



THE OLIVE BRANCH

MODEL UNITED NATIONS NEWSLETTER



Inside this Edition:

Page 2: New Delegate Focus

Page 3: Student Spotlight!

Page 4: MSMUN-Q Update!

Announcements

•OMUN Debates:

-(Feb. 7) Security Council: Assessing the situation in Western Sahel

-(Feb. 13) General Assembly: Promoting international standards for genetic screening

-(Feb 20) Environment Commission: Measures to reduce food waste in MEDCs

-(Feb 27) Advisory Panel: Question of reducing domestic (social, political) tensions within the ASEAN countries

•THIMUN Qatar: Jan 26-29

•Film Festival Submission Due Date: Jan 10



By Lisa Martin

THIMUN Qatar has a special outreach dynamic in play, and 2016 will be a showcase year for promoting the concept collaborative community building. The culture of collaborative leadership, already well entrenched here in Qatar, took on new life when the concept of MUN outreach as service began to emerge with the establishment of the THIMUN Qatar Afghanistan Initiative. This in turn prompted a series of new outreach ideas: supporting a group of students in eastern Sri Lanka and bringing them to THIMUN Qatar 2016, reaching out to home

schooled students in Doha, deepening the commitment to the HELA/AFMUN club in Kabul, and mentoring and buddyng up with students from Palestine, including Gaza. THIMUN Qatar 2016 will play host to four very unique delegations, and in the process, expanding the larger TQ community.

Collaborative outreach has at times proven challenging. Mursal Saidali, a TQ2015 delegate and now one of the leaders of the HELA in Afghanistan, said that the security situation in Kabul made it challenging to actually meet as a team in order to prepare. "It's hard to ensure their secu-

rity and convince their families to let them participate." Club leader Vaidehi Vish said that her outreach with Sri Lankan students was challenging due to time zone differences. Back in Doha, Chris Nasrawi, PGA of THIMUN Qatar and a student at Park House English School commented, "One of my biggest challenges has definitely been trying to mentor MUN from scratch. Trying to retrace what I needed to learn to bring myself here, and fill in the gaps in their knowledge without assuming prior knowledge or using MUN jargon they don't understand has been really hard. With hard work and

help from online resources (Best Delegate is my savior), I think we've managed to do a pretty good job."

Delegates have been making progress, learning the MUN lingo, how to write policy statements and resolutions and generally getting oriented to the upcoming conference. Sajindra from Sri Lanka stated "I am anxious and also still have some fear because it's going to be my first experience in (an MUN) conference." Irshadulhaq from Afghanistan stated that the trip was the best way of improving his skills and that "by joining

(Continued on Page 6)

Director Forum



Name: Gloria Ines Gerard-Penalbert

School: The English Modern School of Doha

Number of Years Being an MUN Director:
5 years

Conferences Attended: As director - 30

Idea of a dream vacation: Owning my own school

Biggest pet peeve: Lateness

Animal Lover? Yes

Bigest challenge juggling teaching and being and MUN Director: Time to finish everything on time.

Three things you wish parents or students understood about MUN: The importance it is for the future, becoming a global citizen and having global awareness, and how it prepares them for the real world.

Most memorable MUN moment: Every time I see my delegates shine and feel good about themselves.

Open Forum: MUN is a stepping stone for the future leaders and just the future. This is the perfect place to put your feelings aside and to look at life through someone else's eyes. If anything is going to change in this world it is going to start with these delegates!

New Delegate Focus



Name: Srijay Gokul

School: Qatar academy, Class 10 B

Age: 16

From: Chennai, India

Number of brothers/sisters: Diya Gokul, grade 12. Qatar academy, and Mun Specialist.

A little bit of information about parents: Mom: Doctor (Emergency physician), Dad: Doctor (Orthopedic Surgeon)

Grade in school: 10th Grade Favorite subject in school: Science, English, French, and Cultural Studies

Favorite activity to do in free time: Reading, and Going to the gym (physical education) for balance in life.

Some interesting fact or two about yourself: I have an interest to acting, and movie making as I have been involved in many dramas, theatre play, and short films.

