

MIDDLE EAST

MODEL UNITED NATIONS NEWSLETTER



VOL. I ISSUE I

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ONLINE EDITION

Conference Calendar

Upcoming Dates:

1/29 - 2/1
THIMUN Qatar

2/21 - 2/24
MUN Georgetown Qatar

2/24 - 2/28
OISMUN Egypt

3/7 - 3/9
AISMUN Egypt

3/15
DCMUN Qatar

Online MUN:

2/10
O-MUN Security Council

2/16
O-MUN Global Debate

2/23
O-MUN Middle East/Africa

2/24
O-MUN Asia

Welcome to Model UN Middle East!

Dear Model United Nations colleagues, friends, and community,

We are pleased to share with you the launching of the first of what we hope will be many issues of our new Model UN newsletter. This monthly newsletter is being launched as a collaborative effort among three separate MUN organizations: THIMUN Qatar, Best Delegate, and O-MUN. All three organizations have one main goal in mind: to help you build strong and meaningful Model UN programs within your community.

We hope to achieve this goal by keeping you and your community informed about the latest happenings in the Middle East region and other areas around the world, celebrating

the various achievements of students and staff as they strive to implement the ideals of Model UN in their daily lives, focusing on student leaders, and offering educational advice and club activities for both newcomers and experienced delegates.

As with all Model UN activities, we will rely on committed volunteers to make this all happen successfully. We hope that you will be willing to share your stories, experiences, and insights with others. We want to hear stories about your Model UN conferences and what is happening within the Model UN scene in your region, and we are looking for writers who are willing to develop regular columns. If you are interested in being a regular contributor, please contact us



Cameron Janzen

at info@bestdelegate.com.

We hope this newsletter becomes a valuable part of your Model UN experience.

Cameron Janzen
Head of THIMUN Qatar

The MUN Scene in Lebanon

By Hasan Shami

A QUITE widespread Arabic proverb translates into “Necessity gives birth to development,” and it couldn’t be closer to the truth. Ten years ago, Model United Nations was virtually non-existent in Lebanon. I wouldn’t venture so much as to call our educational system defunct; it was far from it. However, it is a system that forces schools to steer most of their focus toward academics, and little toward extracurricular activities. That lack of interest in MUN is an obvious outcome, seeing that grave budgeting issues are prevalent in the majority of public schools (and a noteworthy portion of private ones as well). However, you, my fellow reader, should grasp the colossal significance of MUN, and the instrumental role it plays in shaping one’s personality. In a country torn by conflict, Model UN is needed to educate future diplomats, people who will negotiate solutions and sustain peace rather than contribute to the political turmoil rampant in today’s society. The necessity of MUN in Lebanon has paved the way to create a phenomenal system, a system that has managed to thrive against all odds.

A large scale launch of MUN in Lebanon began when, on the 15th of August 2005, the Lebanese American University (LAU) signed with UNAUSA to teach delegates. That same year, the wheels of the free-of-charge LAU training sessions were put in motion, boasting over 500 students from 76 diverse schools in attendance. The assigned trainers were LAU’s own university students, who had volunteered to undertake the responsibility of teaching students debating and negotiating skills and the many intertwining components that made up the program known as Model UN. At the end of each year, a final conference has been held at LAU with these delegates, and up until this year, this was still expense-free, with Global Classroom LAU-MUN training around 1700 students from over 150 different schools.

Online Debates: Thoughts from DSG Lara Ryan



Global Connections: Lara Ryan (center) shows a teacher how to navigate O-MUN’s easy-to-use interface. A global non-profit educational organization, Online Model UN has gained increasing popularity over recent years due to its accessibility and flexibility.

By Lara Ryan

DEBATE ON the question of nuclear proliferation is often dominated by the former Cold War superpowers: the United States and Russian Federation. So naturally, a debate in Model United Nations is expected to follow in a similar manner.

Yet in Online Model UN, this debate scenario would be significantly different — O-MUN embodies what the United Nations *strives* for, not what it achieves — meaning that all countries have an equal opportunity to speak, no matter how small their role in an issue may be. On the question of nuclear

proliferation, a topic debated recently in the Middle Eastern and African region, it is no surprise to anyone familiar with O-MUN that smaller states often play an indispensable role in the construction and molding of debate.

