



THE OLIVE BRANCH

MODEL UNITED NATIONS NEWSLETTER



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Conference Calendar

Upcoming Dates:

11/14-11/15
DCMUN

11/26
NIMUN Registration Opens

11/16-11/23
THIMUN Singapore

11/22-11/23
KSSA MUN

11/22-11/23
Bayan Bilingual Conference

11/22-11/24
KIETMUN

11/28-11/29
BUMUN

Online MUN:

11/3
Security Council

11/10
Asia Regional

11/16
Global Debate

11/24
Pacific Regional

11/24-11/25
jrO-MUN

11/30
Middle East/Africa Regional

11/30
Taiwan

Finding Purpose, Hope, and Community at the 2013 Qatar Leadership Conference



Each year, the Qatar Leadership Conference gives members the opportunity to share their stories with students and teachers in the region.

By Ryan Villanueva

OVER 300 students and educators from across the globe flocked to the second annual Qatar Leadership Conference last month for 3 days of presentations on Model UN, film

making, and leadership. Kevin and I attended the conference and presented alongside dozens of student leaders and pioneering educators.

But the conference is not just about the presentations themselves and exchanging academ-

ic knowledge and information. The QLC is really about the people who presented and the opportunity that this conference gives them to share their stories.

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The Press Club

By Rebecca Cain

I HAVE JUST attended the Qatar Leadership Conference where I co-presented the workshop on How to Run a Successful Press Team. I really enjoyed speaking with many other teachers about MUN, for the most part, it seems that a press club is not a familiar area. So, to address many of the questions I was asked during the conference I have put together my 'How to Guide' for starting up a press club.

From Small Beginnings

As MUN Director of PHES I am always busy making sure the MUN Club runs smoothly and that everyone is given a chance. I realized that there were a number of students joining MUN because they wanted to pursue a career in journalism, so I decided that we needed our own Press Club to run in tandem with the MUN program.

Our press club is in its second year and is proving to be very successful. The fact that we didn't have a student newspaper has not hindered our students in any way. If you already have a student newspaper, you could assign a small team within that to focus on MUN related topics. Having already supervised press teams on a large scale I was in a lucky position, already knowing what would be expected from the students and what we needed to make it work.

Assign a Student Leader

Following a similar ethos as MUN, the press club should be student run. I selected the editor- a student who demonstrates sound leadership skills, is comfortable delegating and can string a sentence together reasonably well. Our student leader oversees the daily running of the press club. They assign the stories, they check the work and liaise with the rest of their team and they make sure

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18 Months of Model UN

By Shukri Ahmad Shahizan

MY FIRST, and so far only, article that's been posted from last year was about O-MUN's

growth, so please excuse me this time for talking about my personal MUN development, and how O-MUN ties into it.

In the span of 18 months, I

have gone from having only the slightest clue of how MUN procedure works, to being a lowly Admin Team member at a middle school conference, to being

EAO of Singapore for O-MUN, to being the Secretary General of a wholly student-run and independent MUN conference. From the outside, my progression may seem somewhat miraculous, but I assure you that there's a lot more to it than it seems. Straight up, I can tell you that there was nothing miraculous, no short cuts or cheat codes involved. The fact is that throughout these past 18 months, there's been a MUN experience accelerator of sorts working in the background, O-MUN, of course.

As many new to MUN quickly find out, there are no short cuts in MUN. The only thing that begets experience is experience. The problem is though, since MUN experience mostly comes through attending MUN conferences, it usually comes in large chunks with periods of (mostly) inactivity

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Model UN teaches skills not only in the realm of debate, but also in personal development.

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QLC 2013

By Lisa Martin

THE SECOND ANNUAL Qatar Leadership Conference, which took place September 27-29, once again surpassed last year's expectations. Over 400 students and their directors, from all over

the Middle East and the world, attended two and a half days of informative sessions relating to MUN, leadership and film. The presenters, ranging from high school students to professional keynote speakers, combined to make for a dynamic and informative weekend in

Doha. Ten sessions an hour were offered, with varied sessions such as: how to improve public speaking, how to be a better researcher, informative discussions on human trafficking, stories from the genocide in Rwanda, and so much more. O-MUN was well represented this year, with seven sessions relating directly to O-MUN, including a demo debate, a jrO-MUN overview, how to use MightyBell, and how to start an O-MUN club at your school. A special highlight was Assistant Director Salam Keadan's presentation on nationality politics in Israel, entitled "It's Complicated", the second which resulted in a standing ovation from supportive conference participants.

The highlights continued throughout the event, eventually culminating with a signing ceremony marking the partnership between O-MUN and The Hague International Model United Nations. Adib Mattar, the new President for O-MUN's Board of Directors, flew in from Abu Dhabi to attend the ceremony and O-MUN's first annual Director's meeting later that evening. The signing ceremony also included Board members Kristin Rowe, David Williams and David Taylor, and Student Leadership Team members Rohan

Sinha, Secretary General for jrO-MUN, Maryam Al-Ammari, SG for O-MUN, Ugbad Kasim and Salam Keadan, Assistant Directors for the program. Also present were Cameron Janzen, Head of THIMUN Qatar and Alain Meidinger, Co-Chair of the THIMUN Foundation.

Speeches and presentations and ceremony aside, what was most special about the QLC was the ability to connect, face to face, around a community we are building together. From our friends at Best Delegate, Ryan and KFC, to professional acquaintances, many friendships were made and renewed. It was a time for both students and teachers to reflect on the importance and promise of MUN, leadership and film. The energy and pride were palpable, and friendships, made first online, were deepened by the exceptional experience that made up this leadership event. Judging from the many long faces in the lobby of the Movenpick as people said goodbye, it was an event no one wanted to see end!

So while the memories are still fresh, I wanted to reflect on what has been an incredible weekend for THIMUN O-MUN. What a difference a year makes! And if history is any indicator, the upcoming year is sure to be an incredible one too!



The finalization of the THIMUN and O-MUN partnership was a highlight of the Qatar Leadership Conference this year.

QLC in a Nutshell

By Hannah Akhtar

"**INSPIRATIONAL**, absolutely amazing, unforgettable, a fashion show;" these are a sample of some of the praising remarks made by the participants of the second annual Qatar Leadership Conference.

Georgetown University of Foreign Service hosted the second annual, three-day, Qatar Leadership conference which took place on September 26-28 2013. While the events of the conference are still fairly vivid, one particular aspect of the conference, which continues to remain prominent in my memory, is the rush everybody was in, which was the driving force of the entire event.

The rush of the admin staff, as they dashed here and there behind the scenes, ensuring that every aspect of the conference was nothing short of perfection. The rush of the participants, desperately attempting to reach their desired sessions, surges of adrenalin from the wonderfully equipped canteen assisting to speed up their frantic movements. The rush of the presenters and speakers, attempting to regain their composure, sharing their compelling depths of knowledge with the overwhelming quantities of eager participants. The rush of the executive team, as members organized and subsequently reorganized each aspect of the conference.

And finally, the rush of Mr. Janzen as he oversaw each and every detail of the conference while he observed the hurrying of the Admin staff, the mad and frantic movements of the participants, the communication of information from the presenters the very decisions, which were made by the executive team.

Another memorable and commendable component of the conference was the diversity of sessions. A variety of sessions was provided to cater to different aspects of one topic. For example, on the topic of Model United Nations there were individual sessions each focused on sub categories of MUN such as lobbying, Debating, framing and writing resolutions, and preparing speeches. This not only provided a wide variety of sessions to attend, it also assisted in improved the skills, which the participants personally lacked confidence in.

In addition to the teaching sessions, there were also sessions with guest speakers. We enjoyed two sessions with Carl Wilkens and his compelling first-hand account of being in war situations. He told of his incredible bravery while being the only American who decided to stay in Rwanda during the genocide of 1994. It was extremely moving to hear of the courage he displayed throughout the horrific event, refusing to leave the country despite all the dangers, in order to ensure the safety of his Rwandan friends. It was not uncommon for the odd participant to shed a tear or two.

When the time came for the closing ceremonies, many participants were left with bittersweet feelings. Yet at the same time, they felt confident, and determined to help make a difference in their communities with their newfound knowledge. Overall, the second annual Qatar Leadership Conference, was a huge success. It is only a matter of time before QLC will return for a third time, where it will be eagerly received by the community it has changed for the better.



Two MUNners pose for a picture in front of a THIMUN poster.

