

# SOCHUM

GENDER  
RESTRICTIONS  
IN MILITARY  
COMBAT

ANDREA  
PALACIOS

NEWMUN



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## **Letter from the Secretary-General**

Dear Delegates,

It is with immense pleasure that I welcome you to Newton College Model United Nations 2023. My name is Anika Sahoo, and as the acting Secretary-General, I am grateful for the opportunity to host such a large-scale conference in the grounds of our school after 3 years persevering in the virtual setting. Alongside the organisers of the conference, I look forward to being presented with our world's future leaders in this year's edition by witnessing what I am certain will be worthwhile debate and convincing resolutions.

To catch you up to speed, my MUN journey began back in 2018 when I joined the very first session of the club. Although I was a naive and inexperienced 10-year-old at the time, I was intrigued by how middle/high-schoolers would simulate the process used by the United Nations to deal with international conflicts. Hence, just a few weeks later, I became an usher for NewMUN 2018, where I found myself enthralled by the discussions that took place amongst the delegates. Soon enough, I was attending conferences as a delegate myself, directly involved amid all the fruitful and fierce debate. While I had the opportunity to explore my skills in various committee types, my interests aligned towards humanitarian topics, resulting in my curiosity for the UN WOMEN committee. Until now, I never let an opportunity pass where I can express my opinions regarding women's rights causes.

While I greatly value the skills and confidence I obtained from my participation in conferences, MUN has provided me with unforgettable experiences and everlasting friendships. During my first years, I was blessed with the opportunity to befriend ex-Secretariat members who shaped me into the person I am today. Nowadays, being in the position they once held has allowed me to feel the same pride they felt towards their mentees every time they overcame a new fear, unlocked a new skill, or were overjoyed with their performance in a conference. Being a Secretary-General is not a position I take lightly, as I strive to make every single session within our delegation memorable, just as I strive to make this conference for you, delegates and faculty members.

For some of you, NewMUN 2023 will be your first conference. For others, your last. Regardless of where you are in your MUN journey, I would like to remind you to continue challenging yourself. Overcome any obstacles you are currently facing. Set yourself goals no matter how far you might have come. Strive to become more self-assured while maintaining yourself kind and humble. On behalf of all NewMUN 2023 organisers, we look forward to seeing your participation in the conference!

Best of luck,

Anika Sahoo

Secretary-General of NewMUN 2023

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## **Letter from the Committee Director**

Hello delegates!

My name is Andrea Palacios and this year I will be your director for the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) for this edition of NEWMUN 2023. My Model UN experience began back in 2018, with the founding of the MUN team of my school: Liceo Naval Almirante Guise. After graduating, I continued debating with my actual team: Peruvian Debate Society (PDS), which I became a member of in 2020. As a PDS delegate, I have had the opportunity to participate in national conferences ---such as PUCPMUN 2020--- and international conferences ---such as Harvard National Model United Nations Latin America (HNMUNLA) 2021; and Harvard National Model United Nations (HNMUN) 2021 and 2022.

Regarding my experience as director, I have had the opportunity of directing many General Assemblies (such as DISEC or HGA). However this is my first time directing a SOCHUM, which I find truly amazing, since I received my first international awards at a SOCHUM committee in both the Ivy League Model United Nations Conferences (ILMUNC) in Philadelphia; and the North American Invitational Model United Nations (NAIMUN) at Washington D.C.

Aside from MUN, I'm a second-year law student at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP) where I have found interest in the areas of Public International Law and Gender and Law. I consider myself a feminist and a very passionate activist for gender and reproductive rights, as well as the LGBTQ+ community. In fact, recently I have been elected as Student Representative regarding Gender Affairs.

