

Houston Area Model United Nations Standard Committee

CSW



Chair | Yumn Qazi & Ayesha Baloch
Topic B: Protection for Incarcerated Women
Houston Area Model United Nations 49
February 1 & 2, 2024

Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

My name is Ayesha Baloch, and I am excited to be co-chairing for CSW this year. I am currently a sophomore at the University of Houston, majoring in psychology on the Pre-Medicine track. I got involved in Model UN my freshman year of high school, and my first conference, which was HAMUN 44, convinced me that MUN was something I wanted to pursue. I attended multiple conferences throughout high school, and each conference was a different, enjoyable experience. As I approached my graduation, I realized that instead of continuing as a delegate on a collegiate level, I wanted to provide students interested in Model UN with a positive experience. I chose to chair the Committee on the Status of Women because I believe that challenges faced by women across the globe deserve equal attention. It is essential to shed light on diverse issues in every country, and I hold a strong conviction that solutions to these issues should be applicable to countries with limited resources. Yumn's and my goal with our topics was to spotlight issues that are so prevalent they are often overlooked in favor of tackling a more manageable issue.

My biggest tip for Model UN would be to focus on what you, as a delegate, would want out of the conference, and then working towards that goal. Other delegates may seem intimidating, but as long as you have adequately prepared to meet your goal in conference, you will achieve it. Your presence at our conference is invaluable, and as your chairs, we are here to support you every step of the way.

Ayesha Baloch

Co-Chair of CSW

aflbaloch401@gmail.com



Brief History

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), also known as UNCSW, operates as a subsidiary commission under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), a principal organ of the United Nations. Renowned for its dedication to fostering gender equality, the CSW actively advocates for both the empowerment of women and the advancement of their rights.

Annually, delegates from Member States convene at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Their primary objectives are to assess strides made in gender equality, recognize existing obstacles, establish international standards, and devise strategic policies to accelerate the global progress of women. In April 2017, ECOSOC inducted 13 new members to the CSW for the tenure of 2018-2022.

Under the directives of their respective mandates, United Nations agencies have diligently integrated women into developmental strategies, programs, and conferences. Women are not merely participants; they engage in preparatory committees, strategize, convene caucus sessions, and establish networks concerning agenda items undergoing negotiation in diverse committees. Furthermore, they serve as informed advocates during the conferences.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) distinguishes itself among UN commissions by allowing participation beyond just member states. Notably, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have the privilege to partake in CSW sessions. They can attend caucuses, contribute to panels, and orchestrate independent parallel events via the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York (NGO CSW/NY).

This inclusive approach bears significant implications for territories like Taiwan, which aren't UN members. In recent years, Taiwanese NGOs, including the National Alliance of Taiwan Women's Associations, have been granted the opportunity to engage in CSW sessions.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is comprised of 45 representatives from Member States, appointed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to ensure a balanced geographical representation: 13 delegates from Africa, 11 from Asia, 9 from Latin America and the Caribbean, 8 from Western Europe and other states, and 4 from Eastern Europe. Each member serves a term of four years. Among its notable contributions, the CSW has formulated several conventions and declarations, such as the 1967 Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Additionally, the commission has been instrumental in establishing women-centric agencies like UNIFEM and INSTRAW. For its 57th session, the CSW prioritized the theme "Elimination and Prevention of All Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls." In anticipation of this session, an Expert Group Meeting focusing on the prevention of violence against women and girls convened in Bangkok, Thailand, from 17th to 20th September 2012.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), a subsidiary of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), was established in 1946 to promote gender equality and uphold women's rights globally.

With its core mission rooted in advocating for women's rights, CSW annually assesses the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In 1996, its mandate expanded to monitor and respond to developments and challenges in gender equality initiatives. Each year, during its two-week session in New York, representatives from UN Member States, civil societies, and UN agencies evaluate progress and strategize for future challenges in gender equality. UN Women plays a central role in supporting the Commission's endeavors and ensuring broad participation from civil society.





