



# ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION



Hello Everyone!

My name is Serena Wang and I will be your head chair for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation committee this year. I am currently a senior at UC Berkeley studying Political Science with a minor in Arabic and Chinese, where I have also become extremely interested in Middle Eastern politics; so, the issues that we will be debating upon are ones that I have become super passionate about throughout college. That being said, I am super excited to witness your guys' intelligence, opinions, and motivation throughout the upcoming year. If you are the least bit worried, don't be! We will be with you every step of the way in terms of both procedure and topic synopsis -- plus, this is also a strong learning experience that can only produce a positive outcome, so get pumped to immerse yourselves into these awesome topics. Needless to say, I am beyond confident that you guys will exceed my expectations and impress me in March!

As you know, the Middle East is complex and multifaceted -- its social, political, and economic issues stem from a multitude of religious, cultural, and ethnic complexities overlapping one another. Hence, with numerous possibilities to choose from, it was quite challenging for me to decide upon just two topics this year. Nonetheless, I strongly believe that covering "Empowerment of Muslim Women" and the "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" will provide you guys with a solid, deep foundation to understanding the roots of Middle Eastern politics.

As you begin your research of these topics, I suggest that you keep in mind your position as both a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and esteem delegate under UC Berkeley Model United Nations! What does that mean? Keep an open eye while reading through the topic synopsis so that you can draw upon specific portions of the thesis that will deepen your understanding of your country and strengthen your essay. For example, if your assigned country is Saudi Arabia, you should be preparing your country position under Topic A, regarding the religious discriminations that Saudi women face in and the rising women's rights movement under Manal Al Sharif. Same goes for Iran under Topic B, where Iran's historical conflict with Arab nations has further sparked controversy within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict -- in other words, take into consideration every event and International response that may be applicable to your own research.

## TOPIC A: EMPOWERMENT OF MUSLIM WOMEN

The notion of Arab Women rights has sparked heavy international attention within the past decade -- from the Arab Spring in 2011 to the Daring to Drive movement in Saudi Arabia, the Middle East has been encountering increased democratic influences from the West and has slowly altered its own policies in compliance towards social rights movements for the sake of government survival and political stability. Last summer, I interned at the National Council of U.S.-Arab Relations and had the honor of meeting Manal Al Sharif, where I truly witnessed the intense lack of Saudi women rights through her story panel. Thus, I primarily chose this topic because I strongly believe that it encapsulates

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the notion of human rights in its entirety, yet provides a strong entrance to the broad range of international issues that surround the Middle East such as Arab-Palestinian women mistreatment, how Islamism continues to shape Middle Eastern society, and controversial weaknesses of Arab political systems.

## **TOPIC B: ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been an ongoing topic of debate for centuries; however, it continues to stand as one of the most controversial, intense issue that has ventured beyond inner Middle Eastern conflict to the international community as a whole. I chose this topic not only for its unique international scrutiny, but also the cultural, religious, and social complexities that play into its multi-layered strife. In fact, many claim that Middle Eastern politics itself is solely centered upon the state of Israel and Palestinians; therefore, further recognizing its complexity and depth would be extremely beneficial to any form of research. That being said, since this topic is so popular at-large, there are thousands of sources that you can draw from. My only suggestion for Topic B is to be careful and impartial of online sources -- know who you are reading from, know your audience, and most importantly, learn to be open-minded and take all perceptions into consideration. At the end of the day, the point of committee is to not outshine or dominant your fellow delegates, but to ultimately come together for a politically feasible solution within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Why is this topic important? Let's just reflect upon the occurrences of this past June, where the world re-centers its attention on Israel and its position within the international community. With the U.S.'s withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council, there are claims that (U.S. moving embassy to Jerusalem, sparking Palestinian outrage)