



ARIZONA MODEL UNITED NATIONS ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT 2002 RESEARCH GUIDE

The League of Arab States is a regional intergovernmental organization comprised of 22 Arab states that spans from the western end of Mauritania to the eastern tip of Oman. It is headquartered in Cairo, Egypt. Through subsidiary bodies such as Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization and the Council of Arab Economic Unity, the League works to strengthen bonds between Arab countries, coordinate cooperative programs, set out a common agenda, and settle disputes. The Council of the Arab League, on which each member state has one vote, serves as the secretariat of the organization; its presidency rotates periodically between member states. While the Council's decisions are reached by majority vote, these decisions are only binding to member states who voted in the affirmative.

EXIGENCY

The March 2002 Summit of the League of Arab States has been called principally in order to coordinate action on the question of Palestine. Annex I of the Charter of the League of Arab States affirms Palestine's sovereignty, autonomy, and independence. As a result, its stance towards Israel, which occupies Palestine, has been exceptionally hostile. The 1967 Arab League Summit set out a general policy stance in the Khartoum resolution regarding the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This stance has come to be known as "The Three No's": no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiations with it. For the purposes of this summit, delegates will be expected to prepare position papers on two topics: first, the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and the Second Intifada; and second, Addressing the September 11 Attacks in the United States.

BACKGROUND: ARAB-ISRAELI RELATIONS

Since the enactment of the Khartoum Resolution 35 years ago, a number of major events have shaped Arab-Israeli relations. First, Israel defeated Egypt in the Six Day War. In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon, a League member state, in order to put down Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) forces attacking from outposts on its southern border. In the course of this invasion, thousands of Palestinians and Lebanese Shi'ites were murdered by Lebanese-Christian Phalangists in Beirut's Sabra and Shatila refugee camps; the Israeli Defense Force failed to intervene in these massacres.

Five years later, in 1987, a Palestinian intifada, or uprising, launched with a traffic accident in which a military vehicle killed four Palestinians in Gaza. The intifada was a mostly peaceful mass

movement of boycotts, general strikes, and other forms of civil resistance, and the Palestinian people clearly showed their resolve against the Israeli occupiers. When the PLO proclaimed the State of Palestine in 1988, the Arab League immediately recognized it. This uprising ended in an agreement between the PLO and the Israeli government. The Oslo Accords, as the agreement was known, delegated some administrative duties to the PLO and thus provided Palestine with limited autonomy. However, the League played no visible role in these important negotiations.

The League's policy of disengagement has come into question in recent times. In 1978, the U.S. brokered a peace deal between Egypt and Israel at Camp David in Maryland. The consequences of the Camp David Accords included violations of all three "no's": Egypt made peace, normalized relations, and negotiated with Israel in order to ensure greater autonomy for Palestinians. In this way, the Oslo Accords represent a logical continuation of the progress made at Camp David. Yet it also represents a major failure for the League, which had no part in it. In fact, because Egypt broke with the Khartoum Resolution, it was promptly ejected from the League. This suspension lasted an entire decade, and isolated one of the Arab world's major powers.

PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE

Since September 2000, Palestinians have been engaged in mass resistance against the Israelis in what some are calling the "Second Intifada." Countless acts of violence on both sides have been committed since Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount, prompting outrage and protests. Everyday life in Israel and Palestine has come to be characterized by disruption, particularly civil resistance and rioting. As competing acts of violence fuel hatred and yet more violence, the situation in Israel-Palestine has become untenable. In these turbulent time, some have argued that Palestinian safety, wellbeing, and prosperity are as much the concern of the League as sovereignty. For that reason, some member states have been coming out with proposals for new ways of approaching Israel in preparation for the conference.

When delegates from League of Arab States convene for the Beirut Summit on 27-28 March 2002, they will have to consider the severity and urgency of Palestinians' present predicament. Delegates should consider not only whether to change the League's engagement policy, but indeed, the extent of relations they would find appropriate and the terms of these relations. Events that have shaped relations between member states and Israel, geopolitical commitments, and internal politics will play decisive roles in determining how each state approaches the prospect of change.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What sorts of strategic relations form the basis for your country's support for Palestine?
2. Where did your country stand on the Oslo Accords and Egypt's participation? What kind of engagement policy, if any, may be tolerable for your country?
3. How can your country in particular, and the Arab League in general, work to ease Israeli restrictions on Palestinian economic, geographic, and political autonomy?

ON THE QUESTION OF ARAB-U.S. RELATIONS

In addition to Israel-Palestine, delegates will discuss relations with the United States, a key ally of Israel—but also of many League member states. The terrorist attacks perpetrated on September 11, 2001, prompted the United States to invade Afghanistan; while Afghanistan is not a member state, it is an ally of many League members and a growing source of instability in the region. In a recent speech, U.S. President George W. Bush identified member state Iraq as part of an “axis of evil,” and implied that military action may be necessary to tame this so-called axis. This constellation of events has put many member states in an awkward position: while cooperation with the U.S. is a crucial part of some states’ economic life and national security, it is becoming increasingly belligerent. At the same time, U.S. support is crucial if any gains are to be made for the Palestinian people. Delegates’ approaches should be informed by this delicate tango.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

4. What relationship does your country have with the United States? How might difficulties in relations affect your economy and political stability?
5. What mechanisms of international security cooperation exist between your country and the United States? Does the U.S. operate so-called CIA black sites, military bases, or other security/intelligence machinery from your territory? How might this be used as leverage?
6. What is your country’s stance on the strain of extreme right wing ideology that is behind the 9/11 attacks?

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