

# **Houston Area Model United Nations Specialized Committee**



## **PRESS CORPS**

**Chair | Eshal Warsi**  
**Specialized Committee Background Guide**  
**Houston Area Model United Nations 48**  
**February 2-3, 2023**

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# Note to Delegates

Hello Delegates,

My name is Eshal Warsi, and I am super excited and honored to serve as the PRESS Corps Chair for the 48th Houston Area Model United Nations (HAMUN) Conference! I am a freshman at the University of Houston and pursuing a Bachelor's in Political Science at the Honors College.

I have been a part of Model UN since freshman year in high school, inspired by my own family's history with religious persecution. I was also elected the vice-president of my high school's Model UN club.

Additionally, I served as the editor-in-chief of my school newspaper, *The Crimson Connection*, and am fascinated by the role that journalism plays in political discourse. As a committee we will discuss the controversial issue of whistleblowers and explore potential solutions to this assault on press freedom.

But this committee differs from all the other ones in a distinct way: you will mimic the body of esteemed journalists who report on the United Nations. You will *observe* the ongoings of each committee, *document* the various factions and solutions, and *inform* fellow delegates and staff about the progress made. For two days, *you* get to dictate how we view the controversial ideas being discussed at the conference. But as Uncle Ben once said, "with great power comes great responsibility". Thus, I will expect the utmost journalistic integrity and attention to detail.

I know it can be nerve-wracking at first, but I encourage everyone to join the discussion and push yourself. I am looking forward to the fruitful discussions, insightful resolutions and perceptive articles. Please email me with any questions you may have.

**Eshal Warsi**

Chair of PRESS CORPS

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## PRESS CORPS

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# ABOUT PRESS CORPS

The United Nations Correspondents Association is the organization that represents the United Nations Press Corps. With over 200 correspondents from all over the world, its efforts are celebrated annually by the General Assembly [\(1\)](#). They help organize press conferences that pertain to different international developments and recognize the work of fearless journalists across the world.

### **How is this committee going to work?**

This committee will be the best of both worlds. The first couple of sessions will revolve around *Topic A: International Protections for Whistleblowers and Journalists*.

As a committee, we will follow parliamentary procedure and use moderated and unmoderated sessions to create resolutions. This will be similar to most other specialized committees at HAMUN. If you are new to Model UN, you can learn more about parliamentary procedure [\(2\)](#).

Once we have finished passing a comprehensive resolution on Topic A, you will be divided into groups of 9 and assigned to any of the following committees: DISEC, LEGAL, SOCHUM, CSTD, WHO, SPECPOL, UNEP, OIC, BHOC. Each of you will act as real-life journalists, and report on the different blocs, resolutions for your respective committee. You will be expected to write hard news articles with reliable facts and interviews with various individuals.



The following list shows what committees each news outlet will cover:

- DISEC - The Guardian and New York Times
- LEGAL - Reuters and The Telegraph
- SOCHUM - BBC and Washington Post
- CSTD - Forbes and Wall Street Journal
- WHO - The Economist and Epoch Times
- SPECPOL - New York Post and Associated Press
- UNEP - NPR and Fox News
- OIC - Al-Jazeera and The Jerusalem Post
- BHOC - The Morning Star and The Independent

You are expected to angle and approach each topic based on the political ideology of the news organization. This does not mean that you can ALTER the facts of the committee. You should read the background guide of the committee you will cover to get an idea of the topic and various characters. However, you may choose to interview and talk to individuals that help prove the point your news outlet would likely align with.



