth?**