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Founded in January 2013

The Olive Branch

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O-MUN Marks its Partnership with THIMUN

By Lisa Martin

IN A BRIEF ceremony during Friday's plenary session, members of O-MUN, the THIMUN Foundation and THIMUN Qatar marked Online Model United Nation's partnership with THIMUN. The ceremony was presided over by the Head of THIMUN Qatar, Cameron Janzen. Alain Meidinger, co-chair of the THIMUN Foundation, represented The Hague International Model United Nations itself. A large cross-section of O-MUN's leadership team were called to the stage, including O-MUN Board of Directors members Kristan Rowe (Taipei American School), David Williams (former head of the THIMUN Foundation), David Taylor (Dean of International Studies at Overseas Family School, Singapore) and Board President (pictured) Adib Mattar (senior Vice-President at Mubadala, Abu Dhabi). Also called onstage were members of O-MUN's student leadership team: Assistant Directors Salam Keadan and Ugbad Kasim, and Secretaries General Maryam Al-Ammari (Saudi Arabia) and Rohan Sinha (Taiwan).

Signing the ceremonial proclamation were Lisa Martin, O-MUN founder and Director, Cameron Janzen, Alain Meidinger, Adib Mattar, and Ugbad Kasim. Adib, a former high school and university MUN delegate, who collectively represented the continuity and staying



Heads of THIMUN and O-MUN sign the proclamation unifying the two organizations at the QLC 2013.

power of Model United Nations. In addition, Ugbad, from Somalia, represented the hundreds of students O-MUN is

working to reach with its innovative format. Overall, the ceremony capped an amazing year for Online Model

United Nations and officially ushered in a new era for THIMUN and its many delegates.

Finding Purpose, cont.

It would be near-impossible to describe all of the eye-opening presenters and incredible stories from the conference in a single article, but for me, there were three people whom I met who captured the meaning of this conference and what made it such an impactful event on everyone who attended.

Kevin and I had the chance to meet David Williams, a bona fide legend in Model United Nations. David is the founder and former Chairman of the THIMUN Foundation, and co-author of one of the first books on MUN, *Uniting the Nations through Model United Nations*. At the conference, his keynote presentation was "Model UN is Not a Game," which piqued my interest; the idea of "gaming" and non-UN-related simulations has become a hot topic within the MUN community, especially after this summer's New York Times article on "The Dog-Eat-Dog World of Model UN."

I attended David's presentation and found it not so much a critique of current MUN practices, but a historical examination of how MUN (specifically THIMUN) used to be when David started advising MUN. David showed us video of delegates from THIMUN in the early 80s, with delegates dressed in costume; the delegate from Cuba, emulating Fidel Castro, wore fatigues and puffed on a cigar in committee! Delegates made seemingly random motions from the floor, and one delegate publicly defected in order to join another delegation.

Delegates had a lot of fun, but it did seem chaotic. As David explained, that's when THIMUN stated implementing more formal rules of procedure, and instituting dress code and other conference policies, in order to make MUN "more than a game" and elevate it into a truly educational activity. The pres-

entation ended with video of THIMUN from the 2000s, with delegates in suits, following procedure, and being welcomed by then-Prince and now-King Willem-Alexander van Oranje of the Netherlands.

I came away from the presentation and from meeting David with not only a greater appreciation for THIMUN, but a deeper respect for the teachers and educators who loved Model United Nations before Kevin and I even attended our first conference. David and others saw the potential for Model UN, and they poured their hearts and souls into making it better and defining its purpose as an educational activity.

And, I received a pleasant surprise during David's presentation. The video featured an interview with a delegate attending THIMUN in the 1980s. When asked where she was from, she replied, "Mission Viejo" — she was from my high school!

The QLC was an opportunity to meet one of the most incredible people I've ever met: Carl Wilkens. Carl was the only American to remain in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. As the genocide unfolded, he was able to evacuate his wife, Teresa, and young children, but he stayed behind in order to save lives.

Carl gave a presentation to the entire conference, and I sat in the front row thinking how surreal it must have been, to be trapped at home as the horrors of the genocide unfolded around you, knowing that the wrong word or the wrong step could mean the end for yourself and those around you.

It was also incredible to hear Carl describe how he had to build relationships with those involved in the slaughter in order to save lives. And it was inspiring to hear him talk about Rwanda today with such hope, describing how far

the country and the people have come, and the lessons that they hold for people around the world.

My favorite presentation of the weekend was given one of Kevin's and my own students, Salam Keadan. Salam serves as a student officer within THIMUN O-MUN; she was one of the members of the Online MUN delegation to THIMUN; and she attended the Best Delegate Summer Program at UC Berkeley with her brother. Salam is also a Palestinian living in Israel, and she gave a heart-rending presentation on what it feels like to lack a cultural identity.

In her presentation, Salam first described the difficulties of being both a Palestinian living in Israel. Although her and her families are Israeli citizens, they don't feel treated as equal citizens, and are constantly subjected to searches and questioning. Salam explained that Arab cities and communities exist in Israel, but they are constantly underfunded and underrepresented. As a student, she had to study under the Israeli education system, which does not take into account Palestinian history and perspectives.

Then, Salam described the difficulties of being an Israeli citizen visiting Palestine and other neighboring countries. She explained that Palestinians living in Israel are regarded as traitors by other Palestinians for not leaving Israel. When Salam and her family visit Palestine, they speak Arabic, but a slight accent gives away that they live in Israel. When they go shopping, shopkeepers recognize their accent and charge them higher prices for their purchases. In addition, because Salam holds an Israeli passport, most neighboring countries will not let her enter, and she has to jump through a lot of hoops in order to travel.

My jaw dropped with every story that Salam shared, which made the audience and me realize the extent of her oppression as both an Israeli and a Palestinian, as someone caught between both cultures and accepted by neither. But the one thing that gives her a chance to share her story, that gives her a voice — that gives her a sense of identity — is Model United Nations. Through THIMUN O-MUN, she's able to interact with students across the region and around the world. Although their interaction starts anonymously, slowly she learns about other students and they learn about her, and she's able to get around the cultural and political barriers of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to share herself and tell her story, and be part of a larger community. And at Best Delegate Summer Programs, Salam told me, was the only time she felt like she could be herself around other students, where she was seen as a fellow student with her own unique background and experience and story, where she also felt part of a community.

The QLC was a wonderful experience that truly encompassed the meaning of leadership on many different levels, from building lasting educational institutions, to holding onto hope in the face of horror, and having the courage to share your story and finding your identity within a community.

Thank you to Secretary-General Jamal Al Ani and his team of student leaders, Head of THIMUN Qatar Cameron Janzen and Conference Coordinator Ann Rogers, and all the presenters and participants on a great conference. Also thank you to conference hosts Northwestern University in Qatar and the Georgetown School of Foreign Service in Qatar.

Kevin and I hope to see you all next year — *inshallah!*

MUN in Palestine, Part I

By Lisa Martin

IT HAS BEEN an incredible couple of days, tagging along with Best Delegate's Ryan Villanueva on our tour of Palestine and Israel. One blog post would not do these three short days justice, but in an attempt to document this special outreach tour, I need to provide a little background.

This outreach tour was sponsored by THIMUN Qatar, who supports Best Delegate by providing logistical resources to visit schools in the Middle East. In addition to visiting Kings Academy and the International Academy of Amman in Jordan, O-MUN facilitated visits to two additional schools: Al Qasemi High School in the Arab town of Baqa al-Gharbiyye in Israel, and Friends Boy School in Ramallah, Palestine.

O-MUN has been working to develop contacts with these last two schools. The FBS program in Ramallah is O-MUN's sponsor for the THIMUN O-MUN Palestine program, run separately and independently from O-MUN's core online program. In the case of Qasemi High School, Salam Keadan, one of our Assistant Directors for the MEA region, and a recent graduate, is working to assist the school in growing their MUN program. Baqa el-Gharbiye is an Arab town just inside the Green Line (the 1949 demarcation line between Israel and Palestine). Salam, a THIMUN O-MUN Delegate to The Hague in 2013, a QLC presenter this September, and dedicated O-MUN leader, provided us with door to door shuttle service, the hospitality of staying with her wonderful family, and guided tours of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. She was, of course, the primary organizer for the workshop held on 5th October.