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# TOPIC A: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Journalism is the bedrock of democracy. Without a free press, corruption and political duplicity would run rampant. Unfortunately, the intensifying of conflicts across the globe has caused hostile relations between journalists and autocratic regimes and western republics alike. Recent eruptions of violence in Ukraine and Israel has caused the deaths of dozens of journalists and the perpetrators continue to roam free. Chief among those targeted are whistleblowers like Edward Snowden, Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning who have been forced to leave in exile or jailed for their exposes of government secrets. Although the United Nations has verbally supported many whistleblower actions, they have thus far been unwilling to grant legal immunity to such individuals.*

*Safeguarding whistleblowers has also become a diplomatically contentious issue and extradition laws are being exploited to punish those willing to criticize political elites. In addition to government unscrupulousness, the United Nations itself has faced accusations of harassing employees for reporting workplace abuses. No institution, no matter how mighty, is infallible. Without concrete deterrents, it is clear that the very fabric of journalism is being jeopardized. It is your goal is to reckon with creating a framework to protect whistleblowers from domestic retaliation as well as implementing a legal recourse for affected individuals.*



# TOPIC CONCEPTUALIZATION

## What does “whistleblower” mean?

- Well, a whistleblower is a person, usually an employee in a government agency or private enterprise, who discloses to the public or to those in authority, of mismanagement, corruption, illegality, or some other wrongdoing. ([3](#))

## How are whistleblowers contributing to society?

- They can help save lives and money, and often trigger investigations that reveal widespread wrongdoing. ([4](#))

## How is journalism related to whistleblowing?

- Journalists publish the secrets uncovered by whistleblowers. Usually, they keep their sources anonymous and should not be compelled to reveal them.

## What punishments can whistleblowers face as a result of their actions?

- They can be fired, harassed, blackmailed and at times even face physical harm and death ([5](#)).

## What past resolutions and actions have been taken in order to protect whistleblowers?

- Article 33 under UNCAC ([6](#))
- OAS Draft Model Law ([7](#))
- Council of Europe Explanatory Memorandum ([8](#))
- UNODC Guide ([9](#))
- African Union Convention ([10](#))

## Is there any comprehensive legislation for whistleblowers?

- There is no comprehensive legislation as of now. It is your duty to come up with an effective plan!



# TOPIC HISTORY: WHISTLEBLOWERS

On 31 October 2003, the UN General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC). It covers a variety of issues related to criminalization, information exchange and preventive measures, however, it is also one of the most significant UN legislation on whistleblower activity [\(11\)](#)

- **Article 33:** *Each State Party shall consider incorporating into its domestic legal system appropriate measures to provide protection against any unjustified treatment for any person who reports in good faith and on reasonable grounds to the competent authorities any facts concerning offences established in accordance with this Convention.* [\(12\)](#)

While the intent of the legislation might be clear to the average person, it is not comprehensive enough to address whistleblower action. In fact, the vagueness of “good faith” and “reasonable grounds” can be exploited by nations to prosecute journalists and whistleblowers who may have good intentions.

#### **As Transparency International notes:**

*“The development of systems to protect whistleblowers is complex, far more so than the criminalisation of corrupt behaviour, and experience shows it is unlikely to be achieved in a single stroke.”* [\(13\)](#)

The United Nations recognizes that Article 33 has not been as successful as anticipated.





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# TOPIC HISTORY: WHISTLEBLOWERS

Whistleblowers come from all parts of the world. This part of the background will introduce you to just a couple of cases that you can research further.

### **Guja v Moldova (14)**

Jacob Guja was the head of the Press Department of the Prosecutor General's Office.

In 2002, four police officers arrested 10 individuals for election offenses. When these individuals were released they alleged that the law enforcement arrested them wrongfully.

The officers wrote a letter to then-President Vornin asking him to cease the criminal proceedings. Vornin forwarded this letter to the Prosecutor General's Office, implying that he agreed with the officers complaints.

The Prosecutor General eventually ceased criminal proceedings against the officers.

Guja felt that this was an abuse of power and released the Vornin letter to a newspaper. Guja was wrongfully dismissed for his whistleblowing.

Guja brought his case to the European Court of Human Rights which agreed that Moldova did not have a right to infringe on Guja's right to speech. His dismissal was not conducive to a democratic society according to the court.



# TOPIC HISTORY: WHISTLEBLOWERS

## [Allan Cutler](#)

In 1994, Allan Cutler found discrepancies in his work as a purchasing manager for the Government of Canada. He worked for the Advertising and Public Opinion Sector of the Government Operational Services Branch (APORS). APORS ran the Sponsorship Program which was meant to increase cultural and community engagement.