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7 Steps for Success

By Ryan Villanueva

IN EARLY OCTOBER, Kevin Felix Chan (KFC) and I taught Model UN in Middle East nations, traveling to Qatar, Jordan, Dubai, Kuwait, and Bahrain. It has been an incredible opportunity to not only learn more about Model UN in the region, but also to meet some of the most passionate and dedicated Model UN teachers and educators I’ve ever met. This trip showed us the potential for Model UN here — not just in terms of the growing number of students and schools that participate — but in terms of the potential impact this activity can have on the lives of students and their communities.

The biggest event of our teaching tour was the inaugural [Qatar Leadership Conference](#), which took place in Education City, Doha, from September 20-22. Over 400 high school students and teachers attended the conference, which featured a series of presentations by leading educators in MUN, film, and global education. The conference was featured in several regional publications, including the Gulf Times.

KFC and I were asked to give ten different presentations at

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2nd Annual THIMUN Qatar Conference

By Cameron Janzen

THE QATAR NATIONAL Convention Center will once again serve as the backdrop for the annual THIMUN Qatar Conference from January 29 to February 1. Over 1,200 students from around the world will gather together in Doha for five days to debate, make new friends, and gain insights about issues facing the world today.

THIMUN Qatar is following up on its successful conference from last year. This year, the conference's new date set for the end of January represents a significant change. The conference changed dates for two main reasons: the first reason was to ensure the security of booking at the Qatar National Convention Center. It is such an amazing facility that major international conferences are regularly held there, such as the recent COP 18. November is one of the busiest convention months, so we could secure our books for the next five years by moving THIMUN to end of January. The new date fits better with the THIMUN Qatar mandate: THIMUN Qatar is here to serve the Model UN com-

munity within our region. Many of our partner schools or THIMUN-affiliated conferences hold their own events in October and November. The purpose of our conference is to provide a meeting place for all of the various schools within the region, and January was the best time to make that happen.

This year's conference will have many interesting highlights. The opening ceremonies will feature the Attorney General of the State of Qatar H.E. Dr. Ali bin Fetais Al Marri, as well as over 200 student performers. Each committee will have the privilege of having experts from the diplomatic or academic community sharing insights into their committee topics; this year will feature speakers from IAEA, UNESCO, and the numerous embassies and universities. Two high profile guests will provide discussions via Skype conference calls: Carl Wilkens and Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish.

Carl Wilkens is the director of the educational non-profit organization [World Outside My Shoes](#). He is the former head of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency International in Rwanda. In 1994, he was the only American who chose to remain in the country after the genocide began. Wilkens' choice to stay and try to help resulted in preventing the massacre of hundreds of children over the course of the genocide.

Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish lost three daughters and a niece to a horrendous shelling in the 2009 Gaza War, yet he continues to be a proponent of peace between Palestinians and Israelis. His 2010 book, *I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor's Journey*, is an international best-seller. For three consecutive years, he has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

On a lighter note, the Friday night social held in the Qatar Foundation Student Center, officially known as the HBKU Student Center, gives delegates access to bowling alleys, games room, gymnasiums, pool tables, a 230 seat cinema, restaurants, and lounges. The second part of the evening at 8:30 will feature a special performance by India's leading illusionist, S.A.C Vasanth.

Moreover, this year, THIMUN Qatar is run by a multi-cultural executive and student officer team, with its members coming from various international backgrounds and schools outside Qatar. As you may know, the backbone of the conference is the Admin Staff team, and this year we have over 100 Admin Staff. We would like to extend our appreciation to the Executive and Admin Teams for their hard work, dedication and commitment.

With over 70 different nationalities represented at the conference, this year's event will once again be a great representation of the youth of the world.

New THIMUN Website Launched

By Cameron Janzen

THIS JANUARY, the THIMUN Foundation was pleased to launch its [new website](#). The first thing you will notice when visiting the new website is that all THIMUN conferences and activities are now in one location. The integrated approach allows users to quickly move from the various programs and services offered through the THIMUN Foundation. The website provides a comprehensive overview of its mission, history, conferences, film festival, educational materials, and affiliation program.

The website was also designed to have a more appealing visual presence with more pictures and easier-to-navigate tabs. The website will continue to be a work in progress. In the upcoming months, look for new features that incorporate the use of social media sites and provide a greater number of resources.