The visit to Qasemi was fantastic, although we arrived late due to has-

sles at the checkpoint entering Israel from the West Bank (see Part 2). Seventeen students, a combination of new and returning MUN delegates, worked through Ryan's famous debate "Which is better, fruit or vegetables.". Students worked through the debate cycle of lobbying, drafting policy statements, making opening speeches and asking points



Best Delegate's Ryan Villanueva and O-MUN's Lisa Martin visit Palestine and Israel

of information. The variations of fruit salad that emerged from this session alone would fill a recipe book, but the larger goal of initiating students into the MUN process was successful. After an O-MUN pitch by yours truly, snacks and some GREAT conversation with delegates, Ryan gave an overview of the UN, and shared a number of research techniques. And then, it was over! Students lingered to talk some more, providing Ryan and I with some incredible insights into the lives of these students. We followed up with a quick visit to meet the school's principal, Faris Kablawi, the following morning.

After a day of sightseeing on Sunday,

we headed to Ramallah on Monday. Our drive through Palestine, this time hassle free, was beautiful, and for me, felt like driving through my adopted country of Jordan, just a mere 30 miles away: olive groves, rocky soil, small villages with striking minarets looming above the skyline of these towns. Of course, in the distance one could see settlements, and

particularly exciting was having delegates from two additional schools present: Jerusalem High School and American School of Palestine (in Ramallah). Passions flared as students again debated the merits of their fruits and vegetables, with lightning rod statements for and against the Kingdom of Pumpkin. New delegates got to feel the cycle of MUN preparation during this simulation, and experienced delegates showed off some strong oratory skills. There were some hilarious moments during this debate. Most interesting in this session was the Q and A about the UN itself, and the deep skepticism and frustration most felt at the inability of the organization to do much in the area of the Israel-Palestine conflict. We left with the added appreciation for the strong MUN culture that exists in pockets of Palestine, and excited that our trip had allowed us an opportunity to connect with these programs.

We then drove through Ramallah, headed back to the border and home to Jordan. The roads crowded, the streets dark, The Wall looming to our right, the cars piled up at the check point and our taxi driver ranting all the while. In the distance we could see gleaming lights and wide roads in the settlements. It had the feeling of being in a bad scene from the Blade Runner: dark, decrepit, menacing, surreal, and all in such stark contrast to the quirky, funny, passionate, intelligent delegates we met at Qasemi and Friends. Ryan and I sat in silence as we were driven to the border, each of us lost in our own thoughts. Fortunately we will be back, but until then, I personally will hold on to the images of goodness and kindness and straight up fun that we had on our tour. That is the Israel and Palestine that I will work to connect O-MUN to, and perhaps, someday, to each other.

Friends Boy School (now the home of the co-ed secondary school) is a beautiful old building just a couple of blocks from the historic center of old Ramallah, Manara (Lions) Square. After checking in with FBS's new MUN Director, Olivia Grugan, we hit the town for lunch and some shopping. Ramallah is a bustling place, and we could have spent hours touring around this interesting city. At 3:30, however, we were back and ready to start the session. Par-



(Left) Delegates share and discuss ideas in a traditional caucus bloc; (right) Ryan and Palestinian delegates pose for a photograph

MUN in Palestine, Part II: O-MUN's Palestine Program

By Lisa Martin

THIS POST IS one that has been in development for almost two years, and with our recent trip to Palestine and Israel, a story that needs to be shared. The impetus for this started with our first delegates from Israel attending several debates in the spring of 2011. Quickly reality of politics began to bump up against the desire to create a global youth program. Now that THIMUN O-MUN has connected with delegates, made friends, and encouraged participation in both parts of this divided land, it is good to explain how O-MUN is maneuvering through the geopolitics of it all, remaining true to the ethical and legal requirements of being a not for profit educational program, but aware of the political realities of working with Palestinian students.

I will start with a story. Last week, Ryan Villanueva from Best Delegate, and myself, did a three day swing through the region. Salam, our MEA regional Assistant Director, Israeli citizen, and Muslim Arab, was there waiting for us, along with her father. In our travel from this border, through Palestine and into Israel, we came to a checkpoint. Salam's father was driving, and we were en route to Ryan's first speaking engagement at Qasemi High School. The lightning rod of attention was our O-MUN AD's hijab, and we were immediately pulled over at the Israeli checkpoint and ordered out of the car. Our bags were taken out, searched, and sniffer dogs descended on the car. The woman overseeing this lovely operation kept disappearing with Salam's passport, and called Ryan, Salam and myself in to be questioned semi-privately. Fortunately Salam insisted she speak in English, so we were getting the gist of how this was unfolding. It eventually came down to one overarching concern: how could three people, who had met online and 'known' each other for only a year, be travelling together as friends.

When round two of questioning began, I grabbed my bag and pulled out the January 2013 MUNITY article that profiled O-MUN's trip to The Hague. That photo included both Salam and myself. With my THIMUN O-MUN business card as the last piece of evidence handed over, our passports were immedi-

ately returned and no further questions asked. Glancing over our shoulders, we saw two women and three small children now having their car torn apart, and this might have forced our security matron to speed up her game and get us on our way. I'd like to think that our special O-MUN story won her over, but I doubt it.

We were late to Qasemi High School, but the students laughed, quite understanding of our recent experience. The students at this school were Palestinian, living on the Israeli side of the green line. And in our stay in Baqa El-Gharbiye and travels around Israel, we experienced other examples of racist, discriminatory actions. Ryan and I got to live a slice of Salam's QLC presentation, and it was uncomfortable, infuriating and ultimately, incredibly sad.

How does this story tie back to O-MUN's policies in Israel/Palestine? Quite simply, students here, a mere few miles apart, live in different universes, and in some cases, are actually forbidden to formally associate with one another. O-MUN discovered this the hard way, when in the winter of 2011, we attempted to connect with students in Palestine. At the mention of the small handful of Muslim student's participation in O-MUN (who happened to live in Israel) the conversation ended. Due to Palestine's non-recognition policy of Israel, schools cannot participate in organizations where Israeli students might frequent. We faced a dilemma, but as our Palestine connections faded, so too did the urgency of a workable solution. One thing was certain. There was no ethical or legal way to create a global MUN organization with an exclusion policy against Israeli teenagers.

Last year we developed national level O-MUN programs, and herein we found our solution. National programs are run by a school for the benefit of the country. For example, Taiwan, with its 100+ delegates, debates monthly, with the moderators and students all coming from Taiwan itself. This national-level program is duplicating itself in France, Egypt, Singapore and Jordan. As we developed these last spring, we again attempted contact with Palestinian students, this time at Friends Boys School (FBS) in Ramallah. When we laid out the program and our desire to find a Pal-



Salam shows off the MUNITY article that got THIMUN O-MUN's group past the checkpoint

estinian partner school, they agreed to give it a try. To keep this program separate from the larger global O-MUN program did not require active exclusion, since national programs are designed to be autonomous, so we were not promoting or accommodating exclusionary online spaces.

It works like this: First, FBS runs an all-Palestine program, and will develop the THIMUN O-MUN Palestine program for students in Palestine/Gaza. Second, FBS does not have its country Liaison sit on the global leadership team; the program can remain totally autonomous. An Assistant Director of Egyptian background and now living in Turkey, is the point of contact between the two programs. Third, Palestinian students in Israel are free to join the global and regional programs O-MUN offers, just like any other student, but will not be able to join the Palestine program, just as students on mainland China or other places in Asia can't join the Taiwan program.

Of course, secretly I hope that these students bump up against each other in the virtual world, and that possibly

the allure of a great debate will entice Palestinian delegates to join our larger global debates. But that's my secret wish, and not one I need to actively promote. Students will gravitate to the programs they feel most comfortable with, and for now, that is more than enough.

Don't think for a moment that I see this as one big global family where differences will fade away and peace will take root and end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in some kumbaya-moment of youth solidarity. But I've seen enough of O-MUN to know that for some students, the ability to connect with others beyond their home towns, countries or other barriers (socio-economic, political, religious etc) is profoundly important, even transformative. That is O-MUN's biggest strength and the ultimate compliment. If our current policies bring that possibility to as many students in Palestine and Israel as possible, I can say we are on the right track. If readers have further questions on the THIMUN O-MUN Palestine program or other program activities in the Middle East, contact Lisa Martin via the website's feedback form.