Thoughts about MUN- What have you learned?: Mun has taught me personally many skills of public speaking, as I have had a previous issue with confidence with a large audience. It has also taught me about many conflict issues, going on all over the world that necessarily does not reach the middle east. It has taught me debating skills that have not occupied in previous years, and have learned to fight for myself. Finally, Mun has taught me about interaction with people and meeting new delegates, charis, famous people that I share and get ideas from to develop my own knowledge.

What is the most difficult/most fun about learning MUN?: The most difficult aspect of mun, was the fear of every conference, and determining if you're worth it to debate, or you're not good enough. It creates a huge downfall in your self confidence, and overall ruins the whole conference for yourself and for others. The truth is, the fear is useless and does not exist, because as new delegates there are in the same position as you and when interacting with them can make you more confident and have a fun conference as a whole. The most fun thing that can be obtained from MUN is the experience of meeting new people and sharing new ideas. I think Mun is a great opportunity to be associated gain experience, and jump to new heights with self confidence.

Thoughts about your future participation in MUN: My future in MUN will be very active, as I want to step up my game, and want to become chair next year. Therefore I will try my best to attend most conferences, and try to increase my experience this year alone being a delegate, so that next year I can apply for chair and try and occupy that spot. This is as MUN is a great venture to be on resumes, and is a great opportunity to learn about world issues, meet new people and improve your self confidence!

Student Spotlight



Name: Christopher Nasrawi

Year: 13

Current MUN Leadership Positions: Secretary General at PHESMUN, President of the General Assembly at THIMUN Qatar

Three words that describe you as a delegate: Friendly, but Realistic and Uncompromising

Favorite Comfort Food: Hummus

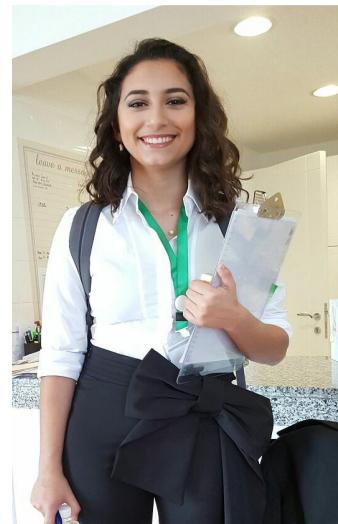
Favorite thing to do when you don't have homework: Watch Cartoons (Steven Universe and Gravity falls are too good)

Pet Peeve: People who in-

terrupt you and then totally derail the conversation so you can't finish what you had to say anymore :'

Personal MUN Goal for the year: To help make sure THIMUN Qatar runs smoothly, and to get the Doha Home Educators and Park House delegates totally prepared for all the MUN conferences they'll run into this year and in future.

One major improvement you'd like to see in Model UN: In many of the conferences I've attended, nations have not been represented entirely accurately in debate. I think learning to argue perspectives you may not agree with is the most important skill that Model UN teaches, as it helps make people more empathetic and understanding, and makes finding solutions to day-to-day conflicts all the easier. Therefore, in the interest of making the world a better place, I think having delegates properly research and embody their assigned countries' views is the improvement I'd like to see.



Name: Alya Saud Al-Amari

Grade: 11, first year IB

School/Country: Ibn Khuldoon National School, Bahrain

Current MUN Leadership: Positions Head of school MUN club Secretary General of Ibn Khuldoon Model United Nations, Bahrain (IKMUN)

Three words that describe you as a delegate:

Observant, adventurous, competitive

Favorite Comfort Food: Curry flavoured instant noodles

Dream vacation: Backpacking across the Philippines

Pet Peeve: Totally unprepared MUN delegates

Personal MUN Goal for the year: My personal MUN goal for the year is to throw a successful, serious Model UN conference and put my school on the figurative MUN map. There's a word in arabic that's always used to describe bad conferences, and it's "maskhara". Basically, my goal is not to hear it.

One major improvement you'd like to see in Model UN: I'd like to see more Arabic councils expand in my region. It makes MUN so much more inclusionary, especially to government schools- who often have the best delegates.

AKISMUN - The Legacy Continues

By Zazza Agri - AKISMUN Head of Communications

This year, on the 27th of March; Al Khor International School (AKIS) made history by hosting their first MUN conference which turned out to be a huge success, stimulating the minds of young leaders in Qatar. With more than 400 participants including delegates from various of other schools such as Al Jazeera, Dukhan English School and International School of London, we were able to set up 7 committees which succeeded in engaging fruitful discussions regarding their assigned issue. In addition to this, we are happy to say that AKISMUN has allowed us to build better relationships between other schools

hence opening up many opportunities for us in the near future.