In his position, Cutler was repeatedly asked to backdate contracts, complete rushed requests, and sign contracts with more expensive companies. When he refused and questioned his boss, Chuck Guite, he was threatened with dismissal.

But eventually, Cutler could not take it anymore. He blew the case to Internal Audit.

But when Guite found out about this he wasn't happy. Cutler was quickly sidelined in his job and not given any work to do.

Cutler's grievances went unheard for years until Auditor General Sheila Fraser raised concerns about bureaucratic wrongdoing. Cutler became a key witness in ensuing investigations and media exposees.

By December 2008, 19 criminal charges had been filed in relation to the Sponsorship Program.



# CASE STUDY: JULIAN ASSANGE

Assange is the founder of WikiLeaks, a website that leaks classified information from whistleblowers around the world.

In 2010, WikiLeaks released video from a US helicopter that showed an air strike on innocent civilians and journalists. That year, it also released secret military reports about the Afghanistan and Iraq war. Assange sought political asylum at the Ecuadorian embassy after multiple attempts by the British legal system to extradite Assange back to Sweden.

He remained there for over 5 years, but a change in Ecuador's political landscape resulted in the revocation of Assange's asylum status. He is sentenced by a British Court for skipping bail.

Swedish prosecutors reopen their investigation, and the US Department of Justice asks the UK to extradite Assange because of his violation of the Espionage Act. Even after the Swedish authorities drop their case because of a lack of evidence, the US is persistent.

Hearings on Assange's extradition begin in 2020. However, a British Judge deems Assange as mentally unfit for extradition.

### QUESTIONS:

1. Does Assange meet the definition of a whistleblower?
2. Did he do it in "good faith"?
3. Should he be extradited?
4. What does the UN think about Assange's condition?
5. How does digital whistleblowing complicate our understanding of protections for whistleblowers?



# UNODC CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION REPORT ON UNCAC

All information in this section comes from [this report](#). I strongly encourage all delegates to look at this report thoroughly. This report was conducted by the UNODC on the shortcoming of legislation for whistleblowers.

## INTRODUCTION

Corruption is hard to detect for many reasons. Often many potential whistleblowers benefit from the illegal activity. This is why it is important to empower and make it easier for employees and public servants to report questionable activity. Countries like India, Malaysia and Peru have already adopted whistleblower protection laws.

**What types of systems are effective and ineffective?**

Formal inspection systems to out corruption are not as effective as whistleblowers who are more familiar with the organization's or government's operations. This is true for both the public and private sectors.

**Do whistleblowers only come from national governments?**

Corruption is not limited to just government bodies. Whistleblowers can also come from the private companies and legal entities, union, NGOs, social media, and those under criminal investigation. There also needs to be adequate protections for reporting persons. Employees may face workplace repercussions, while political dissidents may face imprisonment. Without protections, some may never report wrongdoing they may see.



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# UNODC CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION REPORT ON UNCAC

## **Is there a widespread definition for whistleblowers?**

States need to adopt a comprehensive definition of a whistleblower, that includes the general public and digital media, so that all individuals will be protected by UN laws.

## **Why are individuals hesitant to report corruption?**

Governments need to ensure that people feel comfortable in reporting wrongdoing.

Countries with social and cultural attitudes that distrust authorities need to help their citizens overcome this initial hesitation. Evaluation and continuous monitoring of the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms are needed.

## **How do we deal with obstacles to whistleblowing?**

NGOs and civil groups are most aware of the limitations to reporting. Government need to consult with these groups to identify what needs to be implemented to overcome these barriers. Some potential partners include: ethics bodies, human rights groups, judicial bodies, regulators, ombudspersons and even professional organizations for lawyers and doctors.

Legislation needs to be reworked so that the law explicitly protects whistleblowers. There should be a national or international framework that establishes criminal penalties for those who fail to report wrongdoing. Law should also cover media law, labor and privacy rights.