O-MUN's Behind-the-Scenes Hero

By Chloe Rickards

MANY DIFFERENT people helped cultivate O-MUN from an idea to a thriving reality, but an integral, and often overlooked, factor of O-MUN's success lies in the development of its website. This is where Akshay Joshi comes in. Akshay entered O-MUN while it was taking its baby steps.

"I guess you could call me one of the old-timers," mentions Akshay in an email correspondence with me. He continues by saying, "I have always been interested in the nexus between education and technology. Technology has become very powerful in the last decade or so, but education, in my opinion, has not kept up with those fast-paced changes."

Akshay's outlook on the important relationship between education and technology proved vital to Online Model United Nations. Akshay devoted his time, patience, and skill into developing the website we are currently using today. Recently, the O-MUN site transitioned into a stand-alone site, and Akshay was able to ensure a smooth process for that transition. Delegates enjoy seamless interactions on the website largely thanks to his ideas and work. Many of the features we take for granted, but are integral to the website, also originate with his dedication. Even now, Akshay is happy to assist if a technical problem arises.

What we, as delegates, see and interact with, can only be described as the tip of the iceberg. With respect to the

roadblocks and curveballs O-MUN has experienced, Akshay says, "It's a small tradeoff for seeing the progress of O-MUN over the course of a just a few years."

And Akshay's vision of the O-MUN in future years? "I can't wait to see Online Model United Nations grow larger and continue pioneering innovations at the forefront of the virtual debate programs." That vision certainly seems achievable now, largely in thanks to the foundation Akshay has already laid for the rest of us in the online MUN community.

Thank you, Akshay, for everything you've done in the O-MUN community!

Chloe Rickards is the Press and Publications Officer for O-MUN.



Akshay Joshi

From Possibilities to Reality

By Ugbad Kasim

A YOUNG LADY living in an unrecognized country with no social activities for the youth — this was my reality. Learning from and participating in an international program and youth related activities was just a dream for me. Living in such a country is not a crime, but not having the chance to let your voice be heard is injustice and against human rights. Getting to know my global peers and interacting with them to discuss issues that relate to us and going to international conferences along with a list of things which I will mention later on were some things listed in my book of possibilities, but I never knew if I could change them all into reality.

Once, a wise man said “You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith & hope.”- Thomas Merton. That was exactly what happened to me when I joined O-MUN (Online Model United Nations). I soon realized that my list of possibilities is changing to realities and that the fact of being living in unrecognized country doesn't matter anymore.

In O-MUN I was able to communicate with my global peers regardless of where I lived. I was able to make friends and soon became one of the staff members. These alone gave me the courage and hope to continue with my list of possibilities. But yet going to conferences and meeting some of my O-MUN friends, directors, Best Delegate and so many other people was just a dream.

With the help of Lisa Martine (O-MUN Director) and THIMUN Foundation I was able to attend Qatar Leadership Conference on 26 -28 September 2013. Around February Lisa, proposed to me the idea of me attending the QLC and at that moment I couldn't find words to describe how I felt. The only thing I remember was running around the house and jumping. I was so happy that I didn't even realize that everyone at home was staring at me and thinking

if I won the lottery or a green card but actually it was a green card for me.

Time passed and I was accepted to attend the QLC and I started preparing myself for the conference and I soon ended up leaving home on September 23. I arrived to Doha on the next morning and I spent the whole day appreciating the beauty of the city. At night when I came back to the hotel I met Lisa and when I saw her there was a moment of silence just looking at her and I felt my heart pumping really fast. I was so happy to finally meet her face to face and we spent the next minutes hugging and talking to each other in my room and few minutes later I met Salam. At that moment I couldn't even greet her because I was so happy. I was finally happy to meet Lisa and Salam (my lovely roommate), then I realized that it was real and no matter how long your list is you can turn it into reality.

We spent the next day (September 25) together moving around the city and visiting Georgetown University where the conference was going to be held. There, we did all the preparations for our presentations and checked the rooms that we would use. Later on, in Georgetown, I met Abhay (our IT guru), Ann, and Cameron Janzen who is wonderful and a very dedicated person. I'm lucky to have gotten the chance to meet him. Cameron then introduced us (Lisa, Salam and Me) to the QLC staff team who was very enthusiastic and was composed of dedicated young leaders. Afterward, we got to spend some time with them even though they were busy with the conference preparation.

Soon after that we left Georgetown University and headed back to the city mall where we spent some time shopping and enjoying ourselves. At night, we were at the hotel, busy with our presentations and adding final touches, when Lisa came to us and said “We will go down and introduce you to Best Delegate; they just got in” and I thought, finally, while meeting Ryan and Kevin with a big smile on my face. We went to their room and Lisa knocked the door and Ryan greeted us then we spent few minutes chatting before we went back

to our room.

In the morning of the next day (conference day) I met Maryam (her family), Rohan, Kristine and Darby and we spent the whole morning together. It was one of the best days of my life and I enjoyed chatting with them in real life. In the afternoon we all headed to Georgetown University and the conference was officially opened by Cameron Janzen (THIMUN QATAR). Soon after the opening ceremony everyone ran to their rooms to start their presentations and I was one of them. I did my first presentation on Technology resources for MUN classrooms: MightyBell although I was bit nervous at the beginning, concerned with if people would like my presentation or not but as soon as I finished I was so amazed to see participants asking me questions and giving feedbacks and interested in using MB in their schools which made my day.

On the second day of the conference we had the signing ceremony where O-MUN was becoming an official THIMUN partner. Before the start of the ceremony Lisa told us, the O-MUN crew, that we will all stand on stage and support her while signing the document but the next sentence she said was unexpected. She said, “Ugbad, you will be also signing the document with me and Adib (THIMUN O-MUN Board president) and we will represent O-MUN on that document.” I couldn't find the words to express my feeling at that moment, I felt like I was on cloud nine but the only thing I was sure about is that this was not on my possibility list but luckily on my reality list.

After the ceremony was over, presentations started and O-MUN crew had different presentations to do and one of them was the demo debate where we demonstrated how we ran debates on an O-MUN platform. This was very successful and interesting presentation, where we had a full room of delegates, teachers and directors watching students from all over the world debating in a virtual conference. After lunch I had my second presentation on how to setup an O-MUN school club and actually this was much more interesting than my

other presentation because I had a lot of students and directors willing to set up an O-MUN club in their schools. Soon after my presentation I had received a lot of positive feedback from students as well as directors. I was just elated to finish my presentation successfully. During the conference period I got a successful story from my presentation were one student who was there during my presentation started a club in his school and today we have THIMUN O-MUN Qatar program. At night we went to Pearl City and enjoyed watching fancy Ferraris.

On the third day of the conference I was free and had the time to go and see other people doing their presentation and actually I really enjoyed listening to their speeches. I also had the chance of attending my roommates' presentation (Salam) as well and other people's presentations like Carl Wilkens and Tyler Shelden.

Soon after the presentations was over the closing ceremony of the conference started where we had a keynote speaker from Georgetown University and that was the end of the three lovely days. We all came back to the hotel to rest for a while; afterwards we recorded a short film (coming soon) followed by all of us headed to the Islamic Museum. We concluded the day with a trip to the Souq before going back to the hotel.

That was the end of one of the best weeks in my entire life; hopefully it won't be the last such experience so I'll be able to see you again in the future. Thanks to Lisa, Salam (her dad), Kristin, Darby, Rohan, Elya, Ryan, Kevin, Cameron, Ann, David Taylor, and David Williams for facilitating the best week of my life. I will truly miss you all.

Lastly, a special thanks to Lisa Martine and THIMUN QATAR for making this experience possible and helping me have a wonderful time at QLC. Thanks to Ann again for all the work she has done to make sure that we arrive safely and for keeping up with all my flight changes. This experience will always remain in my heart.

Ugbad Kasim is the Assistant Director for THIMUN O-MUN.

Tech Corner: Mightybell Goes Global

By MightyBell Editors

The [Online Model United Nations](#) organization uses [Mightybell](#) to further its purpose: engaging and connecting youth around the world in a unique online debate forum.

Spanning countries as diverse as Singapore, Somalia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria, this globally connected network allows students to take the world's most popular academic simulation and expand it to new students and schools outside of the Model UN community. Mightybell is the platform which allows students and teachers to come together for MUN.