Please take a moment and navigate through our new website. If you have any questions or comments regarding the content contained in our website, please feel free to email us at thimunqatar@qf.org.qa



Interview with THIMUN Qatar Northwestern Film Festival Participant Ibrahim Soltan

By Ahmad Saadat

1. What was it that motivated you to produce films? And roughly, when was it?

"It was nothing planned — I have never thought about it before. It started as a IT project in grade nine about commerce, which I took very seriously as opposed to other members of my class at the time. Many of my classmates decided to make simpler videos using Windows Movie Maker, but I decided to further explore the field and all the available programs to create the best film. My experience fostered my love for films and their ability to impact how an audience feels, while carrying a meaningful message."

2. What is your goal as a filmmaker?

"My goal is to effect change around the world: any change, as long as it is positive change. I would like to shift the world a hundred and eighty degrees, if not more. Through making documentaries and participating in MUN, I have met a lot of people: people who have inspired me, people who have put the sleep out of my eyes for days, and people who have changed my life."

3. Which one of your films did you think was most inspiring?

"The most inspiring moments of all stem from the last documentary I have made, called *Stray Dreams: Migrant Workers United*. One of the workers from my film who works in Oman once told me, 'I am now responsible for six people, and I give them money so they can eat. That's what I think about.' Then, I had asked him foolishly, 'Why don't you just go back home?' And he responded, 'How? I don't have money.' Up until this day, I regret not buying him a ticket back to his country right away. Ever since, I have been attempting to alter the paradigm of

migrant workers in the city I currently reside in.

I have covered the expenses of one migrant worker who traveled back to his country from my film, but I am planning to do more to help. This particular person was asked to pay 98 000 rupees to come here and work in Qatar, he wanted to raise money for his poor family, but he was struck by another person's greed and avarice. He was told that the money he paid was for food and accommodation expenses, but after working in Qatar, his sponsor, who he had never seen, did not give him his salary for the work he did. The house that he lived in along with the other migrants, who shared similar stories, had no electricity or water. He was mentally, physically, and economically broken. I don't know what more you can do to a man to break him. From that moment forward, I have continued the chase for ways in which I can assist these people. The documentary I made has gained a lot of recognition and sympathy, and I am currently in the process of putting together a campaign for them."

4. What were the reactions that this film received?

"The reactions I've received from people for this film have been phenomenal. In fact, I now have a group of students from Bahrain who are fundraising in their school for these workers. After the screening of my film at the Qatar Leadership conference, and after speaking about it in one of my workshops, I've gotten a lot of Facebook messages and emails of people who want to help. I also have received recognition from people who had connections at Al-Jazeera News Network. Three individuals approached me and asked me to send them a copy of my film to try to get Al-Jazeera involved — and soon, the public. This has taught me that people are

moved when you project real-life situations honestly."

5. What have you learned from your MUN experience?

"Without Model UN, my awareness of these conditions would be nonexistent. In general, Model UN has taught me that everything I do or say — whether it is done as a debater, a filmmaker, or a person — should have a clear message behind it; otherwise, other indi-

viduals will easily discard it. Model UN provided me with a unique platform that no other extracurricular activity could provide me with. Students get to converse with other people and make communicative connections: exploring, creating, and presenting. These are the most crucial skills you need to succeed at any endeavor in the future."

Ibrahim Soltan is a grade 12 student at Qatar Academy.

2013 THIMUN QATAR NORTHWESTERN FILM FESTIVAL

THIMUN Qatar and Northwestern University in Qatar are encouraging high school student films through a documentary film festival from April 11-13, 2013 in Doha, Qatar.

Educational opportunities and prize money are offered for winning entries.

The film submission deadline is February 14, 2013.

Details can be found online at www.thimunqatar.org

THIMUN QATAR NORTHWESTERN FILM FESTIVAL

THIMUN QATAR

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY IN QATAR

Qatar Academy

Qatar Foundation

Reflecting on AMMUN's Wall

By Nadine Fattaleh

I FIRST participated in Model United Nations in 9th grade. I didn't just stumble in and find myself in the club, nor did I find the sign-up sheet by accident. Model UN at the Amman Baccalaureate School is the activity all 9th graders eagerly anticipate. My classmates and I were sitting in a crowded room, the "waiting room," in an unfamiliar territory, waiting for our names to be called so we could be escorted to the tryouts that would determine whether we would be selected for the most prestigious club at school, Model UN. The delegates nervously practiced their 3-minute speeches, reviewed the organs of the UN, discussed current events, and worried about the intimidating student officer panel that would intentionally try to confuse interviewees.