The second annual AKISMUN conference to be held on the 15th of April 2016 with an overall theme of 'Global Goals' will pick up on last years success whilst following THIMUN procedures. Aiming to increase the number of delegates, we hope to have 8 committees which include General Assemblies 1,2,3,4 and 6 as well as ECOSOC, HRC, and Security Council.

The AKISMUN team believes that inviting other schools to attend its conference is essential as it would provide an educational benefit for students across Qatar. For AKISMUN's

2nd conference, we will be accepting schools of varying curricula across Qatar, including any aspiring Student Officers wishing to chair a committee."We hope AKISMUN will not only provide delegates with an amazing experience but also give a chance to delegates to pick up new skills while gaining different perspectives on pressing issues around the globe.

"We want to focus on offering new delegates an opportunity to engage with MUN, while giving experienced delegates a chance to have a seat at the chair table. We are proud to say that, Al Khor International School strongly believes in diversity and therefore, the promotion of world peace

through mutual understanding." - AKISMUN Executive Team



JrOMUN: A director's view from Taiwan



*By Jessica DelaO,
MUN Director International Bilingual School
Hsinchu*

JrOnline United Nations has been an incredible opportunity for my middle school students, grades 6-8, to participate in Model United Nations' debates with students from around the world. The International Bilingual School Hsinchu—Science Park has been sending young delegates to jrO-MUN debates for the past two years and as a result I've seen interest and participation in our middle school MUN club increase dramatically.

Few opportunities in Taiwan exist for middle school students to participate in face-to-face MUN conferences and coming from a public school, most of my students don't have the means to travel to international conferences off the island. While searching for online de-

bate opportunities for my students, I found jrO-MUN by chance one day. Upon further exploration of the jrO-MUN website, I was delighted to learn that the program is absolutely FREE for students and schools!

The high school student organizers of the jrO-MUN program do a great job of guiding students through the multi-step process of preparing for debates via the educational network, Edmodo.com. Prior to the actual debate, student organizers post reminders, tips and advise for middle school delegates via the jrO-MUN Edmodo group. The Edmodo group has given my students a unique opportunity to interact and work collaboratively with other delegates from schools in the U.S., India, and Afghanistan just to name a few. The group's organizers are friendly and run a well-structured program, which helps relieve much of the burden from MUN directors, as they do the majority of the work.

Based on my positive experience with jrO-MUN, I would highly encourage any curious MUN directors to get their students involved and discover benefits of jrO-MUN on your Middle School MUN program.

Arabic MUN to be hosted at THIMUN Qatar 2016



*By Salma Hassan,
Chair of the Arabic Committee*

The second international arabic committee is going to be held at THIMUN Qatar 2016. This year the committee is much larger, it has more delegates, more topics and more diversity than last year.

Arabic MUN is an initiative that aims to develop young Arabs express their ideas in their mother tongue. It also allows youth who are amazing leaders to join MUN which previously they couldn't participate in due to the language barrier.

As a previous Arabic committee delegate before I can say that it's truly unique and somehow much more fun than English MUN but also a lot more difficult which makes

it far more rewarding. Debates in the Arabic committee are always so fierce and filled with passion, they never disappoint and that's because the delegates know the topics because they are issues happening in their countries, so they feel a connection. This year's topics to be debated include The Question of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, Evaluating the efficiency of the Arab League, and Combatting religious intolerance.

Personally, I am looking forward for the debates on combatting religious intolerance as most delegates will have strong views on the issue. I have high hopes for the Special Regional Committee on the Middle East and North Africa and I am super excited for it!

MISMUN Qatar – Not just a training conference...

By Barakah Bilal Moti, Head Chair of GA6 at MISMUN

On the 4th of December 2015, Messaieed International School hosted its second Model United Nations, aiming at both high school and middle school students. The ultimate goal of the conference was to, “to be even bigger and better than ever before, while maintaining the positive ethos of the first conference”. Without a doubt, the conference had an excellent start and finished strong. MISMUN was a successful one-day conference that embodied the theme of “Breaking Taboos”, in which issues on the agenda revolved around this idea. A short but sweet training conference, left delegates with a boost in their confidence, challenged chairs to put forth their leadership skills and left all participants with lasting memories.