Meet Ugbad

In February, I asked Ugbad to become our Mightybell expert, and to apply to present at the Qatar Leadership Conference on how O-MUN uses this great community building tool. Not only did Ugbad learn the ins and outs of this program, but she was also able to help convince the program developers at Mightybell to reinstate a privacy feature essential to making this a safe and productive space for students. When she brought the issue to my attention, we lobbied for changes, and within a week, a new privacy feature had been added.

The girl from the unknown country has made her mark not only on O-

MUN, but on a rising company within the technology sector. She represents the power and community that is THIMUN Online.

Ugbad is currently an Assistant Director for the Middle East/Africa region at Online Model UN (O-MUN). She mentors and oversees high school students around the world by using Mightybell to help them prepare their for upcoming debates.

As part of O-MUN, Ugbad and her team organize private Mightybell Circles that act as research hubs, where students share links and debate-related information as they prepare for their online debates. Leading up to the de-

bate, students and their teachers use the Circle to organize relevant news stories and facts, chat, give feedback and share their speeches.

Once the debate is over, the Circle is switched from private to public, but new members can still join if they request an invite. However, Ugbad and her team discovered that making each Circle public after the event allows other students and teachers around the world to then find and use these resources as inspiration for developing their own debate topics.

Want to learn more about the Online Model UN uses Mightybell? Read [their story](#) on the O-MUN blog.

Type of Resource: Electronic
Purpose: To focus discussion and research in one location for multiple users working collaboratively
Cost: Free
Website: <http://mightybell.com>



M I G H T Y B E L L

The Press Club: How to Create a Press Club that Complements Your MUN Program, cont.

that the deadlines are met. From this, we decided what roles the team should take- reporter, photographer, webmaster, online broadcasting. We find that these roles evolve along with our publication.

Give Them a Taste of 'Real Life'

To make this more professional and to give students some much needed practice, we ask them to complete an application form. We do this for two reasons.

Firstly, for many, the first time they have to fill out an application form is for their university application, they have no experience in this and often need a lot of guidance.

Secondly, if their goal is to apply for a position on an MUN conference press team, they will be expected to complete an application. Therefore, having the students complete an application form for the press club sets the tone that we are looking for keen writers and photographers but also gives them the much needed practice of selling themselves on paper. It also gives them an opportunity to consider putting together a portfolio of work, which again, can be used for university applications. Having spoken to many of our students, they are glad

that they had the opportunity to go through that process.

What Role does the Teacher Play?

In short, Editor-in-Chief. As the teacher, you have to be aware of the content. You get the final say on whether articles can go to print. Many budding reporters like to push the boundaries and write about some of the controversial issues affecting our world. While there is nothing wrong with this, it's the teacher's job to make sure the story is presented in a non-biased manner. This is something many students have to learn. They have their opinions about what's going on in the world, but a true reporter must be able to present the different sides of the issue, showing no bias. So, as the teacher, we have to make sure everything runs smoothly and assist the student leader when required.

Know Your Audience

Establish who you are writing for and who will read your finished product. At our school, we use the MUN club as our inspiration. We record what is happening on a daily basis within our club, conferences that are attended and issues our delegates will be discussing. Whilst

MUN is our springboard, we do not limit ourselves to the MUN club. We also report on events going on around school, for example fundraising activities as well as other issues that are affecting our local community, our region, and the world.

The Age Old Question: To Print or Not to Print?

The answer to this often comes down to budget. If you have the funds, or if you charge students then you will be in a position to produce a professional looking hardcopy. However, the format does link to your audience. More and more, young people are turning to online media. It is faster, more up-to-date, and the possibilities are endless. We choose to run our publication online. There are many great blogging tools, which are free, such as Wordpress, Blogger, Blog. In the end, it comes down to personal preference as to which one you use.

The Possibilities Can Be Endless

As our press club expands and our students gain more experience, we are finding that an online publication is best for us. Within our club we have an online broadcasting team. Two of

these members were part of the Online Broadcasting Team of THIMUN Qatar 2013. They developed a passion for it and wanted to continue long after the conference had ended. Having the press club at school has allowed them to do what they love. Having a blog allows us to embed videos so that our audience is more engaged in our publication.

It's also about showcasing the talent of our team. A blog means we can upload our videos, publish a wide variety of photos as well as our articles. We are not limiting ourselves, our possibilities are endless.

In the End it's the Enthusiasm, Not Experience that Wins

While experience is a valued asset, enthusiasm is a quality that goes further. It is enthusiasm that keeps the team going. It is enthusiasm that drives the individual. It is enthusiasm that gets the story. So if you have an enthusiastic student willing to get this off the ground, do it. Being part of a press club is one of the best aspects about MUN.

Rebecca Cain is an English Teacher and MUN Director at Park House English School, DCMUN Press Supervisor, and THIMUN Qatar Press Team Supervisor.

Reflections: An Indian's Insight into the World of OMUN

By Manmeet Singh

THIS ARTICLE is for all the people who fear speaking out, like me and the millions of Asians, who struggle daily to excel in this world that's fueled by the power of communication. Yes, it's true, some of you must be thinking "How so?", but if that's the question, you have not been exposed to the blue collar jobs that demand just that and nothing else. Technical skills can be acquired, but they'll only serve their desired purpose partnered with the skill of being able to present.

Coming from India I've always had problems presenting and most people from third world countries seem to have the same problem, this issue is always set aside allowing it to amplify. I found a solution to this tribulation of mine. Put the suit on, feel like a professional and speak like world leaders. Wow, that was great, emulating the people I've always wanted to be gave me the confidence. I



started off as a delegate at a conference in Delhi and went on to be a part of the executive boards of big time MUNs.

For those of you still reading, I assure you that you'll benefit from OMUN immensely if you are in Asia. My OMUN journey started off with my penchant for MUNs transcending my ever growing college studies and my desire to find a way to MUN anywhere without having to commute 2-3 days and without spending money on the conventional conferences. I found what I was looking for in Online Model United Nations. I attended the online debates as a delegate and found the concept a bit different in the beginning but the best part was learning the different ideas and opinions that came with the international nature of OMUN and was absent in the Indian conferences.

After attending as a delegate, I started enjoying the debates and sometime later becoming an ambassador too. I started to actively participate in the monthly conferences of uni-OMUN. Coming back to the struggle I was referring to in the beginning, I now find it's been resolved. And now I want this program to initiate its Indian chapter and I know that the people who have understood the ever hidden story of their communicative ineffectiveness will act upon and be a part of the success story that I am.

Manmeet Singh is an uniO-MUN Ambassador and Steering Committee member. Manmeet lives in Pune, Maharashtra, India.

Girl Power

By Lisa Martin

ONE OF MY favorite moments at the Qatar Leadership Conference actually happened at the Movenpick Hotel. Thursday morning, over the breakfast buffet, three of O-MUN's leading ladies met face to face for the first time. During which our Assistant Directors, Salam Keadan (left) from an Arab city in Israel, Ugbad Kasim (right) from Somalia, and O-MUN's Secretary General, Maryam Al-Ammari (center) from Saudi Arabia, pose for a photo while they cemented, a relationship already established over the web during the past year, through a hug and some laughter.

The beauty of O-MUN is that it provides the platform for the most unlikely combinations of delegates and leaders to connect, establish friendships, and working collaborative partnerships. By the end of the conference, this group, including SG for jrO-MUN, Rohan Sinha were seated together working on an upcoming O-MUN promotional video, sharing photos, and saying some tearful farewells.

For me personally, there were many highlights to the second Qatar Leadership Conference, but it is these kinds of moments, the ones you see in the photograph below, that truly defined the event for me.



O-MUN's female leaders gather together to meet each other for the first time.

The Man Who Couldn't Stop Telling Stories

By Lindsay Peak

The Never-ending Storyteller

Let me tell you a story about a man who was held at gunpoint numerous times and still believes in the inexplicable power of forgiveness, a man who can hold the attention of 14 and 15-year-olds for over an hour, a man who can't stop telling stories.

"Stories are much more powerful than guns because stories can change the way we think and act." — Carl Wilkens, at a Qatar Academy classroom visit, Sept. 30, 2013

A Ghost Story

Now let me tell you a story about a high school senior, itching to leave life as she knew it and begin her university studies. One evening, she settles down in the comfort of her living room to watch the latest episode of friends, but gets distracted by a documentary with a chilling title "Ghosts of Rwanda." In this documentary, witnesses of the Rwandan genocide, including Carl Wilkens, tell a story that this student never forgot. Ultimately, this documentary leads her to inspire young people to care about social justice issues by becoming a Humanities teacher. But enough about me...

