

# NHSMUN50

National High School Model United Nations



**CCPCJ**  
**BACKGROUND GUIDE**



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**Dennis Zhang**

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**Christian Hernandez**

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**Hemani Marfatia**  
**Nicole Pilliod**  
**Anya Prasad**  
**Joseph Rojek**  
**Amira Samih**  
**Zaheer Sooliman**  
**Terry Wang**  
**Ellie White**

Dear Delegates,

I am so excited to welcome you to NHSMUN 2024! My name is Bailey Tibbets. I am your director for Session 1 for the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ). I'm looking forward to hearing discussions on "Neglect and Abuse in Prison Systems" and "Terrorist, Gang, and Organized Crime Recruitment via the Internet." These topics were carefully picked by my Co-Director, Uriel Pineda, and I to spark engaging debates. We hope that you will create insightful solutions and inspire meaningful change. Your perspectives and contributions make NHSMUN exceptional, and I cannot wait to see what lies ahead.

I am from Los Angeles, California. I'm currently a second-year student at UC Davis studying Computer Science. Model United Nations has shown me the importance of teamwork, from changing technologies to changing policies. My classes have shown me advancements in an ever-growing field, and I use this in MUN. I work in entertainment or venture capital when I am not deep in my studies.

I was first introduced to MUN when I was in high school. I attended many conferences as a delegate. I also participated as a director multiple times for my high school's conferences. This helped me grow my skills in diplomacy, negotiation, and leadership. Outside of Model UN, I'm the UC Davis Birdstrike Improv group director and a Space STEM coalition volunteer. In my free time, I often do art, build robots, or binge-watch cooking shows.

I am truly enthusiastic about being a part of your NHSMUN experience. I hope you all dive into meaningful debates, thorough research, and valuable learning moments. Your dedication to understanding complex international issues is commendable, and NHSMUN is here to reward your efforts. Remember, every contribution you make enriches the conference. I am excited to see your hard work at play. NHSMUN staff as well as myself are thrilled to provide you with an educational platform. We hope you will all engage in interesting discussions, build bonds, and have an overall enjoyable conference experience.

As NHSMUN approaches, I hope you are all looking forward to our upcoming simulation of the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or concerns before our session begins. I am very excited to see you all soon.

Sincerely,

Bailey Tibbets  
Director CCPCJ  
NHSMUN 2024, Session I  
[nhsmun.ccpcj@imuna.org](mailto:nhsmun.ccpcj@imuna.org)



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**Terry Wang**  
**Ellie White**

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to NHSMUN 2024! It is an honor and a privilege for me to be your director this year. I have been given the wonderful opportunity to be your guide as we explore two issues that deeply affect our society. We will be looking into abuse and neglect in prison systems, as well as online recruitment for in-person crime. My co-director, Bailey, and I have been working hard over these past months to provide you with extensive and informative material on these two topics that will act as a perfect jumping off point for the creative and innovative solutions I'm sure you will come up with. During the conference, we will make our best effort to make sure that your time in New York City proves to be an extremely educational experience, but a very fun and memorable one as well.

My name is Uriel Pineda and I am a fourth-year student at the Tecnológico de Monterrey's State of Mexico Campus, down in Mexico. However, as of writing this, I am spending a semester at the Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, Australia. I have been an active participant in Model United Nations for a whole decade at this point, starting all the way back in fifth grade when I had a role as a page in my school's tiny conference. From there, I held various staff positions through middle and high school. I attended NHSMUN as a delegate in 2017. I did not get involved in IMUNA's behind the scenes, however, until 2021, when I took part in the first ever, online NHSMUN-MX. I was the assistant director of the United Nations World Tourism Organization, and, the year after that, I became the director of the International Organization for Migration. I am now back for my second year of directing in New York, and I am every bit as excited to continue discovering the city as I assume all of you are.

If this is your first time participating in a model like this, I'm sure this will come across as a very scary and overwhelming experience. I have been there. I will never forget that scared twelve-year-old kid walking into a committee room for the first time ever and having absolutely no clue of what a motion or a caucus even were. Model UNs have changed my life for the better, and I hope they continue doing so for many generations to come. They are a one in a kind experience; one that I think more young people should have to be aware of the problems faced by our modern society. That is why I would love to commend every one of you for being up to the challenge of making this world a better place. I cannot wait to see the bright ideas each of you will bring to the table, and I look forward to meeting all of you! I'm sure we will have a great time. Make each moment count, dear delegate. And please don't forget to have fun.