There were legends about MUN that flew around the school. Stories about everything from the training sessions, to the mock debates, to the conference committees, and, of course, the parties circulated. X delegate once ripped up a resolution, Y delegate left the secretary general speechless in the mock debate, Z president made someone cry. MUN was a 10-year-old club; it had many traditions, which, although unwritten, were treated as if they were set in stone. At the heart of these traditions was a culture of authority, where student officers intimidated and threatened delegates to get them to work. Throughout my time as a delegate, there was this barrier between the younger students and the older students, and this hindered many, including myself, from reaching their full potential in MUN.

I watched generation after generation of student officers re-install this barrier. When I eventually became AMMUN's first Head of Training, my first order of business was to take down that wall. While preparing for the first mini-conference, I spent training sessions talking to delegates, chatting with them on Facebook afterschool, correcting their resolutions during break in the library. I encouraged my team to do the same; the motto was personal outreach, because a delegate, especially a young and intimidated one, would work much more effectively if his president also his friend. My school also hosted Ryan from Best Delegate, who gave a workshop on public speaking and resolutions writing, in which delegates and student officers

participated alongside each other.

How successful was I at overcoming the barrier? Well, there is a group of about six MUN girls that I take special interest in; they remind me of myself a few years ago. They are my friends, but more importantly they look up to me as their role model, and agree with my MUN motto. To me, this is the true measure of success, because it is impossible to bulldoze the decade-old AMMUN wall overnight, but ensuring that the next generations of AMMUN officers understand the need for personal outreach to achieve my goal in the coming years.

Nadine Fattaleh is the Head of Training at the Amman Baccalaureate School.



Nadine Fattaleh with Model UN friends

Lebanon Model UN, cont.

Undeniably, what the Lebanese American University has accomplished at the level of MUN in Lebanon is exceptional, and it has further acted as an incentive for some schools to adopt their own programs. Still, that hasn't stopped them from attending LAU's training sessions and the GC LAUMUN final conference, even though this has given them the upper hand over the other schools that are unable to organize their MUN programs due to lack of resources. At this point, we are confronted by a problem warranting our attention: the MUN world is developing at a rapid pace, yet a myriad of Lebanese MUNers, aside from those who go to MUN-inte-

grated schools, are left regarding MUN as a one-time event. Ask a random delegate about MUN, and they'd say: "Yeah, MUN was great — a once-in-a-lifetime experience!" But MUN should not be a singular event. It should be a continuous process, and this is where LAU's role in prepping delegates for MUN debating kicks in, not merely providing them with a memorable experience. But there is a pressing need for more local MUN conferences. Schools cannot afford to give tuition and travel to attend MUN conferences abroad.

The emergence of Online Model United Nations (O-MUN) has proven to be beneficial to Lebanese delegates,

as it has played a small role in equipping Lebanese delegates with invaluable and advanced MUN-related education and training experience. As it can so easily be perceived, O-MUN could be the much longed-for catalyst crucial to the restoration of balance in Lebanese Model United Nations, since it provides equal opportunities for all. This could be a life-belt for promoting greater inclusiveness in MUN, helping to provide Lebanese MUNers the additional debate opportunities they so rightly deserve.

Written in collaboration with Darine Daher, Ali Sibai, and the Lebanese American University.



A View in the Heights: Model UN is growing rapidly in Lebanon

Metaphors: "Model UN is like α..."

By Numair Mujeeb

ANYONE WHO HAS spent any time at a Model UN conference will quickly note the use of analogies in debate. Some delegates use analogies as a tactic for adding clarity to their speaking points, and other delegates use analogies as tactic to create interest in themselves. Either way, original Model UN metaphors can make any speech, idea, or delegate memorable. Below is an assortment of analogies that I have heard throughout my MUN conferences.

"It is interesting to note that the delegation of _____ supports this resolution. (Delegation) speaks with the wisdom that can only come from experience, like a guy who went blind because he looked at a solar eclipse without one of those boxes with a pinhole in it and now goes around the country speaking at high schools about the dangers of looking at a solar eclipse without one of those boxes with a pinhole in it."

"This resolution is like a steel trap, only one with ideas that have been left out so long that the trap has already rusted shut."

"The ideas in this resolution are simple, like my brother Phil. But unlike my brother Phil, this plan just might work."