Successful is an understatement. With only 2-3 schools participating in MISMUN in 2014, this years MISMUN broke through with 12 participating schools, where students took on the role as either delegates or chairs. Additionally, MISMUN had 10 committees in total, with about 20-25 delegates in each forum. Since MISMUN was a training conference, more delegates were first-timers, just starting

their MUN careers and finding ways to build their confidence in front a larger group of people by speaking about issues currently on the UN’s agenda. Furthermore, for the first time ever, MISMUN also organized a director’s debate, chaired by the Secretary General and President of the conference. This debate was “hilarious” as quoted by Mrs. Lisa Martin, the Head of THIMUN Qatar, which shows that the conference was enjoyable for both, students and teachers.

Personally speaking, as the Head Chair of GA6, I was concerned about the quality of debate in committee rooms. With only a few experienced delegates and a majority of first time delegates who were clueless of the process, it was a challenge to use my power as a chair to motivate delegates and invoke their ability to come up with radical solutions. I must say, with a number of delegates openly telling the chairs that they were introverts and extremely nervous to speak, did and extremely nervous to speak, did not let us down one bit. It actually encouraged the chairs to use their leadership skills in making sure that debate in the committee was qualitative. As a head chair, I was able to speak to every delegate individually, making sure that everyone steps out of their

comfort zone and delivers a speech. With about $\frac{3}{4}$ of GA6 initially not wanting to break the silence, my co-chairs and I were able to make every delegate speak a number of times as the conference progressed. Shy and vulnerable delegates, aged only 11 years old were able to speak their minds, surely made every participant realize their ability to make changes if only they decide to do so. Similarly, other committees have illustrated a similar progress, which indeed concludes that the conference was a great initiative in preparing delegates for future conferences.

MISMUN was a great conference

overall. With small entertainment sittings in committee rooms, followed by a humorous directors debate and fruitful committee sessions, MISMUN gave joy to every participant. Although MUN is undeniably hard, it did not deter students starting their MUN careers but encourages them further. Hands off to the Secretary General, Hanna Moazam and the respective executive team for pulling together such an enjoyable conference. The goal was certainly achieved, to make MISMUN better than before and to give what they delegates needed, a boost in their confidence and self-esteem for future MUN conferences. Until next time MISMUN!



MSMUN-Q 2016 Preparations Underway

By: Aliyaa Haji, Deputy Secretary General of MSMUNQ 2016

As we commence into a further step into the realm of MSMUNQ, my fellow executive members and I have been profoundly excited in choosing the topics for this learning-based conference. The theme of this year’s conference is Safety and Security, which has brought up topics including “the protection of Syrian refugees”, “measures to protect teenagers from online harassment and abuse” and “combating plastic pollution in oceans”. The number of topics for this year’s MSMUNQ deals with the question of refugees and combating terrorism, as well as cyber surveillance including many others in our eight committees. We are sure these topics will intrigue our middle school delegation into a heated debate and encourage them to write effective resolutions.

These topics will be scrutinized by our fellow Student Officers. In this year’s MSMUNQ, being a student officer was an opportunity for younger students to gain experience in chairing. Having a good number of experienced chairs alongside new chairs will be a profound opportunity for

new student officers. With this balance, MSMUNQ will surely be an effective learning environment for not only our younger delegates but newcomers into our student officer team. Our student officers come from schools such as Qatar Academy, American School of Doha, DPS, Mesaieed International School, and Doha College. As we come closer to MSMUNQ, the opportunities and vision of a better learning environment for students interested in MUN and gaining further skills from it is becoming a reality! We look forward to working with middle school programs in the region to build the best MSMUN-Q yet!