See you soon,

Dante Uriel Pineda Cortés  
Director CCPCJ  
NHSMUN 2024, Session II  
[nhsmun.ccpcj@imuna.org](mailto:nhsmun.ccpcj@imuna.org)



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## A Note on the NHSMUN Difference

Esteemed Faculty and Delegates,

Welcome to NHSMUN 2024! We are Dennis Zhang and Christian Hernandez, and we are this year's Secretary-General and Director-General. Thank you for choosing to attend NHSMUN, the world's largest and most diverse Model United Nations conference for secondary school students. This year is particularly special as NHSMUN celebrates its **50th Anniversary**, and we are thrilled to welcome you to our hometown, New York City, this March for this landmark year!

As a space for collaboration, consensus, and compromise, NHSMUN strives to transform today's brightest thinkers, speakers, and collaborators into tomorrow's leaders. Our organization provides a uniquely tailored experience for all through innovative and accessible programming. We believe that an emphasis on education through simulation is paramount to the Model UN experience, and this idea permeates throughout numerous aspects of the conference:

**Realism and accuracy:** Although a perfect simulation of the UN is never possible, we believe that one of the core educational responsibilities of MUN conferences is to educate students about how the UN System works. Each NHSMUN committee is a simulation of a real deliberative body so that delegates can research what their country has said in the committee. Our topics are chosen from the issues currently on the agenda of that committee (except historical committees, which take topics from the appropriate time period). We also strive to invite real UN, NGO, and field experts into each committee through our committee speakers program. Moreover, we arrange meetings between students and the actual UN Permanent Mission of the country they are representing. Our delegates have the incredible opportunity to conduct first-hand research, asking thought-provoking questions to current UN representatives and experts in their respective fields of study. These exclusive resources are only available due to IMUNA's formal association with the United Nations Department of Global Communications and consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. No other conference goes so far to deeply immerse students into the UN System.

**Educational emphasis, even for awards:** At the heart of NHSMUN lies education and compromise. Part of what makes NHSMUN so special is its diverse delegate base. As such, when NHSMUN distributes awards, we strongly de-emphasize their importance in comparison to the educational value of Model UN as an activity. NHSMUN seeks to reward students who excel in the arts of compromise and diplomacy. More importantly, we seek to develop an environment in which delegates can employ their critical thought processes and share ideas with their counterparts from around the world. Given our delegates' plurality of perspectives and experiences, we center our programming around the values of diplomacy and teamwork. In particular, our daises look for and promote constructive leadership that strives towards consensus, as real ambassadors do in the United Nations.

**Debate founded on strong knowledge and accessibility:** With knowledgeable staff members and delegates from over 70 countries, NHSMUN can facilitate an enriching experience reliant on substantively rigorous debate. To ensure this high quality of debate, our staff members produce detailed, accessible, and comprehensive topic guides (like the one below) to prepare delegates for the nuances inherent in each global issue. This process takes over six months, during which the Directors who lead our committees develop their topics with the valuable input of expert contributors. Because these topics are always changing and evolving, NHSMUN also produces update papers intended to bridge the gap of time between when the background guides are published and when committee starts in March. As such, this guide is designed to be a launching point from which delegates should delve further into their topics. The detailed knowledge that our Directors provide in this background guide through diligent research aims to increase critical thinking within delegates at NHSMUN.

**Extremely engaged staff:** At NHSMUN, our staffers care deeply about delegates' experiences and what they take away from their time at NHSMUN. Before the conference, our Directors and Assistant Directors are trained rigorously through hours

of workshops and exercises both virtual and in-person to provide the best conference experience possible. At the conference, delegates will have the opportunity to meet their dais members prior to the first committee session, where they may engage one-on-one to discuss their committees and topics. Our Directors and Assistant Directors are trained and empowered to be experts on their topics and they are always available to rapidly answer any questions delegates may have prior to the conference. Our Directors and Assistant Directors read every position paper submitted to NHSMUN and provide thoughtful comments on those submitted by the feedback deadline. Our staff aims not only to tailor the committee experience to delegates' reflections and research but also to facilitate an environment where all delegates' thoughts can be heard.