Thus, I expect a lot of passion in speeches and a good amount of research regarding our topic "Gender Restrictions in Military Combat", as the importance of this topic requires. Moreover, I anticipate a lot of argumentation and negotiation during the committee, don't be afraid to criticise ideas/proposals from other delegates or engage in constructive confrontation, since I gladly prefer contentious debate (as a former DISEC delegate). Nevertheless, do not let that confrontation transform into disrespect and lack of diplomacy. It is possible to have an aggressive debate style and maintain utmost diplomacy.

See you in April!

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## **History of the Committee**

The General Assembly of the United Nations is tasked with many human rights issues through resolutions and declarations meant to lay foundations for further (usually legal) actions, such as treaties and conventions. Its Third Committee was created to help the General Assembly perform its given duties in the second session of the General Assembly in 1947, and is called the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM). The memberships of the SOCHUM committee include all the Member States of the United Nations' General Assembly, therefore, 193 countries are part of it. Additionally, non-member states and other recognized entities by the United Nations may attend and participate, however, these observer members do not have voting rights when it comes to resolutions and reports.



The Third Committee is in session simultaneously with the General Assembly. It accepts reports from Special Rapporteurs, Special Representatives, Working Groups, and other Special Procedures as well as from the Human Rights Council. Since its creation in 2009, the Human Rights Council has been a main partner for SOCHUM. The Contracting States can apply themselves as “sponsors” to certain topics that are debated by the Commission. SOCHUM may draft resolutions which will then be presented to the General Assembly for adoption. In fact, it has become one of the most important organs of the UN that deals with social aspects such as refugees, overpopulations, prostitution, and social welfare.

The Third Committee is currently dealing with the following issues: protection of child's rights, elimination of racial discrimination, the right to self determination, and women's rights. Its reports and draft resolutions are important to the General Assembly because it can affect whether action is taken when peace is jeopardised and the Security Council has been inhibited by a permanent member's negative vote. The Third Committee can make recommendations and begin research on areas in which social and humanitarian issues are affected.

## **Introduction to the Topic**

Ever since the moment they are born, women are trapped in a cage, in which so many decisions of their life are already determined purely based on the sex that they are born with. In some cases, these restrictions are even more limited when we take into consideration the culture, religion and beliefs of these women's birthplace. Nonetheless, throughout history, women have faced and fought for a variety of gender injustices that have affected their lives.

Although in most countries women are no longer restrained from joining the Army, their participation in military combat remains in extremely low numbers. As of 2020, it was reported that females only participate in 16% of activities in the U.S. military force, showing that the issue is not entirely solved. These numbers decrease to as low as 3% when we take into



consideration the beliefs and ideologies of more varied, conservative countries. Furthermore, according to ForeverWingman, the military branch with the most female participation is the Army, yet the Army and Navy have the highest numbers of sexual assault cases reported in 2023 by the Department of Defense. Evidently, sexual assault cases for women in the military continues to increase. In a branch with very low numbers of female participation as only 27% in the Army, it can be a very dangerous environment for female soldiers to work in.

As women fight and demand for justice to be made and for change to come through, we see the involvement of women increases throughout the years, creating revolutionary change on military combat. "The region's erstwhile police force noticed that things were different when she—the only woman present—joined police and Army patrols," state Rachel Grime's colleagues. Rachel Grimes is an officer in the British Army serving in Northern Ireland. They noticed a significant change in the locals' behavior, recalling how women and children that were victims of rape would be gathered on the surroundings of their villages after being cast out from their own community. Therefore, having female officers with those women creates a sense of comfort around them. The participation of women in the Army is crucial, breaking stereotypes and leading women's growth and power.

During these past decades, military combat has made progressive change in order to implement more gender equity in the Army force. Recent statistics about military combat regarding the underrepresentation of women display the restriction women suffer when it comes to military opportunities. This is shown by the fact that there has never been a female member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff or a female Secretary of Defence. An issue that women face in the Army is the difficulty to

maintain a family whilst in combat, forcing many female soldiers to leave their jobs. Addressing these barriers creating gender inequity is the way to make a change. Since the lack of women in senior ranks represents the difficulties women face when returning to their careers after having children, giving voices to these women who have served in the Army is crucial to spread their experience and inspire others.