To check out the full list of student officers for MSMUN-Q, please check out our website: <http://thimunqatarpress.org/programs/middle-school-mun/msmun-q-2016-leadership-and-officer-team/>



OMUN ECOSOC Debate

By Irene Ann Promodh, OMUN Delegate, Dubai, UAE

The atmosphere bubbled with intense fervor as the Universal Coordinated Time ticked closer to the end of the much awaited ECOSOC debate. Though we comprised of nations spread across the wide expanse of the globe, we were subconsciously electrified as a single body of future world-changers. Cultural barriers lay strewn on the forefront of the O-MUN field. Ethnic or religious differences crumbled to dust as appointed delegates from the seemingly insignificant country of Lithuania to the global American superpower joined hands to combat the issues facing young men struggling to find employment in post-conflict environments.

As the delegate of Ghana, I received the opportunity to declare my country's economic and social concerns which were apparently quite different to those of the other more developed nations. Due to Ghana's long-standing history of tribal conflict and cyclical patterns of deprivation, the country has experienced the worst situations of stagnation in terms of unemployment and poor living standards. The other countries realized this potential issue and the relevance of the debate question in our modern societies. Consequently, the OMUN delegates cooperated as a team of a multitude of colors, gradually yet inevitably editing the original resolution to suit the needs of all the UN nations as a whole. The perfect balance between arguing for potential amendments and supporting existing relevant clauses prompted me to ponder on the intricate harmony that exists in society as the two opposing groups ironically acted as one body designed to create a final resolution of perfect sympathy for both factions involved. Moreover, when

arguments seemed to veer slightly out of control due to a country's fervent outcry for an amendment, the overseeing moderator reinforced order, and understanding amongst the various nations was restored in mere moments.

The ECOSOC debate was indeed one of the greatest successes in OMUN's debate history as we not only learnt the importance of acting as global citizens to effect social changes, but we also discovered the true essence of leadership and cooperation in a world marked by terror and chaos. Although the debate was held in a virtual online room, in my humble opinion, it represented the beginning of something greater in a physical sense. If young individuals from countries located on every corner of the globe could reach a final and satisfactory agreement after an elapsed time period of two hours, how much more are we capable of in an era when time is indefinite and undefined? If young minds could collaborate with each other in a virtual setting to produce a document containing the ideas of twenty different nations, how much more can we, the leaders of tomorrow, create a global movement towards peace and international security?

In conclusion, OMUN is more than a mere outlet to raise awareness of a social problem; it is a symbol of the potential that "inexperienced" high-schoolers or college students have to initiate a global revolution in favor of collaboration between formerly rival nations. However, such an ambition requires time to manifest itself into reality. But if we, the delegates of OMUN, continue to produce answers to the world's toughest questions, I am sufficiently confident that, in the near future, there will not be any hurdle that we cannot overcome TOGETHER.

Building communities...one MUN club at a time

(Continuation from Page 1)

this trip we can show all people of the world our talent, our leadership skills, and our abilities. If we are trying and if we are facing difficulties -- if there is no pain, there is no gain. This trip is going to be a highlight of our lives and we should acquire achievement for our country and our organization (HELA)."

The impact of a first MUN conference can't be overstated, but for an opportunity to travel overseas and be a part of an international conference of this scale, well, that isn't lost on the mentors, who see this as an unprecedented opportunity for their mentees. "Qatar Academy has been working with the Eravur community in Sri Lanka for a long time, and we have helped build a sister school in Sri Lanka." Shared Vaidehi Vish, a member of the QA Action

Club and the person who first envisioned bringing Sri Lankan students to THIMUN Qatar. "I felt it was time to provide students in Sri Lanka with more opportunities to flourish outside the classroom. I just wanted to share one of the most amazing experiences I have had as student with them, and that was MUN. Seeing the Afghan delegation the previous year inspired me to take action to make this idea happen. MUN helps connect the world, and it's so exciting to see another delegation having the opportunity to benefit from MUN and make a change."

"Mentoring a delegation of homeschooled students in MUN and bringing them to THIMUN paves the way for the popularization of Model United Nations among homeschooled students in Qatar, and for them to be able to host an MUN club independent of a school."



Chris continues "I think that bringing Model United Nations to more students like this is extremely important because of the skills the activity develops. The diplomatic and social skills, as well as the research and public speaking skills learned through MUN are absolutely invaluable, so I'm honoured to be a part of bringing them to homeschooled delegates in Qatar."