**Empowering participation:** The UN relies on the voices of all of its member states to create resolutions most likely to make a meaningful impact on the world. That is our philosophy at NHSMUN too. We believe that to properly delve into an issue and produce fruitful debate, it is crucial to focus the entire energy and attention of the room on the topic at hand. Our Rules of Procedure and our staff focus on making every voice in the committee heard, regardless of each delegate's country assignment or skill level. Additionally, unlike many other conferences, we also emphasize delegate participation after the conference. MUN delegates are well researched and aware of the UN's priorities, and they can serve as the vanguard for action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, we are proud to connect students with other action-oriented organizations to encourage further work on the topics.

**Focused committee time:** We feel strongly that face-to-face interpersonal connections during debate are critical to producing superior committee experiences and allow for the free flow of ideas. Ensuring policies based on equality and inclusion is one way in which NHSMUN guarantees that every delegate has an equal opportunity to succeed in committee. In order to allow communication and collaboration to be maximized during committee, we have a very dedicated administrative team who work throughout the conference to type up, format, and print draft resolutions and working papers.

As always, we welcome any questions or concerns about the substantive program at NHSMUN 2024 and would be happy to discuss NHSMUN pedagogy with faculty or delegates.

Delegates, it is our sincerest hope that your time at NHSMUN will be thought-provoking and stimulating. NHSMUN is an incredible time to learn, grow, and embrace new opportunities. We look forward to seeing you work both as students and global citizens at the conference.

Best,

Dennis Zhang  
Secretary-General

Christian Hernandez  
Director-General

## A Note on Research and Preparation

Delegate research and preparation is a critical element of attending NHSMUN and enjoying the debate experience. We have provided this Background Guide to introduce the topics that will be discussed in your committee. We encourage and expect each of you to critically explore the selected topics and be able to identify and analyze their intricacies upon arrival to NHSMUN in March.

The task of preparing for the conference can be challenging, but to assist delegates, we have updated our [Beginner Delegate Guide](#) and [Advanced Delegate Guide](#). In particular, these guides contain more detailed instructions on how to prepare a position paper and excellent sources that delegates can use for research. Use these resources to your advantage. They can help transform a sometimes overwhelming task into what it should be: an engaging, interesting, and rewarding experience.

To accurately represent a country, delegates must be able to articulate its policies. Accordingly, NHSMUN requires each delegation (the one or two delegates representing a country in a committee) to write a position paper for each topic on the committee's agenda. In delegations with two students, we strongly encourage each student to research each topic to ensure that they are prepared to debate no matter which topic is selected first. More information about how to write and format position papers can be found in the NHSMUN Research Guide. To summarize, position papers should be structured into three sections:

**I: Topic Background** – This section should describe the history of the topic as it would be described by the delegate's country. Delegates do not need to give an exhaustive account of the topic, but rather focus on the details that are most important to the delegation's policy and proposed solutions.

**II: Country Policy** – This section should discuss the delegation's policy regarding the topic. Each paper should state the policy in plain terms and include the relevant statements, statistics, and research that support the effectiveness of the policy. Comparisons with other global issues are also appropriate here.

**III. Proposed Solutions** – This section should detail the delegation's proposed solutions to address the topic. Descriptions of each solution should be thorough. Each idea should clearly connect to the specific problem it aims to solve and identify potential obstacles to implementation and how they can be avoided. The solution should be a natural extension of the country's policy.

Each topic's position paper should be **no more than 10 pages** long double-spaced with standard margins and font size. **We recommend 3–5 pages per topic as a suitable length.** The paper must be written from the perspective of your assigned country and should articulate the policies you will espouse at the conference.

Each delegation is responsible for sending a copy of its papers to their committee Directors via [myDais](#) on or before **February 23, 2024**. If a delegate wishes to receive detailed feedback from the committee's dais, a position must be submitted on or before **February 2, 2024**. The papers received by this earlier deadline will be reviewed by the dais of each committee and returned prior to your arrival at the conference.

Complete instructions for how to submit position papers will be sent to faculty advisers via email. If delegations are unable to submit their position papers on time, please contact us at [info@imuna.org](mailto:info@imuna.org).