## **History of the Topic**

During the 1775 American Revolutionary War, women were documented to serve in the Army in multiple different ways, yet none of those were fighting in the battlefield. Traditionally they only served as nurses, cooks or even spies. Since many of the battles occurred in fields or farms, women had a major role in documenting enemy movement and transporting messages. As time passed, women had started to disguise themselves in order to serve in combat or could only fight accompanied by their husband. More than 170 years later, the official legislation allowing women to finally combat in the Army passed in the year 1948. Although as mentioned previously women have had roles working in the military before and as far as hundreds of women served in the First and Second World War and many others.

The history of military combat being more and more accessible for women to be able to participate in wasn't short or fast at all. Most of the legislation allowing female participation in military branches came once every decade. As women were only able to start going to military service academies in the 1970s. Ultimately, it took two decades to allow women to fly in combat and fight on navy ships in the 1990s. In the year 2013, Defense Secretary Panetta lifted the Defense Department's ban on the participation of women in ground combat. Revoking former 1994 Pentagon's rule to restrict women from military combat. Two years later Secretary of Defense Carter directed the women's integration to the armed forces which allowed women to participate in any military specialty if qualified, in America. But, a striking issue for the integration of women in the military globally are their low pass rates. It's said that only after Barack Obama was president from 2009 to 2017 that all types of positions in combat were open for women to join in the US. "Valor knows no gender," States former president Barack Obama. Yet there is still a long way to go with their participation according to the numbers of women in the Army and the gender disparities and sexism they face in their work area.

Each country has taken its steps on integrating women in the Army, and so far we see others taking action and improving on breaking gender stereotypes far more than others. As of today, New Zealand's Army has no gender limitation in all military units. Many of these legislations have been fairly recent, as in 1995 Norway was the first country to ever permit women to serve in submarines, when it had been deemed as a masculine or "male-only" duty in the military. To break stereotypes and improve gender equity in work areas, it is important to address the issues in order to be able to change rules restricting a woman's freedom.

Unfairly, throughout the course of history, there have been different types of temporary lifts from restricting women from the Army. For instance, during the Second World War, women served as snipers and fighter pilots when the Soviets had no other option, as most eligible men were already in other combat-related positions. Cases as such have been seen in different countries as well, when England temporarily lifted their restrictions allowing hundreds of women to work on anti-aircraft guns during their Battle of Britain. Evidently, women were always left as the second choice when no other resources seemed to be available. These sexist acts underestimated the strength of women to combat in the battlefield, with the amount of powerful women who had ruled an Army before as did Joan of Arc, who commanded an entire Army to victory during 1429. It seemed as if no matter how women had "proved" themselves before, a misogynistic system that ruled countries would never allow them to fight in the Army whatsoever.

Proving their worth to other male service members in the military is something many female officers still feel the need to do today. That is because of the way they had been looked down upon and underestimated due to their gender for centuries, being seen as too weak or too delicate. Therefore, they are expected to always perform at their best. Military life can be far more demanding for



women than for men, for reasons as such. As many female soldiers recall, misogynistic instructors actively made sexist comments or used their gender upon them to constantly remind female soldiers that the military is not made for them, pushing their limits to later on insult them for being "too emotional". Having to work in an environment as such can discourage or restrain women from being in the military.

