

Forum: GA4
**Issue: Developing measures to prevent
discrimination against indigenous communities**



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Issue: Developing measures to prevent discrimination against indigenous communities and aid in their survival

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Introduction:

Indigenous societies are known as any group of people which are the original descendants of a specific region or land. They were there prior to the colonists or settlers who began to claim and occupy the land. For centuries of colonization or conquest the indigenous societies are denied formal recognition of their land. The indigenous societies share a deep connection to their natural resources and environment; however, they are often evicted from their ancestral lands. This is due to a growing demand for urbanization and governments desire for the societies to become mainstream citizens.

In many nations there is a lack of provided public services or basic needs to maintain a standard quality of life (healthcare) for the indigenous societies. This forestalls the societies to participate in political issues or grow economically, as they make up 19% of the extreme poor while only being 6% of the world population. This makes the indigenous societies the most vulnerable to suffering of diseases or climate change.

Furthermore, there exists a large discrimination in legal systems of countries, making the indigenous groups vulnerable to violence and abuse. Defenders of indigenous rights

often are faced by intimidation and/or violence. States and governments often neglect the discrimination in the legal system or support it.

Often members of indigenous societies are attacked or even murdered simply for belonging to the indigenous societies. And peaceful efforts made by the indigenous communities to show control over their traditional lands are seen as acts of terrorism or treason.

Definition of Key terms:

Indigenous societies: Known as a group of people who are the original descendants of a specific region or land. They often have a strong link to their territories and natural resources.

Discrimination: Prejudicial or unjust treatment of a specific category of people, on the ground of a specific ground like ethnicity, age, sex, or disability.

Systemic discrimination: Procedures or routines of any organization that, without intent, contribute to less favorable outcomes for minority groups than for most of the population.

Genocide: Acts which are committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.

Urbanization: The process through which cities grow and a higher percentage comes to live in the city.

Marginalization: The social exclusion to a certain group of people.

Background:

Although under International law, like in the Universal Declaration of the Right of Indigenous People by the UN, state that indigenous people cannot be forcibly removed from their lands or territories, these rights are often violated. Governments and private corporations use the indigenous lands for personal benefit, such as selling or urbanization. This is due to the discrimination against the indigenous communities. Reason being for the discrimination is because the societies often differ from mainstream society, hence they are not seen as equal.

Indigenous people rights

Once the indigenous societies are kept from their resources or their environment which they need for survival, the indigenous populations often suffer from poverty and disease. This leads to more deaths, sometimes even extinction as a group. However, solutions, like indigenous land rights activists face violence and even murder when attempting to defend the lands. Due to the discrimination in the legal system, there isn't a foundation for the indigenous societies to protect themselves. Hence, the importance for GA1 to debate this topic. The discrimination in the legal system is mostly caused by widespread discrimination in society which translates into systemic discrimination. This systemic discrimination not only leads to less grounds for protection but also more indigenous people being arrested and charged for crimes.

Maintaining biodiversity

The survival of indigenous populations is also important for maintaining biodiversity. Indigenous population protects 80% of the biodiversity. With the decrease in indigenous populations the biodiversity is also likely to be lost. The indigenous populations value living in harmony with nature. They hold ancient information on how to maintain a sustainable use of natural resources. Plus, maintaining a healthy food supply and using natural resources to live, while simultaneously encouraging environmental biodiversity.

With a decrease in population of indigenous populations this biodiversity is less protected and likely to decrease. Further, with the selling or urbanization of the indigenous peoples land the biodiversity which they protect is simultaneously also lost.

Loss of cultural heritage

With discrimination against indigenous societies, their cultural heritage is also lost. Around the world many indigenous societies have been denied self-determination. This principle is in international law which means people's right to freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development and determine their political status. In place, the indigenous populations have suffered from oppression by mainstream society.

An example of cultural heritage loss was in Canada where the government removed Indigenous children from their family and placed them in boarding schools. At these school they were forbidden to speak their language or express cultural heritage and identities. Or in Australia Aboriginal children, an indigenous society in Australia, were placed in institutions where they suffered abuse and neglect.

Due to the loss of the territory and environment for the indigenous communities often they are forced to industrialize and move more into mainstream society. Hence, more cultural identity is lost.

Major parties involved:

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII): Established by the United Nations on the 28th of July in 2000. Since then, the committee discusses issues concerning the indigenous community's social development, economic development, culture, environment, education, health, and human rights. Since then, they have aimed to raise awareness and promote the integration and coordination of activities related to indigenous issues within the UN system. Furthermore, provide expert advice on indigenous issues to the Security Council as well as to programmes, funds, and agencies of the United Nations

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):

UNESCO is a UN agency which focusses on helping world peace and security by promoting international cooperation in education, sciences, culture, communication and information. UNESCO acknowledges that indigenous people play a significant role in maintain the world's culture and biological diversity. They have made policies which state that it must be ensured that indigenous people are able to participate in issues which shall be affecting them.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): An UN agency focusing on protection of all human rights for all people. They have made a manual

aiming to strengthen the work of national human rights institutions in the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous people. It provides a broad understanding of the legal nature of the rights, to ensure that the indigenous people's rights are fully realized.

China: China is one of the countries which now still commits a series of human rights abuses against the native Uyghur people and other ethnic and religious minorities out of discrimination. The human rights violations are often characterized as genocide. Since 2014, the Chinese government have pursued policies which resulted in the imprisonment of more than a million Muslims, from whom the majority is Uyghurs. They are imprisoned in secretive camps without legal processes. In the camps there is physical, mental, and sexual torture. Chinese government does this as they believe Uyghurs to have extremist and separate ideas.

Relevant UN treaties, resolutions, and reports:

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), 2007

<https://en.unesco.org/indigenous-peoples/undrip>

State of the worlds indigenous people, 2009

https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/SOWIP/en/SOWIP_web.pdf

Rights of indigenous peoples: rights of indigenous peoples (GA) 23 January 2020

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Previous attempts to solve the issue:

Attempts to solve the issue of the discrimination against societies are considered by different stakeholders in the issue. An example at an attempt is the legislation in the discrimination against people from indigenous societies in for example employment. This would give equal opportunities., ensuring that the indigenous societies are not undermined in their income, making them less vulnerable to poverty. However, this legislation could also be in the legal system.

Further, promoting awareness and respect for indigenous cultures and traditions among mainstream society. This makes being part of an indigenous society more normal, creating less grounds for there to be discriminated on.

Establish provisions which ensure that indigenous people can carry out their traditional occupations without undue restrictions and recognizing their right to maintain their cultures and traditions.

Concerning the maintenance of cultural heritage like the language, governments are often aware of the loss of language. However, they are not willing to implement legislation or programs to maintain the language. Reasons is lack of funding or resources needed to maintain the languages.

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