"This resolution is lame as a duck. Not the metaphorical lame duck, either, but a real duck that is actually lame, maybe from stepping on a land mine or something."

"This resolution is like a rear-view mirror. It gives you the illusion that you are driving. But just like a rear-view mirror doesn't drive the car, the engine does. This resolution needs an engine."

"This resolution is the great example of the art of saying "Nice doggie" until you can find a rock."

"This resolution is a great example of the principle of give and take. It gives one portion to (delegation) and takes ten portions from (another delegation)."

"This resolution is like walking off a very high cliff: it may be fun at first, but at some point it is really going to hurt."

That is all for this month! Be sure to send your favorite analogy to me at mun.analogies@gmail.com, and I will be sure to include it in next month's issue.

Speak UP!

By Osama Ghani

TO GAIN SOME insight into the Model United Nations scene here in the Middle East, we decided to interview two experienced MUNers, Shakeer Ahmad from Qatar Academy, and Adrina Gnanachandran from Doha College. Each was asked to share their views about different aspects of Model UN in the Middle East. Both delegates have served in executive leadership roles at conferences in the region.

Which conference in the Middle East has been your favourite so far, and why?

Shakeer: I have enjoyed many conferences in the region, including THIMUN Qatar, Georgetown MUN, Qatar Academy MUN, and Doha College MUN, I feel that I liked QAMUN the most because I knew everyone there, since it was a fairly small community. Although it probably doesn't have the scale of THIMUN or GMUN, the debates were really heated and enjoyable because we all knew each other to an extent.

Adrina: Doha College MUN V 2012. I serve as Deputy President and it was my 5th and final DCMUN conference, and my 14th conference overall. It was my favorite because I had been part of it since its induction, so I saw the conference and the DCMUN club grow into something truly amazing. I loved organizing an event of such a large magnitude and sharing my experience with a brilliant executive team and local and international delegates.

Have you been to a UNAUSA style conference? Which style do you prefer more and why?

Shakeer: I have been to a "US" style conference; Georgetown MUN. Both systems have their merits, but I would say I slightly prefer the US style. It gives delegates, like me who enjoy grasping and retaining lobbying power more opportunities to exert their influence through an open unmoderated caucus system. I liked the fact that delegates had the power to open unmoderated caucuses openly and frequently.

Adrina: I have never actually been to UNAUSA style conference — only conferences based on THIMUN procedure. I really do believe that THIMUN



Set For Success: Shakeer Ahmad (left) and Adrina Gnanachandran (right) are two of the Middle East circuit's most experienced Model UN delegates

conferences work well, as they are systematic and generally reflect how the UN conferences function. However due to lack of experience in the UNAUSA style, I am unable to comment on my preference.

Especially in Middle Eastern countries, do you feel that representing Israel is controversial? Could you elaborate?

Shakeer: No, I do not feel that representing Israel is controversial, at least not in my field of conferences. Multi-cultural communities such as that of Qatar and the UAE can host situations with Israel being represented. So long as the students are open-minded, there are no issues. Coming from personal experiences coaching and advising delegates of Israel here at Qatar Academy, they, especially as Arab kids, enjoy the challenge of representing the so-called "Enemy" or "Other side." It's kind of like trying to role play something you know a lot about but have never done before. If the students are coming into MUN with an open mind, anything is possible.

Adrina: The actual debate can become very heated when representing Israel in Middle-Eastern countries, but this sense of controversy is what makes MUN exciting and enables us to expand our ways of thinking in order to facilitate innovative ideas that will serve as plausible

solutions. As a chair, I have seen that the level of professionalism in the delegates originating from the Middle-East when tackling the Israel issue, still remains high, and most are able to express the views of their delegation as opposed to their personal opinions.

What is the one thing that you feel Middle Eastern conferences are lacking?

Shakeer: I would say conferences such as THIMUN Qatar and Georgetown MUN are excellent in terms of quality of debate and leadership. The only area lacking would be a more diverse student body. While the region itself is very diverse, there should be more delegates from the Western World and Africa to match the representation from the Middle East and Asia. That's the only thing I would have to say. Personally though, I find the debate here the best I have experienced, as compared to other conferences I have been to elsewhere.