Despite the fact women are allowed to participate in military combat, it does not mean they don't face sexism and gendered restrictions that impact their work in service. "You will probably meet people who look down on you and treat you differently because of your gender," states the non-profit rehabilitation organisation The Soldiers Project. Gender discrimination in the Army is far different from any other type of mistreatment, as it is only based on a soldier's gender. It can cause an exclusion from a certain activity or even opportunities related to the ranking in the Army simply due to being a woman. As female soldiers face misogyny by their service members which could be verbal, physical or sexual abuse, those issues being addressed or action taken in order to stop it can be easily brushed off as a woman being dramatic or a liar in a predominately male surroundings. In 2020, the Department of Defense received more than 6,200 cases of sexual assault reported by soldiers in their military time. Yet it is hardly being addressed, creating a military rape culture. For victims of sexual assault, many may experience lack of sleep, depression and more which can negatively affect their performance. Being a woman in the military has many obstacles and challenges that they face purely based on their gender, creating a much harder military life for women than for men.



On top of all the restrictions and limitations women may face in the Army, one of the difficulties they often have is their uniform. Since women were restrained from being in the military for so long, most types of armoury, military uniform or combat equipment is specifically designed to fit the male figure, such as bulletproof vests or flak jackets. This incentivizes a culture of female soldiers not finding combat equipment that suits them, whether it is for their daily duty or for a current challenge. Simple daily problems as such show how the system comes to be so unprepared to make progressive change for the Army to be able to integrate women. This is why it's so important to not focus on making women's needs fit the system, but make the system fit women's needs.

## **Past Actions**

Before World War I, it was unusual for women to take a direct part in warfare. However, this did not mean that the few participants enjoyed any legal protection in case of being injured. It was only with the birth of international humanitarian law that they benefited from the same legal protection as male soldiers. Prisoners of war benefited from the provisions of the Regulations attached to the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907. However, the year 1929 marked a worldwide milestone when, for the first time, women enjoyed special protection under international humanitarian law, this was given as a result of the large female presence in the Army during the First World War.

During World War II, it is estimated that of a total of 50 million deaths, 26 million belonged to the armed forces, many of whom were women. Said exorbitant figure made it necessary to consider new legal instruments that could be used to protect war victims. In effect, "The Diplomatic Conference for the celebration of international Agreements destined to protect the victims of war", which was convened by the Swiss Federal Council, elaborated 04 agreements that were approved



on August 12, 1949. In this same line, the III Convention, addressed the scope related to the treatment due to prisoners of war and the IV Convention, relative to the protection that should be given to civilians, allocating approximately 30 articles to aspects that specifically concern women.

In a more current context, in October 2000, the United Nations adopted Security Council Resolution 1325, which recognized the importance of understanding the repercussions of armed conflicts on women and girls, while guaranteeing their protection and their full participation in the peace agreements.

“In December 2007, NATO and its partners agreed to implement Resolution 1325 and expand the role of women in United Nations operations and especially among military observers and civilian Police. This commitment was expressed in the CWINF Guidance for NATO Gender mainstream report, this being document the first contribution of the Alliance to development that addressed the gender perspective.

## **Bloc Positions**

There are several factors that you may take into account to divide into bloc positions. These are the following:

### ***Similar Interests***

It is evident that, taking into account the diversity of positions on the subject, there are countries that prefer to address the problem based on similar interests. For example, countries that believe that the incorporation of women into the military sphere should be considered could work together to consolidate their position. Conversely, countries that consider that there should be no or progressive incorporation could approach the issue differently.

### ***Religion***

In addition to considering similar interests, it may be helpful for countries to consider their religious ideology when looking for potential allies or partners in policy making. Religion in a country plays a transcendental role when influencing decision-making and generating policies in favor of the population. In this sense, the religious beliefs of the population can influence the image that is held around women (depending on which is the majority religion in an area). The presence of a religion in a country, whether official or not, can cause citizens to have certain stereotypes about certain decisions made and even the role of women in society. Therefore, religion is an important aspect to consider when conducting the pertinent discussions in order to form blocs.