**Delegations that do not submit position papers will be ineligible for awards.**

## Committee History

The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) is a functional committee of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and is the principal body of the United Nations concerning transnational crime and criminal justice. In the early 1990s, the UN developed a greater interest in criminal justice policy, leading to a recommendation for the creation of the CCPCJ by the UN General Assembly.<sup>12</sup> Its predecessor, the Committee on Crime Prevention and Control, was dissolved with the intent of intensifying “international cooperation in crime prevention and criminal justice” and increasing coordination between existing UN agencies.<sup>3</sup>

In 1992, the ECOSOC established the CCPCJ as a commission of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) with the passage of Resolution 1992/1. The Commission is composed of 40 member states, with terms of three years and quotas for each region of the world to ensure broad discussion and cooperation. Resolution 1992/22 further defined the priorities of the CCPCJ, including “to plan, implement and evaluate crime prevention and criminal justice assistance projects and to serve as a facilitating agent...with which to assist countries in preventing crime, promoting security, sustaining national development and enhancing justice and respect for human rights.”<sup>4</sup> With such a guideline, the CCPCJ has adopted thematic discussions ranging from money laundering to crime prevention in urban areas.

The Commission is also responsible for directing the United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which meets every five years. The Congress brings together leading policymakers, governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and several other parties for greater discussion and collaboration on work pertaining to the CCPCJ. The last Congress met in Doha, Qatar in April 2015 and addressed the integration of crime prevention and criminal justice with the wider UN agenda to promote social and economic development and the promotion of the rule of law at national and international levels.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, recommendations were adopted by CCPCJ concerning the changing trends of crime prevention and criminal justice in tandem with considerations about economic development, transnational crime, and the rule of law.

The most recent and 29<sup>th</sup> session of the CCPCJ was supposed to be held in May 2020, but was postponed to instead take place in December 2020. This Commission also serves other administrative matters. The CCPCJ governs the UNODC through its responsibility to approve the budget of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Fund, providing resources and technical assistance for worldwide crime prevention and criminal justice.<sup>6</sup> Following its mandate of collaboration, the CCPCJ works with the UN Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme Network. This Network links several institutes that gather data, exchange information, research, train and educate others in matters concerning illicit activity.

Unlike other UN agencies, the CCPCJ focuses solely on crime prevention and criminal justice, but this does not mean that collaboration with other UN bodies does not occur. Instead, the CCPCJ, as emphasized in several clauses of A/RES/46/152, works cooperatively with other UN agencies, including the Security Council, the UNODC, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, and the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption.<sup>7</sup> The CCPCJ also acts as a coordinator, providing support to member states and managing the activities of regionalized institutes on crime prevention and

1 A/RES/46/152, “Creation of an Effective United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme,” 18 December 1991.

2 “Creation of an Effective United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme.”

3 “Creation of an Effective United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme.”

4 E/1992/22, “Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 46/152,” 30 July 1992.

5 A/CONF.222/INF/1, “Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice [...] Information for Participants,” 12 January 2015.

6 “UNODC: Commissions,” *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, June 30, 2010, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/index.html?ref=menuaside>.

7 “UNODC: Commissions.”



criminal justice.<sup>8</sup> The CCPCJ encourages the sharing of information and constantly invites states and governments to participate in international dialogues to strengthen cooperation.

Moving forward, the CCPCJ plans to address issues of crime prevention and criminal justice. Through the work of the CCPCJ, the UN can better prevent illicit activities and continue to foster greater international cooperation for the benefit of all states.

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<sup>8</sup> DPI/1642/CRM, “The United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme,” April 1995, accessed 15 May 2018, [http://www.unodc.org/documents/congress//Previous\\_Congresses/9th\\_Congress\\_1995/031\\_Backgrounder\\_United\\_Nations\\_Crime\\_Prevention\\_and\\_Criminal\\_Justice\\_Programme.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/congress//Previous_Congresses/9th_Congress_1995/031_Backgrounder_United_Nations_Crime_Prevention_and_Criminal_Justice_Programme.pdf).



CCPCJ

NHSMUN 2024



## TOPIC A: NEGLECT AND ABUSE IN PRISON SYSTEMS

Photo Credit: Oxfam East Africa

## Introduction

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) serves as the parent body of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ). Their mandate is “to assist countries in building and reforming their prison systems, and in implementing sanctions and measures in compliance with human rights principles and UN standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice.”<sup>1</sup> There is no common standard for what a prison system should provide. There is also no way to regulate treatment in prison systems. As such, there is a wide variety of prison experiences worldwide. Countries have varied feelings towards the justice system. A huge number of prison systems around the world are in crisis. This has serious consequences for offenders, their families, and society. The reality in many jails is far from international norms. These prisons risk compromising the ultimate goal of a prison sentence: protecting society from crime. While this issue has many factors, healthcare, violence, private prisons, and intersectionality are the main issues.