# UNODC CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION REPORT ON UNCAC

## **What is “good-faith” reporting?**

The conflicting definitions of what whistleblowers can report for the “public good” can make it harder for them to determine if they meet legal protections in their state. A comprehensive definition for good-faith is needed. What types of whistleblowing is protected and what types of whistleblowing, if any, is not protected?

Sometimes whistleblower revealing personal data of others without their permission. How should states deal with this reality? How does a state balance one’s right to privacy and one’s right to free speech?

## **When are states allowed to block whistleblowing because of national security concerns?**

Many whistleblowers are prosecuted because they have allegedly put the states’ security at risk. Where should countries draw the line?

## **What is the typical hierarchy of reporting?**

Usually, individuals approach internal ethics bodies that deal with the issue. Other competent authorities may also be contacted by these individuals based on the severity of the crime. If individuals contact media persons and NGOs instead,, the protection of journalistic sources should also be considered.

## **Should there be an external agency that handles whistleblowing cases?**

If so, such an organization deals with cases effectively and impartially.



# UNODC CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION REPORT ON UNCAC

## **What risks do whistleblower's face when reporting?**

Risks may include: intimidation of relatives, physical injury, suspensions, prosecution and even death.

## **What are some potential protections that countries can provide whistleblowers with? Should they be compelled to do this?**

Some protections include: anonymity, transfer to another position, legal protection against liability, anti-gagging legislation, physical protections, new supervisors, and burden of proof on the state and not the whistleblower. Incentives to encourage reporting may be helpful as well.

Many whistleblowers often do not know what to do with the information they have. Whistleblowers should receive help from organizations that can advise them on how to move forward with any information they may have.

## **Who should deal with whistleblowers?**

Many countries do not have specialized persons who can adequately deal with such matters. How can states provide such training to certain agencies.

Normal citizens should be aware of the protections they are entitled to, otherwise they may never feel comfortable in reporting malpractice and corruption.



# WRITING ARTICLES

Before you can even get started there are some fundamental principles you must follow in order to produce a fantastic article.

- 1) You should NEVER assume anything. All of your information must come from a source. This could include a delegate, chair or dias. Any information found online and from the background guide is fair game as well
- 2) ALL outside information must be attributed. Ethics is a key tenet of journalism. Any plagiarism will not be tolerated in PRESS CORPS.
- 3) Look at the AP Style Handbook. This is the official journalistic guide for spelling, abbreviations and more.

To get started, you first want to read the background guide to get an idea of the issue they are tackling.

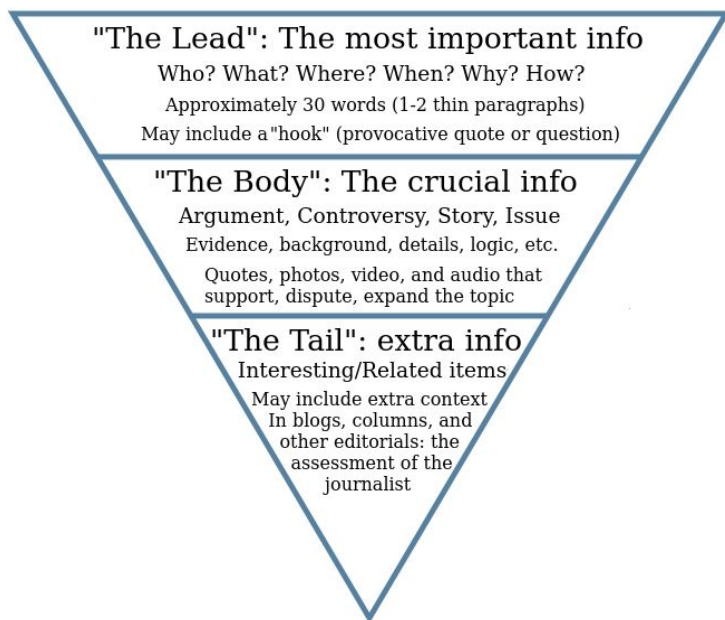
Once you have a general idea, go ahead and research how your newspaper views this issue.