Most serious MUN delegates understand the what they get out of MUN, from the social to the academic, but it's good to be reminded just how important some



of our visiting delegates view THIMUN Qatar 2016, something Mursal made clear in her comments. "Afghanistan is a country living in conflict; at this time our country needs leaders, real leaders, that will take Afghanistan toward a peaceful country far away from war. Through joining this conference Afghan youth will develop international communication with world's youth; they can show their talent to world! This conference will help them to raise their level of knowledge. This conference means a lot for Afghan youth and for the HELA organization. This will help Afghanistan

Park House English School Successfully Hosts Model United Nations Conference (PHESMUN)

Park House English School, one of Qatar's oldest and most prestigious British schools, hosted the PHESMUN Conference on Saturday, November 21. More than 230 delegates, including 90 students from Park House, participated in the conference. Doha College, Qatar International School, Dukhan English School, Al-Khor International School, English Modern School and Al Jazeera Academy all participated along with seven students from the Doha Home Educators, a homeschooling programme. Park House has a rich history in participating in MUN conferences throughout the country with highlights being the Doha College MUN VIII earlier this month as well as the Qatar MUN and Film Leadership Conference 2015.

During PHESMUN, all delegates worked hard on preparing their research and presenting on issues related to the theme of The Millennium Development Goals. Apart from extensive research, delegates also conducted a number of debates on topics including "The question of regulating informal employment", "Addressing the role of cultural beliefs in acquisition of health-care", "Targeting social and cultural differences when combating bilateral tensions" and "Measures to reduce carbon emissions".

Members of the Executive Committee trained new members as well as the participating Park House delegates.

Mr. Dougie Smith, Headmaster of Park House English School, said: "We are extremely proud to have hosted PHESMUN. The participating delegates made this such an exciting and interesting event filled with intellectual debates, lively discussions and thought-provoking insight. MUN is a great initiative that teaches students a range of skills including diplomacy, research, public speaking, debating, writing, critical thinking and team work, along with developing leadership abilities, their understanding of international relations and the role of the UN."

Major highlights during PHESMUN included a live press conference simulation hosted by Laura Kyle, Principal Presenter, News Reader and International Correspondent, and Tom Nicholson, a cameraman, both from Al Jazeera English News Channel. Students were placed under the spotlight and answered hard hitting questions as Ambassadors of their assigned countries. Mr. Issa Mohamed Al-Ishaq, the Administration and Finance Manager of Qatar Red Crescent, was the keynote speaker during the Opening Ceremony.



MISMUN's Secretary General reflects on MUN

By Hanna Moazam, MISMUN Secretary General

Cocaine, crack, heroin ... MUN. All these things have one thing in common. They're addictive. The more you get the more you want.

My own first conference experience was simply terrifying, as a delegate in GA5 in THIMUN Qatar. The first day left me in tears. There were so many people who seemed to know so much more than me and who refused to listen to my perfectly valid arguments, and I was completely unaccustomed to being contradicted and ignored. But over the next few days, as our former director Ms. Falck predicted, I caught the 'MUN bug', and since then have been a passionate MUNner.

After MISMUN 2015, you are guaranteed to likewise be hooked and eager for more. With the innovative theme of 'Breaking Taboos', we plan on providing every single one of the 300 people involved with an unforgettable experience.

MISMUN is a platform which provides students with the opportunity to bring a novel, youthful perspective to issues such as the spread of ISIS; the question of the sustainability of aid to LEDCs and the issue of genetically modified organisms, among others. By debating such topics, we consider not only the controversies and policies surrounding real world decisions, but also question many of society's deeply ingrained perceptions, and force the delegates to take into account a variety of viewpoints.

One of our main focuses this year is creating opportunity. With non-member delegations, trainee chairs and Arab League, we have widened the reach of MUN, and thus created an incredibly diverse conference.

In all the hype around student empowerment in MUN, the teachers and adults who volunteer so much of their time and effort are often sidelined and forgotten until they chaperone us into buses at the end of the day. At MISMUN however, we'll be giving the directors a hands-on MUN experience, debating a topic that is one of the biggest taboos and is guaranteed to spark fiery arguments: "The issue of the rights of expats in the Middle East, with focus on Qatar".