Adrina: Middle Eastern MUN conferences encompass most, if not all the aspects that could be experienced in any other conference. However, due to restrictions, an MUN party or social event generally is not a part of a Middle Eastern conference (however, there are some exceptions), and this generally tends to be a highly enjoyable part of other international conferences.

Is there any significant language barrier you have seen for Arab delegates trying to get their point across?

Shakeer: Language barrier? I don't think it is specifically for "Arab Students" but rather for the schools some delegates come from. I have met and befriended many Arab delegates who are excellent at Model UN. I would argue that rather than plainly Arab students, students who only have access to little English at their schools sometimes struggle, otherwise there is little or no language barrier. The schools here are doing a pretty good job!

Adrina: I've barely seen this, as most delegates who sign up for Model United Nations are well aware that a certain level of English proficiency is necessary to partake in a conference. Very seldom is there an expression of difficulty in communication. This may be due to the fact that apart from the student officers, Model UN is largely dependent on the delegates aiding one another; so as a team, delegates are usually able to get their point across clearly without significant problems.

Next month, we'll be interviewing delegates from Bahrain and Egypt! Keep your eyes on this space for my monthly column, *Speak UP!*

Online Model United Nations, cont.

Given that none of the permanent five members of the Security Council come from the Middle East or Africa, students from this region understand how difficult it is to gain recognition on an international stage and are willing to listen to the voices of states on the fringe. It goes without saying that the region itself is incredibly diverse, which makes debate much more interesting. Additionally, I believe the youth have realized something of which the United Nations itself could benefit from understanding: that these differences in opinion need not extinguish any hope of reaching consensus, and that we can instead progress in appreciating this "different sameness."

As a delegate, an important lesson to learn is to not be discouraged when assigned a smaller country, or a country

with a less significant role with respect to an issue; these countries can prove to be essential in resolving such a conflict. Perfecting your ability to voice an opinion in debate, regardless of what country you are representing, doesn't happen without practice. So as we welcome a new year, I encourage you to contact me at 13lryan@asd.edu.qa to inquire how to get involved in this ever-growing and heterogeneous community.

When I first got involved in O-MUN in January of 2012, the region was much smaller than it stands today. Currently, we have 213 eager delegates in the region, who are all anxious to debate. When I say that the region is fast growing, I *really* mean it! And the region's potential is expanding with its population. Not only does a larger community mean further opportunity for exploring

debate, but for developing leadership as well. We have recently started an O-MUN ambassador program to accelerate outreach in the region. Lastly, a visit earlier this year to the Qatar Leadership Conference helped demonstrate student's true interest O-MUN. The Internet is playing an increasingly important role in connecting people and, as such, a movement of Model UN from solely physical conferences to largely online ones not only makes better logistical sense, but allows for wider international participation. Finally, I think it goes without saying that I see O-MUN becoming a major player in this movement.

Lara, O-MUN's DSG for Middle East and Africa/American School of Doha, is a student at the American School of Doha.



Lara Ryan (pictured on right)

Finding MUN Success in the Middle East, cont.

ten different presentations at the conference on MUN-related topics. One of KFC's workshops was "What the UN Wants for Model UN," in which he shared his takeaways from a UN workshop in August. One of my workshops was "What Should Model UN Teach?" in which I described the vast spectrum of differences between MUN programs around the world. KFC also led a workshop on negotiation skills, and I gave advice to high school seniors and juniors on how to share their Model UN experience on university applications.

In addition the conference, KFC and I visited different schools around the region, including the American Community School in Jordan, the Amman Baccalaureate School, Dubai International Academy, the Universal American School in Kuwait, and the Ibn Khaldun National School in Bahrain.

We worked with students on fundamental Model UN skills, such as public speaking and resolution writing. We also provided professional development for teachers, helping them learn the ins and outs of Model UN, how the activity differs across regions, and what steps they can take to build up their Model UN programs.

We met many students, teachers, and educators who believe that Model UN in the Middle East is important because it can inspire positive change in a part of the world that has seen so much chaos. I wanted to explore this, and in my workshops, I asked students and teachers to write resolutions in response to recent events surrounding the "Innocence of Muslims" video.

It was an engaging topic that hit close to home and sparked meaningful discussion. Using Model UN to explore this issue prompted students and teachers to look at the topic from different perspectives, including those opposite their own. They produced draft resolutions that sought to strike a balance between protecting the freedom of speech and protecting religious diversity, while also providing physical protection for foreign nationals. This turned out to be a powerful exercise that showed the potential for using Model UN to engage youth by providing a structured and thoughtful way to explore political and social issues.