I'm Not Leaving

Carl Wilkens was the only American person who chose to stay in Rwanda after all Americans were evacuated to safety during the infamous 1994 Rwandan genocide. As Carl tells it, it wasn't so much that he chose to stay in Rwanda, but rather that he refused to leave. After sending his wife and children to be evacuated, he was told to sign a statement declaring he had refused assistance from the U.S. government. A decision that could have been deadly, this proved to be the right one for Carl and many

Tutsi Rwandans that he was able to save, since he was able to negotiate with local killers.

A Storyteller Turned Teacher

Carl came to Doha, Qatar as a guest speaker and presenter for this year's Qatar Leadership Conference. His presentation style was unconventional as it was, in a state of beautifully organized chaos. On Monday, Carl visited Qatar Academy Senior School with not a mundane PowerPoint presentation, but instead a laptop full of video clips, gripping photographs, child-like enthusiasm and a plethora of stories, Carl held a guest session that would trump most of your Humanities lessons any day.

Carl's Stories

The hour began, continued, and ended with stories. Carl began with the story of how he met his wife, and subsequently began their life together with their three children in Rwanda. He told stories of his children growing up playing with neighborhood Rwandan children, of hard-working household workers who became a valued part of their family, and of the optimistic people who inhabit the endlessly green and rolling hills of the Rwandan countryside.

A Chicken for a Life

After pausing his stories to open up the floor for questions, students learned reasons why the genocide occurred, how the genocide was, in Carl's words, "carefully orchestrated" rather than resembling a random killing spree, and there would be days in which Hutus would have to be bribed with money or even chickens to save Tutsi lives.

But there was one story that shocked us all. Not because of a story of death, or injury, or blood, or anger. It was a story of strength, love and forgiveness.



Carl Wilkens is the director of *World Outside my Shoes*.

I Forgave You Long Ago

There once was a Rwandan woman who miraculously survived a blow to the head during one of the many killing days of the genocide. Years later, she spent her time visiting prisoners guilty of genocide. But that's not all. She learned that one of these men was responsible for killing her own son. Surely this was the moment where she snapped, unable to continue showing compassion for these evil men.

"Call Me Grandma"

She asked for this man, who had murdered her own son, to be released early from prison. The arrangement was made for him to be released into her care and moved into her house as if he himself was her own son. The man felt unimaginable guilt and shame, but submitted to her unprecedented compassion. Today, this man's children call this miraculous woman, "grandma."

"Forgiveness doesn't mean that what they did is ok, but you will no longer be angry or resentful because of an offense or mistake."

Oh, by the way...

Carl couldn't stop telling stories. He would frequently pause one story to start another. He would frequently lose track of what story he had originally been sharing, but students didn't seem to care. He even paused his stories of incredible sadness and blood stained machetes to tell a story about the first time he saw his wife. That did it. Students were all sold. This storyteller had left a mark on these students' lives.

Collecting Stories

Life is about collecting stories: tales of sadness, anger, joy, silliness, and even forgiveness. It is time the rest of us figure out what Carl learned long ago — that our stories need to be heard.

Carl Wilkens serves as the director of *World Outside My Shoes*, a non-profit educational and professional development organization. To learn more about Carl Wilkens' experience, watch his videos, or get involved by sharing your story, you can visit his website [here](http://www.worldoutsidemyshoes.com).

Silver Linings of the Rwandan Genocide

By Sarra Hamid

DURING HIS Rwanda Today workshop, Carl Wilkens displayed a picture of a scenic view from a hill in Rwanda accompanied with an anecdote. Wilkens recalled that when he took that picture, he was expressing disbelief towards a Rwandan friend that wanted to build a gondola lift up the scenic hill to a proposed guest house. In response to his disbelief, his friend replied with the only two English words he knew, "Is possible."

Wilkens has come to QLC to talk

to us about him and his wife's, Teresa Wilkens, work in Rwanda after they chose to stay behind during the genocide, "My wife was really the only one in my family who supported me during this cause. Most of my family were telling me to get out of there, but I probably would have reacted the same way if I was in their place". The main topic behind the workshop was to educate people that Rwanda has changed and managed to move past the tragedy and rebuild themselves through unity, "It's really important that everyone is involved in both the reconciliation and

the physical building of the damage after the genocide. A lot of contributors to the genocide have been building homes for widows, they've been doing radical terracing [a method of agriculture], and building schools."

Wilkens emphasized the importance of forgiveness and leaving the bad blood created by the genocide behind, saying "I think they demonstrated that there is a way to live together in the future and contribute to rebuilding the country they were part of destroying." Wilkens also discussed a project where civilians would write letters to the people they lost in the genocide, "When we remember the loved ones we lost during the genocide, we don't remember them anymore, they are forever frozen in this box of genocide." This project gives us the opportunity to communicate to those we lost and remember them for who they were rather than the tragedy behind them.

They even moved the project to Rwandan prisons, where contributors to the genocide actually wrote letters to the victims. It was also discussed how the idea of revenge through acts like, public executions, have held the country back from unity. When telling a story from a Rwandan citizen regarding attending an execution of a genocide

convict, Wilkens recalled "As the blood of the execution started to pour on the ground, it reminded him of the blood of his family."

However, Wilkens also wanted to clear the air of any unanswered misconceptions regarding the genocide and its aftermath, "People often thought that it was all just about the Hutus and Tutsis and they don't recognize that it was really politically driven. There were actually many Hutus and Tutsis that loved each other. The planners of the genocide actually had to work really hard to break the bonds between Hutus and Tutsis."

But like many societies today, there was still some prejudice present in Rwanda, "There were still some prejudices just like any society, so for their own political means to stay in power, they exploited those prejudices. But for people to think that the genocide happened because one group hated another group is completely untrue. I think that's one of the biggest misconceptions."

While the Rwandan genocide still may haunt many, it is important to abandon the bad blood and find the silver lining: Carl and Teresa Wilkens found the value of this message. For more information on the issue please visit their website, [World Outside My Shoes](http://www.worldoutsidemyshoes.com).



In his speech, Carl Wilkens emphasized the value of forgiveness.

People on the Ground: Rwanda's Survival and Perseverance

By Sarra Hamid

CARL WILKENS has been quite popular during this Leadership Conference; his experiences have inspired many students. But what about the Rwandans he encountered during his experiences in the genocide? We follow up on Wilkens during his workshop, "Eyewitness stories from the Rwanda Genocide." He discussed the victims and the perpetrators of the genocide, as well as the action he took to protect the civilians, "Rwandans could not be evacuated, it was a huge risk. The only sensible option for me was to stay and protect them. Perhaps my presence would stop the militia."

While almost every American was being evacuated by the government as quickly as possible, Wilkens chose to stay and protect a pastor and his family whom he grew close to during his stay in Rwanda, saying, "One time, we had to pay off the militia a hundred dollars to stop them from slaughtering the family. We just did what we had to do to survive." But even in this time of fear and tragedy, they were keen on providing a better future to those displaced by the genocide, saying, "Having a mission or purpose is huge in a time of crisis."

Wilkens also discussed the living conditions of many of the genocide victims, "There were many child deaths not just from the genocide, but also from diarrhea and dysentery. There was a lack of clean drinking water and that was a priority, getting water to the children." Wilkens even had to create relations with some high authority figures responsible of the genocide, in order to have access to facilities and aid victims, "I remember when I was living with the pastor, he told me 'if you wanna make a difference, you gotta form a relationship with the guys in power.'"

With help from some Hutu authority figures and colonels, Wilkens managed to obtain signed documents to help him travel easier as an American in war-ridden Rwanda. Road blocks no longer hassled him as long as he presented the authority's paper work, "It's amazing how obedience played such a huge role in Rwanda at the time. Obedience to authority was a huge part of both the killing and of me being able to move through the roadblocks."

Wilkens recalled his own horror stories during the genocide, such as his encounters with militia men, "We would offer the killers chickens as a bribe in order to make them leave. Imagine that, a chicken for a human life."

However, he also discussed the importance of raising awareness and creating a difference by involving people that actually experienced struggle during times of challenge, "Always listen to the people on the ground, the innocent civilians that have to go through it all. Consider their opinion and listen to the people on the ground."