Your goal is to create an article that is 100% factually true but helps push the general ideology of your paper. For example, if there was a committee on abortion in the United States, FOX News would likely write in support of overturning it while CNN would not. Both would use different experts and evidence to help back up their point. Both articles would be factual but have hidden biases within their approach to the issue.

But how do you find sources that help prove your point? Well, first of all you want to observe the different alliances that form during unmoderated caucuses. Which bloc seems to most align with your ideology? Which bloc seems most opposed to your newspaper's beliefs? Once you have identified key individuals, interview them.

Make sure you **RECORD** their voices so that you can prove what they said later. I recommend using **Otter** - an app that automatically transcribes audio files for you.

After having conducted interviews, ask yourself: what is the most important information? Your most important information should come at the beginning of the story. Here is a general [guideline](#) you should follow.



The first sentence of your article should be a lede. A lede is something that anyone can read and understand the basic idea of your article without having to read any further. Here is a sample lede from a Guardian story about the Brazil Election:

*"Brazil's acrimonious presidential race will go to a second round after the former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva failed to secure the overall majority he needed to avoid a run-off with the far-right incumbent Jair Bolsonaro"*

It clearly establishes prominent individuals and the main idea the article is going to cover. The lede SHOULD NOT be longer than 2 sentences.

Once you have finished your lede, you need to move on to the nut graph. This will contain more information than the lede and will give more details about what you talked about in the lede. Here is the nut graph from the same Guardian article.

*"With more than 99.5% of votes counted the leftist veteran had secured 48.3% of the vote, not enough to avoid the 30 October show down with his right-wing rival. Bolsonaro, who significantly out-performed pollsters's predictions and will be buoyed by the result, received 43.3%."*

After some paraphrasing, you are expected to start your quotations. DO NOT use quotes that are too lengthy or can be paraphrased better. The quotes should be the “meatiest” part of your article. They should give us an insight into the minds of the delegates at the committee. Watch this [video](#) to understand formatting rules about quotations.

You should alternate between quotes and paraphrasing. More paraphrasing is fine, but more quotes may be a risky bet. Here is an example of alternating between paraphrasing and quoting.

*“I think this is a chance that the Brazilian people are giving me,” said Lula before heading to a celebration with his supporters on São Paulo’s Paulista avenue. “The campaign begins tomorrow.”*  
(Quote)

*In Rio de Janeiro’s historic city center, a massive crowd of people, mostly clad in red, drank beer and danced samba as they awaited the final tally to appear on a screen overlooking the square.*  
(Paraphrasing)

*But the jubilant mood dampened when results showed Lula still nearly 2 percent shy of the majority he needed to avoid a runoff duel with Bolsonaro.*  
(Paraphrasing)

*“I’m disappointed,” said Kharine Gil, a 23-year-old university student. “Because we saw that Bolsonaro is stronger than we thought he was.”*  
(Quote)

The ending of your story should end off with a banger. You want to put a powerful quote from one of your sources at the end. This will make the reader feel strongly about what they just read.

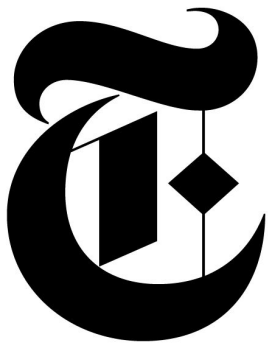


# Characters



## [The Guardian](#) - DISEC

*The Guardian* is a British newspaper that is typically more liberal than its English counterparts. It's renowned for its investigative journalism, coverage of international events and unorthodox viewpoints. [The](#) newspaper claims to be free of political pressure because of its independent ownership structure.



## [The New York Times](#) - DISEC

*The New York Times* is one of the most prestigious and longest-running American newspaper. It is well-known for its op-eds and influence on American foreign policy. In the 20th century, it was a hallmark of objective journalism. However, its for-profit structure and alleged left-leaning bias has caused cracks in its reputation.