Through our experiences at the Qatar Leadership Conference and teaching Model UN at schools around the region,

KFC and I learned a lot about Model UN in the Middle East and how much it has grown in recent years. We met many students and teachers who are passionate about the activity and its potential for inspiring change, and we joined many discussions on how to help Model UN keep growing.

KFC and I would like to share those discussions below, and also offer our



Kevin Felix Chan (center) poses for a picture with a group of students and teachers from his Model UN workshop in Bahrain.

suggestions for seven steps that students and teachers can take to build successful Model UN programs in the Middle East. We also believe these lessons apply to other regions in the United States and around the world.

1. Organize 1-day MUN conferences.

The key to building Model UN in the Middle East is creating more opportunities for students and teachers to participate in Model UN, and the best way to do this is the creation of 1-day MUN conferences throughout the region.

The purpose of a 1-day conference is to introduce new delegates to Model UN.

The conference also gives experienced delegates, student officers, and secretariat an opportunity to practice MUN skills, chairing, and conference organizing on a

smaller scale and in a much more controlled and relaxed setting than a typical multi-day conference.

A one-day conference can be held on a weekend, on campus, and in classrooms. This means that delegates and directors don't miss school, don't have to travel far, and don't have to pay a lot to attend. Everyone comes in the morning, leaves in the afternoon, and gets home in time for dinner.

Each committee (also called a "forum" at THIMUN conferences) should have a

• 4pm – 5pm: Closing Ceremonies

One of the best examples to look at is [SOCOMUN](#), the largest 1-day MUN training conference in the world that took place in early October.

2. Create circuits of local MUN conferences.

A 1-day conference is ideal for a group of neighboring schools. Each school can organize their own conference annually. As long as the conferences are scheduled some time apart from one another, each school in the group can attend each other's conference. This could mean 1 conference taking place every month. When neighboring schools take turns hosting Model UN conferences for one another, this is called a "circuit."

A circuit of conferences gives students multiple opportunities to participate in Model UN throughout the year. They get to practice and deepen their skills, whether as delegates or student officers. This makes them better prepared when they travel to the big international conferences like THIMUN Hague.

A circuit doesn't have to be all 1-day conferences. A circuit can also include a multi-day national conference that is more formal, like [AMMUN](#) in Jordan and [DIAMUN](#) in Dubai. And everyone's circuit can include a big regional conference like THIMUN Qatar.

To create a circuit, schools first need to organize regular 1-day conferences. Then, a group of local directors need to communicate with one another and draw up a schedule. Directors should assign specific weekends to conferences and make sure they don't overlap.

3. Start Model UN outreach programs.

More and more schools in the Middle East and around the world are starting Model UN programs. Some are starting because the students want it; others because teachers are being asked to do it. In either case, new programs need help. The purpose of an outreach program is to have experienced Model UN students visit neighboring schools to introduce them to Model UN and teach them how to participate. They can visit high schools with new MUN clubs that need help. They can also visit middle schools to get their students interested in Model UN and ready to join the club when they get to high school.

The goal of the outreach program is to have the new school attend a 1-day



Students and teachers learn how to draft resolutions and write policy statements, believing Model UN holds the power to inspire positive change.



MUN in Minutes: Teachers learn Model UN at Ryan's professional development workshop in Dubai

Finding MUN Success in the Middle East, cont.

training conference. Conducting outreach also raises the level of debate at conferences. And it's a great opportunity for students to demonstrate leadership in Model UN.

To start an outreach program, appoint a student officer in charge of outreach. Have them get in contact with one neighboring school, whether it's a high school or middle school, to ask if they can talk about Model UN. As part of their presentation, the student officer should run a brief MUN simulation.

4. Invite parents and principals to watch Model UN.

At the workshops I taught, a frequently asked question from teachers was how to gain support from parents and principals who are unfamiliar with Model UN. This is important not just because parents and principals are in charge of funding MUN trips and programs, but they should be aware of how valuable the activity is to their students and to the school. If they actively support Model UN, it's easier for students and teachers to expand their programs, recruit students, start conferences, and reach out to other schools.

Parents and principals need to see their students participating in Model UN before they understand it. Invite parents and principals to conferences and showcase events. The 1-day conferences are good opportunities for this. You can also hold end-of-year events and run a simulation just for parents to watch, or have students take turns giving speeches. Even better would be having parents and principals participate in their own Model UN simulation!