And even after a recollection of harrowing events from the genocide, Wilkens ended on a positive note with some words of wisdom, "When wanting to make a difference, we often forget the power of asking. So many times we won't ask because we don't believe there is any potential within this person. There is always potential within people for one good choice, for one kind decision, one act of generosity. The real question is whether you believe it's there."

After Wilkens' experience it's safe to say that potential has been recognized within the people on the ground.

For more information on Carl Wilkens and his wife Teresa Wilkens' experiences in Rwanda, please visit their website worldoutsidemyschools.org.

Eravur: Building A Sustainable Community

By Afif Haitam

ERAVUR, located on the east coast of Sri Lanka and 320 kilometers from Colombo, is home to an initiative between Qatar Academy and the Eravur Educational Development Institute. The two collaborate to run an after-school program in English and ICT. Not only is EEDI focusing on education, but also on community development such as providing lights to homes by installing water bottles on the roof. EEDI is also helping special need students and orphans who lost their parents to the 2004 tsunami.

In a region that suffered so much during the last twenty years, including a civil war, to educate the youth would sustainably rebuild their community. The struggle between the Tamil Muslims and Hindus during the civil war claimed many lives on both sides in the area, leaving many widows raising children alone and many children growing up as orphans.

Started in 2005, Qatar Academy had the vision to integrate and link the divided community in Eravur through education. Today, Hindu teachers are teaching Muslim students at the school – something that people once never thought was possible.

Together, Cameron Janzen, Head of THIMUN Qatar; Dr Hedger, previous Director for Qatar Academy and Ansar Mohammed, Facility Manager at QA and founder of EEDI as an NGO, realized what was at first an idea, became something so much greater. Janzen believes that "we can't change the world, but we can change a community in Sri Lanka."

The club that helps raise awareness and money for EEDI is called "QA Action". It is mostly student run with participation from Janzen as well as Kay

Mitchell, another teacher who felt passionately about the cause and gave the presentation about Eravur today.

Since its opening, EEDI welcomed more than 170 students. Today, the number skyrocketed to over 350 in just a few short years, and is continuing to grow rapidly. This is all possible due to the commitment of students at Qatar Academy all the way from primary to senior school. Because of this, a new plot of land had to be purchased to house a new school.

The initiative is without a doubt a success. This is evident through students who attended the school achieving the highest exam results in the area. The local government also awarded the school as the Best Educational Institution in the area.

Moreover, the initiative is a two-way experience. Qatar Academy provided with the resources, materials, and financial means in order to run the school. The Eravur Educational Development Institute, in return, provides priceless cultural experience and learning experience for visiting students from Qatar Academy.

See the bigger picture?

Because of the overwhelming support, Qatar Academy and EEDI are able to start a new movement called 'One woman per year' where a local woman is given 25,000 rupees to start her own business. Because of this, these women are able to provide fifty to seventy percent of their family's daily expenses. Their products includes woven baskets and food.

Moreover, more and more schools are becoming increasingly aware of the movement. For instance, Compass International School in Doha is following Qatar Academy's footsteps and has provided the building of houses and wells for people in Sri Lanka.

Point of Order

By Cameron Janzen

THIS YEAR the Point of Order column will be focusing on the values and principles that underline the purpose of MUN programs. Model UN programs take a lot of time and effort from our students, teachers and schools. While there are tremendous academic benefits that result from Model UN participation, the goal of MUN programs is to also impact individual's perception of the world and their corresponding actions.

At this time of year, MUN programs around the world are getting ready for their first MUN conference of the new academic year. One of the most exciting times during the club is when you receive your country assignments. The country you represent determines your approach to the entire conference. The process of country assignments is also reflective of a key Model United Nations principle; viewing issues from different perspectives.

At the heart of MUN programs is the value that we need to discover the

multiple perspectives that surrounds each and every issue. I didn't have the privilege of being involved in MUN programs as a high school student but I clearly remember my first experience of learning to debate from a different perspective. I was enrolled in a first year university course called persuasive writing. The first class our professor asked was to choose any controversial topic in which we held strong conviction and write a persuasive essay. I jumped into the assignment with great enthusiasm and spent hours developing what I thought were ironclad arguments. I couldn't wait to see how impressed my professor was going to be with my work. The next week the professor collected all of our essays, held them in his hands for about five seconds, and then dramatically threw them all in the garbage can at the front of the class. He then said our next assignment (the one he would actually read) was to take our essays that were in the garbage and argue against the main points. The issue I had chosen was a long standing social and religious value and I was now being asked to argue against it. It was the best

learning exercise that I had that year.

The goal of MUN is to simulate this exercise for every delegate at every conference. While we defend your assigned government's position, the country assignment tries to provide the delegate with a country that allows them the opportunity to explore the issue from a new perspective. The goal is not to convince you that a particular perspective is right but to teach the delegate to listen and explore alternative perspectives. I remember one year St Andrews MUN organizers assigned our school a particularly difficult country for my school's population. My assigned ambassador for the delegation had 14 members of her extended family killed in military actions by our newly assigned delegation. We were now being asked to defend the policies that had literally led the deaths of her family members. It was an amazing experience and at the end of the process her fundamental views about solving this particular issue had not changed. However, her understanding of the other side and their perspective convinced her that a solution was possible.

For the MUN director, this is a challenging requirement of the program. Parents may be upset if their child is assigned to a particular country. Government laws or cultural barriers may make representation of certain countries political risky. Students may choose to deliberately misrepresent country policy or behave in such a way that would be an embarrassment to the host country. Most commonly, delegates simply fail to do the research to accurately learn the assigned country's points of view. However, without including this aspect of the MUN program we are simply providing our students better debate tools to defend narrow and/or currently held views.

There are really only two main ways of solving conflict; through force or by means of discussion. The goal of Model United Nations is try to show our young people that diplomacy and discussion are possible, but more importantly, that we have to learn to listen and look at problems for new perspectives in order to achieve the best results.

The Case Against Syrian Intervention

By Faissal Darwish

The Crisis

As we all know, the repulsively horrible crisis in Syria has been going on for about two and a half years, and has developed to become even worse throughout those years. Today, there are almost 7 million refugees, over 110,000 people murdered, and everybody has been tortured, one way or another. Undoubtedly, this is the most chaotic conflict the world has experienced to date.

Disgustingly Horrific

Sadly, I must admit that both the supporters and non-supporters of Assad have discovered methods of killing and torturing which are vilely creative. Whether it's burying alive, using bullets and shelling, electrocution, kidnapping, slaughtering, dismembering people's limbs, raping with foreign objects - such as broken glass bottles and even live rats - and most recently, they're using chemical weapons! Bill Maher, American satirist and political commentator, has tried to elicit how mental Bashar Al-Assad is by remarking a comedic insult, he said, "I think he's the worst kind of socio-path, the kind who commits unspeakable acts, but who looks like a shoe salesman at Macy's."

The "Solution"

However, the main issue I'm trying to address, or maybe question, is the involvement of several countries from the "international community", like Russia, Iran, China, and of course, the US. Why does America always feel the need to play the hero? Now I know that it seems to be the most powerful country on this planet, and that it may have been pressured into it because of how high the international community's expectations are of it; although, that does not give it the right to decide what the solution for this civil war is, especially when their "solution" is not one at all.

Military strike isn't the correct approach. What I am referring to is the strike that Obama proposed a short while ago in order to take down Assad and his regime. He precisely stated, "... the use of chemical weapons that we saw in Syria was a criminal act, and that



The Obama administration has made its stance clear, but the American public remains divided on Syria.

less, neither the US or Russia is taking into consideration the side-effects that the strike will have on Syria: murdering even more innocent lives.

UN Plots for Destruction of Chemical Weapons

Recently the UN has sent an advance team consisting of 16 of its personnel and 19 from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to carry out a plan to completely destroy any chemical weapons in Syria. This mission is made up of 3 strenuous phases: "Phase 1" is to establish that the team is present in Damascus to inspect the initial list of chemical weapons in Syria. "Phase 2" is to elongate the teams duration till the end of October, in order to confirm that the revision of such weapons and storage facilities is complete, as well as to establish a support base in Cyprus. Finally, "Phase 3" -which shall happen from November 1st until June 30th- is for the team to "monitor and verify the destruction" of

The Advocate

I had recently invited a strong supporter of the Syrian rebels to a personal interview in which she answered questions critically and insightfully. She does not wish to be named, so I shall refer to her as The Advocate. She believes that Assad used chemical weapons against innocent communities because "he is desperate to end this revolution and keep himself in power - to exert his authority over people, he has to scare them. So one day, he can turn around and say "is your revolution worth all these dead?" and hope that everyone will just give up." Furthermore, I asked The Advocate, "Do you agree with Obama's decision to strike Syria in order to eradicate Bashar Al-Assad?" Promptly, she responded with, "No, I do not. My personal opinion is that the US does not have honest and caring intentions; they would strike in order to keep their earlier promise of striking if Assad used chemical weapons instead of trying to help those inside Syria. Obama has previously stated that a US strike would not have the intention of taking down the Assad government so I don't see why everyone is convinced that it will. So really, I think it's useless for them to care now after over two and a half years."