The first problem that prisons deal with is healthcare. Prisons often do not provide the same healthcare for prisoners as most of the population. Ghana struggles with high HIV and Hepatitis C rates, which is more common in prison systems with poor sanitary conditions. There is almost no relationship between the national prison system and the national Ghana Health Service.<sup>2</sup> This lack of sanitation has resulted in poor healthcare and more illness. Poor access to mental health services is also a problem for some regions. The United Nations received reports from the Central African Public and Burkina Faso that imprisoned people are beaten for disrupting the prison systems.<sup>3</sup> Some countries have introduced reforms to address the topic globally, but these solutions are costly and general. Other health problems include diseases, underlying mental health issues, rehabilitation, substance abuse, and pregnancy care.

Another issue is violence in prisons. Violence presents itself in many forms. One of which is prison gang and cartel violence in Latin America. Guards take bribes to ignore violence between different gangs or even participate in the beating of

imprisoned people.<sup>4</sup> There are similar stories with militants in Ghana and Burkina Faso. This issue goes past gang violence. There is bribery, cartel or terrorist affiliations, sexual violence, and non-violent offenders turning violent.<sup>5</sup> Gender-based violence is especially prevalent in the prison system. On average, women’s arrest rate is 25 percent more often for non-violent crimes like substance abuse and property offenses.<sup>6</sup> In the United States, the incarceration rate for women has risen from 12 percent in 1986 to 25 percent in 2020.<sup>7</sup> There are few prison resources to help with pregnancy care, mitigate sexual violence, or maintain family contact.

Private prisons are another important subject. Prisons in the United States, England, Scotland, Australia, Israel, France, Japan, Chile, and Brazil encourage overcrowding. This only worsens when prison staff are paid based on the number of occupied beds. Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, Wales, and England have the highest number of imprisoned people in private prisons compared to the rest of their populations.<sup>8</sup> Because they are privately owned, there are significantly fewer regulations, violence, and abuse from guards. Many countries

1 “Prison Reform,” United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime, n.d., <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/es/urban-safety/prison-reform.html>.

2 “Ghana Health Service – Your Health, Our Concern,” n.d., <https://ghs.gov.gh/>.

3 “Burkina Faso,” United States Department of State, February 27, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/burkina-faso/>.

4 “Burkina Faso,” United States Department of State, February 27, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/burkina-faso/>.

5 United States Department of State, “Burkina Faso.”

6 Prison Policy Initiative, “Women’s Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2023,” Prison Policy Initiative, accessed September 9, 2023, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2023women.html>.

7 The Sentencing Project, “Incarcerated Women and Girls,” The Sentencing Project, May 12, 2022, <https://www.sentencingproject.org/fact-sheet/incarcerated-women-and-girls/>.

8 Brandy F Henry, “Private Prisons & Human Rights: Examining Israel’s Ban on Private Prisons in a US Context,” *Concordia Law Review* 4, no. 1 (2019): 198–212, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6781874/>

still use imprisoned people as non-consensual subjects in medical experiments. Here, there is little control over the rights of imprisoned people.

It is important to consider the intersectionality between race, gender, and sexuality in prisons. The prejudice that different countries have based on a person's collective identity can impact their experience while imprisoned. Traits like sex, age, ethnicity, and religion were found to have a major influence on the experiences of imprisoned people. These traits' judgments were based on a country's general political views. Across prisons worldwide, 36 percent of imprisoned people had intersectional minority identities. This can create new challenges to address. In Japan, imprisoned people are only allowed to converse with each other in Japanese. Foreigners or those who do not speak Japanese are isolated in separate buildings.<sup>9</sup> Many non-Japanese speakers of different races face solitary confinement or abuse from guards as they have fewer liberties than imprisoned people native to the country.<sup>10</sup> Identity can lead to further prison abuse and be hard to track.