Last but not the least, we have the honour of welcoming Michelle Wu, an IT leader at General Electric, as our keynote speaker on 'Breaking Taboos', a topic that is very near to her own personal success story. Her story will inspire and motivate, and put into context the importance of conferences such as MISMUN which provide us with the opportunity to learn so many of the skills that are necessary for survival in the real world.

"Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything"
– George Bernard Shaw.



Maverick Youth



Interview with Bassim Eledath, with contributions from MY staff writer, Alia El Kattan

When was MY founded?

Maverick Youth was founded on September 18th, 2014

Are you the sole founder?

Yes, but we have a large team that manages the website.

Why did you decide to launch Maverik Youth?

The idea came to me in the summer of 2014. I was the Press & Publications Officer at O-MUN and I was in charge of the website's blog. Seeing as there were so many young people from around the world who wanted to submit their writing, I saw it is an opportunity to start a publication dedicated to voicing the opinions of the youth. I wanted to create a publication that valued the writers as much as the readers (in other words, not a click-bait). Over the many months we've been in operation, we've had articles on social issues like gender inequality, economic problems like the plummeting of oil prices, impact stories like the one on Farhad (the story of an individual who fled Afghanistan) and topics that were simply out of the blue, like the article on Mean Girls. That's the beauty of MY—you can express your opinions on absolutely anything at all. Every article offers the reader a fresh perspective—the young perspective.

Are there any costs associated with MY and how do you fund that?

Yes there are minor costs

such as web hosting. As we receive more and more website traffic, the cost increases. As of now, I am using my pocket money to finance these costs. However, owing to the recent success of our merchandise sale for charity, the marketing team of MY is planning to sell more merchandise items and a portion of the profits will be used for future expenses.

How many writers did you start with and how many do you have now?

We started with only 6 writers. Like most startups, we had a shaky start. I was told MY would not hold strong and that "teenagers only click a link if it's from Buzzfeed". In fact, a strong critic of the website posted 10 reasons why MY would fail on his Facebook timeline. But looking back, those disheartening comments are what pushed our team and we are now stronger than ever. We are an official publication on Apple News with nine regional branches spanning 6 continents and we have 100+ writers.

How large is your readership? If you know, how do you know?

According to Google Analytics, we have viewers from more than 150 countries. According to WordPress, we receive on average 100-300 page-views a day. There is a lot of variation in this data. On some days we receive as little as 50 page-views, and on others, we receive more than 2,000 page-views (when a popular article is published).

How did the OMUN network contribute to the global scale of MY?

Alia – O-MUN has successfully established a global community of youth from different backgrounds who are opinionated and proactive leaders in their own different ways. That way, the O-MUN community was what Maverick Youth was looking for—the brightest minds around the world who have their distinct perspectives. Thus a lot of our members are a part of the O-MUN community too.

What observations can you make on the degree of comfort/acceptance that young people find in online communities, and in building their own organic communities?

Alia – In online communities like O-MUN or Maverick Youth, there's usually a common understanding that people want to communicate, make new friends, and connect with different people. As a result, you find that students are a lot more comfortable adding people on Facebook and starting conversations with people they've never met. The online community we're a part of already acts as a common interest and as assurance that other members of the community would be accepting and welcoming, thus allowing young people to get out of their comfort zones and interact with new people, building many overseas friendships.

What are educators missing about the power of connected youth communities?

Alia's answer – There's definitely undeniable educational benefits that come from the exposure being in an online youth community provides. Aside from the opportunity to create friend-



ships and meet new people, being connected to diverse youth from all around the world opens your mind towards new perspectives and expands your knowledge. It also provides great opportunities for leadership, especially with communities which are primarily youth-led such as MY or O-MUN.

How can we get more authentic student writing out of individuals? How does MY play into that discussion?

I would change the undue importance given to objectiveness over creativity. It's not about the curriculum being impractical or not. That doesn't matter. Whether it's history, biology or chemistry—you will eventually forget the facts and figures. Testing, as a result, should be focused more on thinking and not rote learning. When students are made to answer questions that don't solely rely on what they already know, it exercises their minds to push their mental boundaries. A school that focuses on 'how' they teach rather than 'what' they teach is an institution that fosters true learning.

At MY we have a saying—'We give you the platform and you make the difference'. The reason why we have so many writers who write for free is because of our global reach. They have something to say and they want to be heard. This invariably promotes authentic writing. By giving a platform bereft of any limitations on expression, I believe we play a powerful role in that regard.