Executive Summary

a. **Prison Conditions for Women:** The conditions within prisons greatly influence an inmate's potential for societal reintegration post-sentence. Essential elements include facility quality, safety, post-release support, and women-specific needs, such as protection from harm and ensuring their safety post-release. Many women lack adequate support for reintegration, facing barriers like stigmatization due to their criminal records. Positive prisoner-staff relations are crucial for both external and internal safety, necessitating proper staff training and gender-sensitivity.

b. **Sexual Assault in Prisons:** Prisons are rife with sexual violence, with 1 in 20 adult inmates and 1 in 8 juvenile inmates facing assault. Majority of victims don't report assaults. Women, though 13% of the prison population, represent 2/3 of sexual abuse victims.

The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) of 2003 aimed to measure and counter such assaults, but challenges remain. Along with trauma, sexual violence also risks spreading diseases like hepatitis and HIV. The focus should be on enhanced protection and medical care for victims.

c. **Punishments for Women:** In some regions, like the Middle East, women face severe penalties, such as death, for crimes like spousal murder. To comprehend such harsh punishments, it's crucial to understand historical treatments of women and their lingering implications.

d. Maternity in Prison: Managing maternity and pregnancies in prison poses significant challenges. 6-10% of female inmates are pregnant, with rates higher in local jails. The separation from children, whether they are in or outside prison, has psychological implications for both mother and child. The rights and needs of these children are often overlooked. Additionally, many incarcerated women have histories of abuse, and some face cruel punishments. Proper assessment and care are required for pregnant inmates.





Conceptualization of Topic

Across the globe, around 750,000 women and girls are estimated to be incarcerated. The number of women in prison has seen a marked increase since 2000, as shown by data from the Institute of Criminal Policy Research. This growth surpasses that of their male counterparts. Within these numbers, pregnant women and mothers stand out as particularly vulnerable, requiring unique and specialized care. If the challenges these women face in prison are not addressed, global society risks failing a significant segment of its prison population.

While incarcerated, women frequently face greater barriers to justice than men. Gender-specific health and wellness issues are often side-lined, even though many of these women have histories of sexual assault and abuse, both prior to and during their imprisonment.

Penitentiary institutions worldwide house about half a million women and girls. A deeper look into their lives unveils stories filled with victimization, unstable family structures, educational or professional failures, and health complications that have made them more susceptible to their circumstances.

Consider a theatrical performance: while male inmates and staff are front and center, what transpires in the shadows? This analogy highlights the societal tendency to neglect the challenges incarcerated women encounter. Marginalization, along with physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, is common among these women. Such distressing experiences hinder their rehabilitation and further complicate their reintegration into society. This trauma intensifies mental health issues, with many battling depression and anxiety, and some resorting to self-harm or contemplating suicide.

Disturbing trends have emerged in recent times. In the UK, there's been a more than 200% surge in the number of incarcerated women, resulting in a 20% increase in the overall prison population. This spike underscores the inadequate management of these institutions, ranging from ill-prepared staff to insufficient healthcare. The repercussions of such mismanagement are evident, with a 15% rise in suicide attempts among this demographic.

In the present day, conditions for female inmates continue to worsen. Despite more women being incarcerated, the facilities designed for them have not evolved. According to the World Health Organization, incarcerated women are three times more likely to have experienced abuse before their imprisonment. Global prison systems, predominantly designed with male needs in mind, fail to cater to the unique requirements of women. This oversight contributes to ongoing violence, perpetuating the silent agony endured by many incarcerated women.





Topic History

In a comprehensive assessment conducted in 2014, it was observed that women constituted a range of 2% to 10% of the national prison populations across various countries. This already notable percentage has witnessed a surge over the ensuing years. A meticulous report updated in 2020 by Penal Reform International elucidated this growth, indicating that the global count of incarcerated women and girls has reached a staggering 741,000. To put this into a broader perspective, there has been an increase of over 100,000 women in correctional facilities within a mere span of six years. This significant increase is particularly concerning when juxtaposed against the international regulations and conventions, which have been explicitly designed with the intent of curtailing the female prison population.

The current trajectory suggests a compelling need for introspection and reform in how female offenders are managed and rehabilitated.