# Characters



## [The Daily Telegraph](#) - LEGAL

*The Daily Telegraph* is one of the biggest British newspapers. It tends to take a conservative, middle-class approach to most issues, and has supported the British [Conservative party consistently](#).

## [The Washington Post](#) - SOCHUM

*Although initially formed as an organ to the Democratic Party, the newspaper took on a new role in the 1960s. It became famous for its coverage of the Watergate Scandal and Pentagon Papers. It has faced allegations of left-leaning bias. In 2013, the paper was bought by billionaire Jeff Bezos.*

## [Reuters](#) - LEGAL

Previously a London-based newspaper, *Reuters* moved to Toronto in 2008. It is a typically balanced newspaper that may lean-left on certain cultural issues.



REUTERS

# Characters

The logo for The Wall Street Journal, consisting of the letters 'WSJ' in a large, bold, black serif font.

## [The Wall Street Journal](#) - CSTD

*The Wall Street Journal* is owned by Rupert Murdoch, known for his conservative views. The newspaper typically exhibits balanced news articles, but sometimes shows pro-business bias. The editorial board often has a right-leaning bias.

The logo for BBC News, featuring the letters 'B B C' in white inside three red squares, with the word 'NEWS' in white capital letters below them, all on a red background.

## [The BBC](#) - SOCHUM

*The BBC* is a public UK broadcasting company. It's policy of impartiality has come under fire for providing cover for extreme right-wing policies. In the aftermath of Brexit, many criticized the BBC for energizing the "Leave" camp.

## [Forbes](#) - CSTD

*Forbes* is an American-based newspaper. They typically exhibit a balanced approach to the news. While they lean left on social issues, they may lean right on economic issues.

The logo for Forbes, featuring the word 'Forbes' in a large, bold, black serif font.

# Characters

## The Economist

### The Economist - WHO

*The Economist* is a UK-based newspaper. Although it leans left on social issues like gay marriage and abolishing the monarchy, it also favors deregulation and free enterprise. They consider themselves the “radical centre”.

## THE EPOCH TIMES

### The Epoch Times - WHO

*The Epoch Times* is funded by Chinese Americans and associated with the Falun Gong, a controversial religious movement. It is committed to upholding “truth and tradition” and is strongly anti-communist and anti-socialist. It leans right but is still balanced.

## NEW YORK POST

### The New York Post - SPECPOL

*The New York Post* is owned by Rupert Murdoch, a prominent conservative donor. It is a tabloid newspaper that features more right-leaning stories, and conservative op-eds. It is also more sensationalist than its counterparts.

# Characters

The logo for the Associated Press, consisting of the letters "AP" in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. Below the letters is a solid red horizontal bar.

## Associated Press - SPECPOL

*The Associated Press* is one of the most trusted newspapers in America. However, recently, it has shown increasing left-leaning bias in relation to voting rights, gun control and immigration.

## NPR - UNEP

*NPR* is both a private and publicly-funded not-for-profit news company. Despite its public nature, it often leans left in topic coverage, and omits good-faith conservative rebuttals. However, it does not resort to sensationalism or charged language unlike other outlets.

## Fox News - UNEP

*Fox News* is a conservative outlet and one of the most popular news outlets in the United States. It is founded by Rupert Murdoch, a conservative donor. It typically endorses Republican viewpoints and frequently bashes left-leaning ideas.





# Characters

THE  
JERUSALEM  
POST

## The Jerusalem Post - OIC

The Jerusalem Post is a popular Israeli-based English newspaper. It focuses on Arab-Israeli relations and does have a right-leaning bias.

## Al Jazeera - OIC

*Al Jazeera* is a news agency that is funded by the Qatari government. It is consistently left-leaning and is blatantly critical of conservative ideas.

## The Independent - BHOC

*The Independent* is a British newspaper based in London. It has close ties to the Saudi government and has been criticized for it. Although they use credible sources, they often run left-leaning articles.



# Characters



## [The Morning Star](#) - BHOC

The newspaper is transparent about their support for socialist causes and the Labour Party. There is a clear far-left bias in word choice, and topics covered by the paper.