For more information on Maverick Youth, please visit their website at <http://www.maverickyouth.com/>.

Last Call: THIMUN Qatar Northwestern Film Festival deadline approaching

The THIMUN Qatar Northwestern Film Festival deadline is approaching. Please Remember to submit your films using the following link:

<http://tqnfilmfestival.com/.>

The portal is still open. A reminder that you will not be able to submit your films after February 10th 2016.

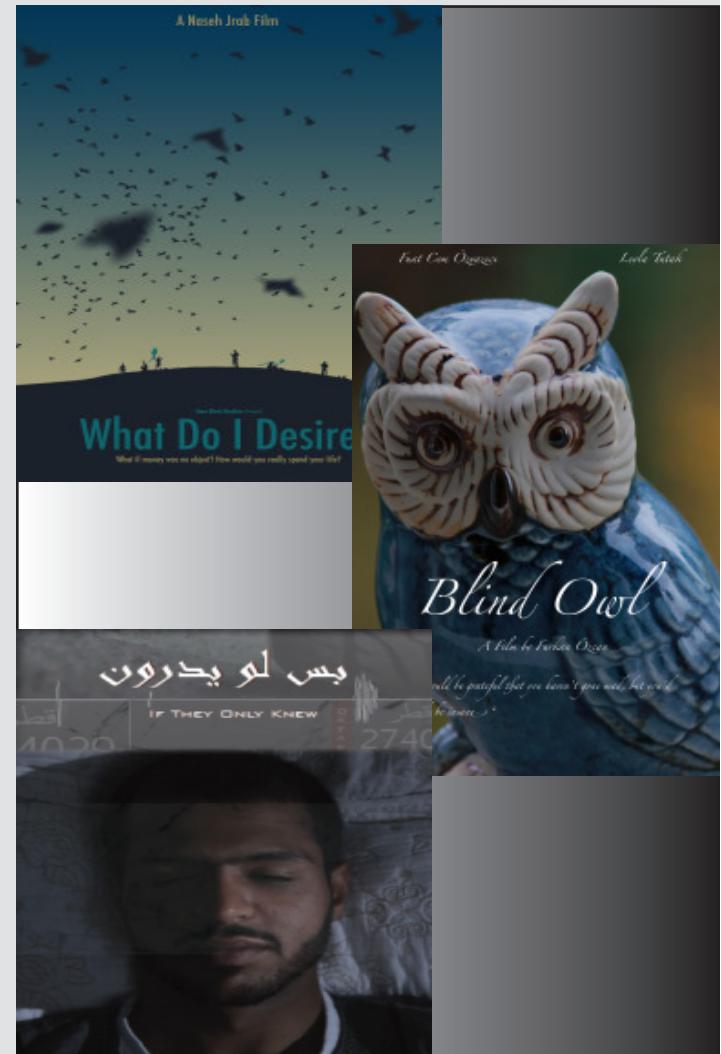


To view past submissions from the festival visit our YouTube page-

[https://www.youtube.com/user/THI-MUNQatarFilmFest](https://www.youtube.com/user/THIMUNQatarFilmFest)

-and also stay tuned to our Facebook page for any updates:

[https://www.facebook.com/THI-MUNQatarNorthwesternFilmFestival/](https://www.facebook.com/THIMUNQatarNorthwesternFilmFestival/)



QLC 2016
QATAR LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

20-22 October, 2016
Deadline for registration 30 June, 2016

 **THIMUN QATAR**
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5th
Annual QLC

**THIMUN
QATAR
NORTHWESTERN
FILM
FESTIVAL**

**2016 THIMUN QATAR
NORTHWESTERN
FILM FESTIVAL**

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 **NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY IN QATAR**

THIMUN Qatar and Northwestern University in Qatar are encouraging high school student films through a documentary film festival from March 24-26, 2016 in Doha, Qatar.

Educational opportunities and prize money are offered for winning entries.

The film submission deadline is February 10, 2016.

Details can be found online at <http://qatar.thimun.org/film-festival>

Write for the Olive Branch!

Submit articles by the 1st of the month.

**Email thimunqblog@gmail.com
for more information**