1. **Mandela Rules:** Formally known as the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, these were ratified by the United Nations General Assembly on December 17, 2015. They emphasize ideals like institutional equality and the underlying philosophy governing incarceration.
2. **Protection Principles for Detained Individuals:** On December 9, 1988, the United Nations General Assembly, via resolution 43/173, established 39 principles to ensure the welfare and security of those detained or imprisoned.

1. Foundational Principles for Prisoner Treatment: Endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly through resolution 45/111 on December 14, 1990, the initial two principles are widely recognized. They uphold the essence of human dignity and strictly
2. Tokyo Rules: Also known as the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Custodial Measures, these principles, adopted on December 14, 1990, advocate for alternatives to imprisonment. They stress community involvement in criminal justice, ensuring a balance between individual rights, victim rights, public safety, and crime prevention.

The pressing issue of female incarceration and its dire need for overhaul has long been recognized.

Both the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) emphasize that prevailing norms predominantly cater to male inmates, often neglecting the unique circumstances and repercussions faced by women.

Historical International Endeavors

Bangkok Rules: Ratified by the United Nations General Assembly on December 22, 2010, these 70 rules cater specifically to female prisoners. Despite being in place for a decade, tangible improvements in the incarceration conditions for women remain scarce. Penal Reform International's studies underscore this stagnation, revealing persistent over-incarceration of women in many regions. Numerous agencies continue to urge governments to rigorously implement the Bangkok Rules and revisit dated policies.

Though a framework exists to address the challenges of female imprisonment, sustained and amplified efforts are crucial to effect genuine change and enhance the lives of these detainees.





Case Studies

The Bangkok Rules:

Implementation of the Solution: The Bangkok Rules, officially known as the "United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders," were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 22 December 2010. They are a set of 70 rules formulated to address the unique needs of female prisoners, taking into account gender-specific requirements. To ensure their application, member states were encouraged to incorporate the Bangkok Rules into their national prison management systems. This would include training prison staff on gender sensitivity, revising infrastructure to meet women's needs, and instituting gender-responsive policies.

Agreement on the Solution: The Bangkok Rules were the result of

increasing recognition of the unique challenges faced by female prisoners, which were not adequately addressed in the existing international standards. The development and adoption of the Rules were driven by extensive consultations, discussions, and contributions from various stakeholders, including member states, non-governmental organizations, and experts in criminal justice. The agreement reflected an international consensus on the necessity to ensure that female prisoners are treated with dignity and that their specific needs are met.

Intended Consequences: Improved Treatment: The primary goal was to ensure that female prisoners are treated with dignity and respect.

Special Considerations: The rules emphasize the provision of health services specifically tailored for women, including prenatal and postnatal care.

Non-custodial Measures: The rules advocate for alternative measures to imprisonment, especially for pregnant women, mothers with dependent children, and sole caregivers.

Protection from Violence: They underscore the need to protect female inmates from all forms of abuse and violence, including those of a sexual nature.

Unintended Consequences: Incomplete Implementation: Despite their adoption, not all countries have fully incorporated the Bangkok Rules into their prison management systems, leading to inconsistent application.

Resource Constraints: Some countries might face resource limitations that impede the full realization of the rules, especially in developing nations.

Cultural Barriers: In certain regions, deep-rooted cultural beliefs might resist changes advocated by the rules.

Impact: Direct Impact on Female Prisoners: Those in countries that implemented the rules experienced improved living conditions, better healthcare, and enhanced protection against abuse.

Prison Systems: Encouraged prison systems worldwide to reevaluate and modify their policies and practices to become more gender-responsive.

Wider Society: The rules sparked discussions about gender equality and the rights of incarcerated individuals, potentially influencing broader societal views on these issues.

In conclusion, while the Bangkok Rules are a significant step towards addressing the unique challenges faced by female prisoners, their success depends on consistent implementation and the willingness of individual countries to commit resources and confront traditional norms.





Questions to Consider

1. Beyond endorsing the Bangkok Rules, what actions has your country undertaken?
2. Are there unique issues or concerns pertinent to your state or area?
3. How can we tackle the underlying issues leading these women to commit offenses?
4. What steps should be taken to shield women from potential harm while respecting regional ideologies and beliefs?



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