### ***Politics***

Another important point to consider is the potential division of what role the government should play, if at all, in the development of policies to address the problem. For some countries, the government should take an active role in encouraging the participation of the female population while others have a stricter policy with closed regulations. For this, it will be imperative to observe the precedents of each country to obtain a comprehensive idea of the type of policies they have to implement. For example, countries that consider that women should not be included in the armed forces may be more concerned with taking protection measures for women and vice versa with those who consider that

they should participate in the armed forces, having to find out which could be the mechanisms to ensure the presence of the female population.

### ***Culture***

Finally, a key aspect to consider in the formation of blocks is the culture of a country. A rigorous investigation must be carried out on whether the participation of women within the armed forces is accepted and/or expected within the population. Besides, Culture is a determining factor in the possibility that certain countries align or have shared interests. Regardless of the policies a country is focused on, it is important to consider both the feasibility of solutions and the impact specific policies will have across the board. The blocs should aspire to approve comprehensive and thoughtful policies that facilitate the early incorporation of women into the armed forces.

### **QARMAs**

QARMAs, or Questions A Resolution Must Answer, are questions that are meant to aid you in the process of creating a solution from the perspective of your country. As the name suggests, these are questions that are **mandatory** to address in your draft resolution (which can potentially become the final resolution). Hence, we strongly encourage you to consider these questions as you think of your solution as well as the direction you want the committee's discussion to take.

1. Which measures should be implemented in order to eliminate gender restrictions in military forces?
2. How can we prevent and decrease the stereotypes of women based on cultural and religious beliefs without violating the right to self-determination and the right to religious freedom?
3. Which actions should states take in order to guarantee the integration of women in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (Blue Helmets)?
4. What should be the response of the international community if a country refuses to include women in their Armed Forces? Which measures could be implemented without violating the sovereignty of such countries?
5. Should gender quotas be applied as a measure to include women in the Armed Forces? If so, how can it be implemented effectively?

### **Guidelines for Position Papers**

A position paper is a document that outlines a nation's position regarding the topic, as well as possible solutions that address questions and concerns. The position paper is divided into 3 main sections which are equal to their paragraphs:



- **Paragraph 1:** Introduction to your country's view on the topic, and should not be confused with an introduction to the topic. The idea here is to explain how your country sees the issue being discussed and what should be done.
- **Paragraph 2:** Past actions, explain past actions done by the United Nations and/or your country, as well as the effects of those actions and what your country thinks about both the actions and the repercussions of those actions
- **Paragraph 3:** Solutions, offer one or more solutions to the topic, within the scope of what your country can do, while remaining in policy and in accordance with what your country thinks and has done in the past.
- **Bibliography:** A bibliography in MLA 9 citation format is required. Any position paper that does not include a bibliography will be instantly considered as plagiarised work and will be ruled out, meaning that the delegate will not be eligible for an award.

Furthermore, this document has a specific format. We strongly request delegates to follow the specifications below as any documents that fail to do so will not be accepted.

- **Font:** Times New Roman 11 pts.
- **Line Spacing:** 1.15.
- **Margins:** 1 inch (2.54 cm) from all extremities (standard margins)
- **Pages:** 1-page max. (excluding bibliography)
- **Bibliography format:** MLA9
- If a citation machine is used, please cite it.

Lastly, all position papers are to be delivered by **April 14th at 11:59 pm** in PDF format to the following email address: [andreaapalacios03@gmail.com](mailto:andreaapalacios03@gmail.com). For ease and to make sure no position papers are lost in spam, please send all of them with the subject "Position Paper - *Your Country*".

## **Closing Remarks**

I hope you enjoyed the study guide! While it's not long and too thorough, it will provide you with the basic information you need to gain a superficial understanding of the topic. Nevertheless, I expect you to go beyond such information and arrive at committee with a considerable amount of research, as well as enthusiasm to debate. In committee, I expect the utmost diplomacy from all delegates, as this is not an easy topic to discuss and requires a lot of sensibility. If you have any further doubts regarding the topic or committee dynamics in general, don't hesitate to contact me from the email above. See you in april!

## **Sources (in MLA9 format)**

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