



The question of the increasing global restriction of civil liberties

Civil liberties can be defined as the freedoms given to individuals within a population to only be subject to laws that have been established for the good of the community, especially with regard to freedom of action and speech. As global tensions flare, it is oftentimes common policy to cut back on the amount of liberty given to a certain population and this can indeed be seen across the globe currently. Even internal populations that form a minority of a multicultural country are persecuted and not given the same civil liberties and freedoms that the rest of the population enjoys.

The UN charter clearly outlines what our human rights are, yet they are repeatedly ignored and seemingly overruled by certain governments and organisations. This practice can be seen across society, whether it be the exploitation of workers in Indonesia or the persecution of the Uighur Muslims within China. In these instances, alongside countless others, the civil liberties and human rights of those involved have been entirely overlooked, yet this continues to be extremely common, especially in the less developed nations.

It should not be stated that this global trend is only in action on the other side of the planet. In the United Kingdom, we have seen the rise of the far-right and ‘identity politics’, which has brought into question our own freedom of speech laws. Various right-of-centre activists haven’t been allowed to give talks at lecture theatres or on university campuses, purely on the backlash that subsequently followed when their lecture was announced. This is commonplace on university campuses within the United States, with examples including conservative commentator Ben Shapiro, who required hundreds of police officers to protect him from protesters that were angered by his ideology and presence on their campus.

The website ‘freedomhouse.org’ reported that in 2018, 68 countries suffered a net decline in political rights and civil liberties, whilst only 50 registered gains. If we begin to unpack this trend, it becomes clear that the rise of extremist politics and indeed a lack of trust in our democratic institutions have played a huge part in this phenomenon. The countries of Hungary and Serbia have been notable in their decline, partially due to their location within Europe, as they were registered as ‘Entirely Free’ in 2005 when the previous consensus was taken but have now become only ‘Partially Free’. And, outside of Europe the situation is not much better.

Unfortunately, it doesn’t seem that the United Nations is doing very much to combat this trend. Civil liberties are gradually being eroded across the globe, and this is a problem that is being entirely overlooked by the media due to their intense coverage of the climate emergency and other major issues. Therefore, it is for you as delegates to combat this problem with your own innovative ideas and solutions.

Points to consider:

- How can the United Nations collectively combat and tackle the causes of the global increase in the restriction of civil liberties?



- What measures can be put into place to make sure that these liberties are not further infringed upon in the future?
- What are the root causes for this global trend in the restriction of these civil liberties?
- How can the United Nations help to heal the damage done by the restriction of civil liberties in certain countries?
- What potential punishments should be put into place for countries that have witnessed this decline in their population's civil liberties?

Helpful websites:

- <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2019>
- <https://www.humanium.org/en/fundamental-rights/freedom/restrictions/>
- https://www.venice.coe.int/SACJF/2006_08_MOZ%20Maputo/Hamilton_delicate_balance.htm
- <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17549507.2018.1392612>

Main Nations Involved:

- USA
- UK
- North Korea
- Senegal, Nigeria and Uganda
- Ukraine
- Pakistan

Key Documents:

- The 1st Amendment to the United States Constitution.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19 especially).
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- Human Rights Act (UK – Article 10 especially).