5. Develop a teacher network through THIMUN Qatar.

A key theme that came up during the Qatar Leadership Conference was the need to improve communication between Model UN directors in the region and also worldwide. One way to do this is to leverage THIMUN Qatar as the hub for MUN activity in the Middle East.

Director Cameron Janzen and Conference Manager Ann Rogers have made it their mandate to promote Model UN in the region. They are achieving this by organizing multiple conferences and programs throughout the year, such as the flagship THIMUN Qatar Conference, the Qatar Leadership Conference,

the Film Festival, and various outreach programs. THIMUN Qatar's various conferences should serve as networking and professional development event for the teachers in attendance.

Besides communicating at conferences, teachers should be communicating year-round via THIMUN Qatar. Estab-



The Future of Student Diplomacy: O-MUN Director Lisa Martin delivers a keynote speech at the Qatar Leadership Conference and explains her vision for O-MUN.

lished teachers should be coordinating efforts with Cameron and Ann, specifically regarding conference schedules, as well as sharing resources. And teachers who are new to Model UN should get plugged into the Middle East community and seek support from more experienced teachers by getting in touch with THIMUN Qatar.

6. Explore the potential of Online MUN.

I had been aware that many students in the region are unable to travel to Model UN conferences for socioeconomic reasons and lack of funding, but I was not aware that cultural and even political reasons could present concerns, too. An Model UN club from an all-girls school, for example, might be wary of or simply prohibited from attending conferences that don't follow a specific dress code or where

boys are present. Students might also encounter difficulties obtaining visas to enter foreign countries, or find it difficult to travel due to the political situation in their own country.

A possible solution to these issues is the development of [Online Model United Nations](#), which makes it possible

for anyone, anywhere to participate in Model United Nations. O-MUN Director Lisa Martin, who also teaches middle school MUN at the American Community School in Jordan, delivered one of the keynote speeches at the Qatar Leadership Conference and showed a demo of O-MUN. Participation in O-MUN is free; all you need is a computer and an Internet connection. Students interact in a moderated environment, made possible by a technology stack centered around Blackboard Collaborate. To learn more about O-MUN, visit Best Delegate's profile on O-MUN [here](#).

O-MUN has huge potential not just for the Middle East but also around the world. If you're interested, visit their [website](#) and get in touch with Lisa. But if you're really serious, check out the schedule for their online debates and sign up to participate in the discussions yourself. Also, Lisa and the O-MUN team, at the invitation of THI-

MUN, is [currently in the Hague](#) representing OPEC, in addition to running O-MUN demo debates for conference attendees.

7. Integrate Model UN into classroom curriculum.

The International Baccalaureate Organization is developing a new unit on Global Politics that will integrate Model UN into the curriculum. The IBO has started a pilot program at select schools, but when the unit gets rolled out, Model UN will probably grow exponentially. Many of the teachers I met were in IB and they were very interested in integrating Model UN into already existing curriculum.

If you are interested in integrating Model UN into your curriculum, even if you're not in IB, I would highly recommend checking out the [Overseas Family School Model UN program in Singapore](#). OFS Dean of International Relations David Taylor gave a presentation at the Qatar Leadership Conference on how Model UN perfectly complements IB's educational goals, specifically the IB "learner profile." He and his faculty have seamlessly integrated Model UN into existing classroom curriculum from high school to middle school and even primary school — they have 4th and 5th grade students already participating in Model UN!

KFC and I would like to give special thanks to Cameron Janzen and Ann Rogers of THIMUN Qatar, the students of Qatar Academy Model UN, and the Qatar Foundation for inviting us to the Qatar Leadership Conference and giving us this opportunity to teach Model UN in the Middle East.

We would also like to thank Lisa Martin at the American Community School in Jordan, Peter Carrigan at Amman Baccalaureate School, Tanusankar Chakraborty at Dubai International Academy, Richard Barbree and Valerie Wagner at the Universal American School in Kuwait, and Mohamad Ramadan and Jaime Fontenot at the Ibn Khaldoun National School in Bahrain for welcoming us into their schools, their homes, and their Model UN communities with such gracious hospitality.

KFC and I truly enjoyed teaching Model UN in the Middle East and we hope to visit again soon — *inshallah!*

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