"Morally and Strategically Indefensible"

Two political figures who share a mutual opinion with The Advocate are John McCain and Lindsey Graham, who believe the strike is "meaningless." They claimed that the agreement between the US and Russia to prohibit Syria from using and producing chemical weapons "does nothing to resolve the real problem in Syria", and that "Assad can go on slaughtering innocent civilians and destabilizing the Middle East." Concisely, they described the agreement as "morally and strategically indefensible." I completely concur with both politicians as the US thinks it is the band-aid to Syria's wound; though it isn't, instead it is the salt being poured into the wound - only making it worse.

Why so supportive?

Since the resolution has been finalized to be non-beneficial, why are people still encouraging the US and Russia to move forward with such a faulty action? I think the reason is that many Syrians have given up because they're fed up with their homes being destroyed and their family members being killed, therefore they desperately cling to anything that they believe could save them. However, we have to retain a realistic view and not be led away by false hope. I believe that the US is seen as a major superpower that has the means to help countries that are in trouble; then again, this is an idealized and naïve view.

A More Reasonable Solution

We have to remember that most of those who died in the chemical weapons massacres were children. There are children being hit by shells, losing their limbs, being killed by snipers, and children being arrested and tortured for either no valid reason or because their parents are involved in the revolution. Moreover, The Advocate explained to me how several of her own family members have been forced to escape to Lebanon, and how her mother's hometown was destroyed, and last but not least, how some of her relatives have died because of the lack of medical aid they have been given. Seeing that the UN Security Council has unanimously passed a resolution to stop the US military strike, I believe the UN should at least begin to help Syrian civilians by providing innocent children, women, and refugees with proper shelter: safe, clean and sustainable, as well as providing medical assistance for the sick and wounded, since the regime has prevented them from receiving any sort of treatment.

The End?

Overall, ending this severe civil war is quite a difficult task and will undeniably take a long period of time to be solved - precisely by mid-2014. How? I guess we'll all just have to wait and see what other "solutions" the UN comes up with!



President Obama discusses Syria with congressional leaders and cabinet members.

it is absolutely important that the international community respond in not only deterring repeated use of chemical weapons, but hopefully getting those chemical weapons outside of Syria." Critics have realized that the US seems to believe that bombing countries is the solution to every problem. Nonethe-

the chemical weapons. Considering that the team has already avoided two mortar shelling attacks, Dr. Richard Joseph Jackson, Joan H. Tisch Distinguished Fellow in Public Health, claimed that "destroying the estimated 1,000 tons of chemical weapons stockpiled in Syria without poisoning anyone is tricky."

Resource Corner: Amnesty International

By Cameron Janzen

AMNESTY International is a renowned human rights organization providing in-depth information on countries around the world. While the Amnesty International site has a large volume of helpful resources for the MUN delegate, one of the best resources are the annual country reports.

Each year, Amnesty International provides a summary of the major human right issues in every country of the world. These reports provide the MUN delegate access to key issues facing the country. While the reports will focus on

human rights, delegates can quickly get a sense of the social, political and economic issues facing the country.

Let's examine the 2012 annual report on Qatar:

The first section of the report focuses on issues of freedom of expression. The report mentions individuals detained for criticizing the monarchy and for blasphemy identifying the important role the royal family and religion plays in Qatar. The next section focuses on Migrant workers "who make up more than 80 per cent of Qatar's population" identifying a key social and political understanding for a delegate assigned to

represent Qatar. All reports are quick and easy to read allowing delegates at all levels of experience to use the resource.

Access

Access to the country reports is easy to find off AI's homepage. On the right hand side of the site, use the drop down menu to find your assigned country.

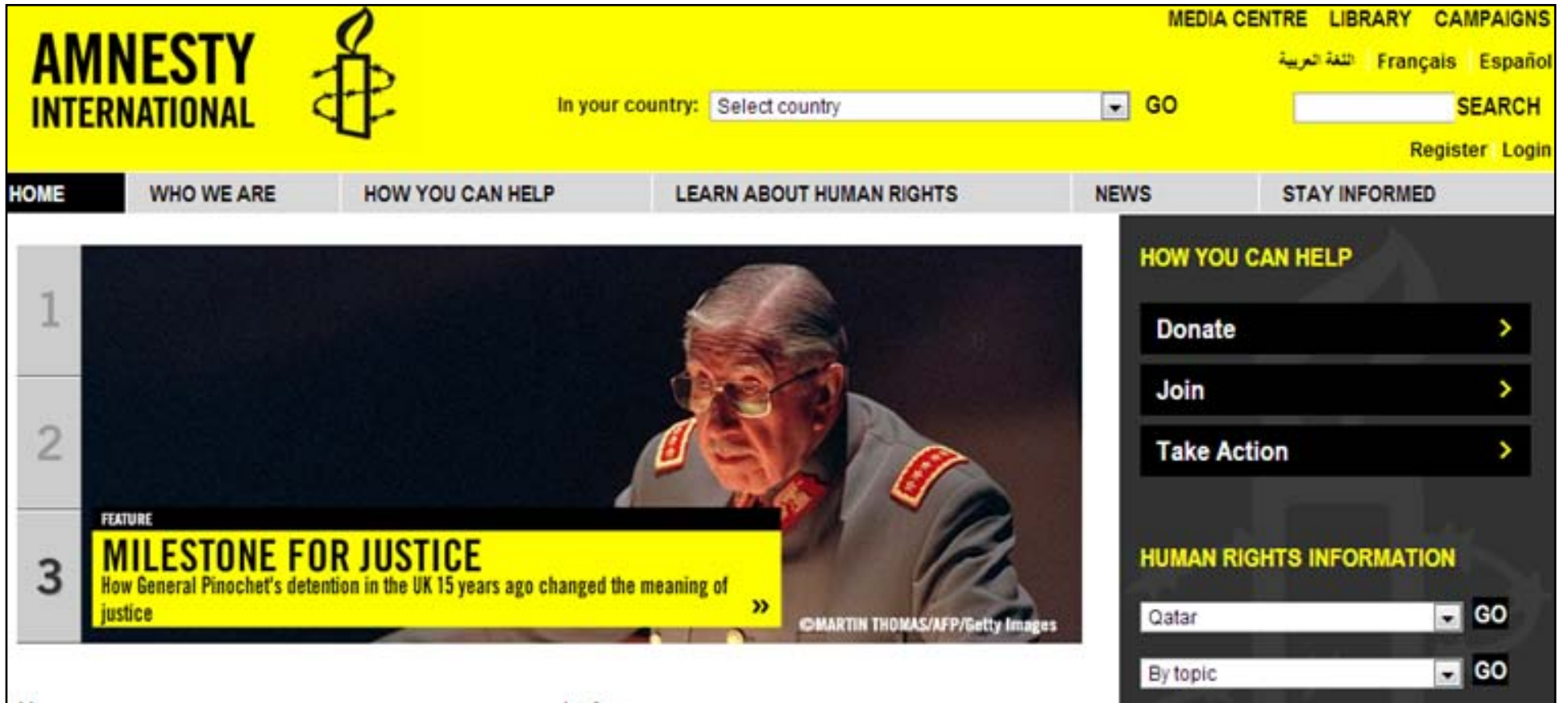
Once you get to your country's page, you can access the annual report as well as see the latest AI's stories about your assigned country.

By reading the country reports, delegates will better able to understand their

assigned country.

Extension Activity

An extension club activity would have delegates read their country's annual report and then have them act as a member of the government and present their country's response to the report. By doing this activity early in the preparation cycle, it teaches the delegate that the need to understand the type of source they are to use (non-governmental vs. governmental) and their role in defending their assigned government's position on issues.



Amnesty International provides free country reports that allows delegates to become familiar with their assigned countries.



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