## History and Description of the Issue

### Healthcare

People are given limited medical care in prison. This turns prisons into a center for diseases. People in prison have a higher chance of contracting deadly illnesses compared to the total public like human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). 3.8 percent of prisoners have HIV versus 0.7 percent of the global infected population.<sup>11</sup> In 2019, WHO Health in Prisons published a status report on prison health in Europe. This report showed large diversity and significant health inequalities

in prison populations across these countries.<sup>12</sup> People in prison are ten times more likely to get tuberculosis than the average person.<sup>13</sup> These diseases can be chronic and deadly if they are not addressed. The variety of illnesses worsens the fragile state of prison healthcare systems. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the public has become more aware of poor living conditions in prison. After the virus started, people in prison were three times more likely to have COVID-19. This added to the spread of the virus.<sup>14</sup> Lack of information on the health conditions of imprisoned people has been a huge issue. Improper screenings made it difficult to address and manage these health risks. These errors are caused by people in prison being dishonest with their symptoms due to a lack of trust in staff.

The WHO and UNODC urge countries to connect prisons with their Ministry of Health. One of these connections was the Moscow Declaration on Prison Health as Part of Public Health. The declaration promoted "close working links between the Ministry of Health and the ministry responsible for the [prison] system." The WHO hoped this would ensure proper medical treatment.<sup>15</sup> With the different healthcare systems in each prison, tracking health in low and middle-income countries' prisons is difficult.<sup>16</sup> Medical workers are needed for disciplinary work with limited prison staffers. This creates distrust between medical staff and people in prison. Prisoners are less likely to share personal information with healthcare workers if involved with disciplinary work. The Mandela Rules and Bangkok Rules set UN policies for safe and proper health in prison. The UN Human Rights Council reported 91 violations of the Bangkok Rules in 55 countries. Violations include strip searches, tranquilizers, and staff violence. A lack of medical confidentiality makes people in prison unwilling to seek healthcare. This makes it more

<sup>9</sup> "Inmates v ICE the Prison Crisis," 2019, <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/PSJ>.

<sup>10</sup> "What Is Life like in Japanese Prison?" English Lawyers Japan.

<sup>11</sup> Katherine E McLeod et al., "Global Prison Health Care Governance and Health Equity: A Critical Lack of Evidence," *American journal of public health*, March 2020, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7002953/>.

<sup>12</sup> World Health Organization, "Health in Prisons," WHO Prison Factsheet, accessed September 5, 2023, [https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/librariesprovider2/regional-committee-meeting-reports/fact-sheet---health-in-prisons-\(2020\).pdf?sfvrsn=ce722f2\\_2&download=true](https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/librariesprovider2/regional-committee-meeting-reports/fact-sheet---health-in-prisons-(2020).pdf?sfvrsn=ce722f2_2&download=true).

<sup>13</sup> Salome Charalambous et al., "Scaling up Evidence-Based Approaches to Tuberculosis Screening in Prisons," *The Lancet Public Health* 8, no. 4 (2023), [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2468-2667\(23\)00002-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2468-2667(23)00002-6).

<sup>14</sup> Carlos Franco-Paredes et al., "Covid-19 in Jails and Prisons: A Neglected Infection in a Marginalized Population," *PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases* 14, no. 6 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pntd.0008409>.

<sup>15</sup> "Declaration of Moscow Prison Health as Part of Public Health." 2003. Moscow Declaration. World Health Organization. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/352130>.

<sup>16</sup> Jörg Pont et al., "Prison Health Care Governance: Guaranteeing Clinical Independence," *American Journal of Public Health* 108, no. 4 (2018): 472–76, <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2017.304248>.

difficult to screen for diseases.<sup>17</sup>

Medical staff take on custodial work due to prisons lacking staff and overcrowding issues. Imprisonment rates in Oceania, North and South America, Asia, and Africa have increased by over 30-200 percent since 2000. Prisons are struggling to accommodate the expanding population. 121 countries and territories have prisons operating above their official capacity.<sup>18</sup> Overcrowding increases the spread of many diseases. Pneumococcal pneumonia, bacterial meningitis, infections, and non-infectious skin diseases are dire.<sup>19</sup> The concentration of illnesses makes drug-resistant viruses. These issues complicate treatments. Resistant pathogens go beyond prison walls, becoming wider public health risks. The spread of diseases is caused by the movement of staff, lawyers, visitors, and imprisoned people through prison facilities. The increased smoking rate in overcrowded prisons leads to a greater risk of cardiovascular diseases among prisoners. This trend is seen in Spain, where prisoners have a 78.8 percent smoking prevalence

rate.<sup>20</sup> Increased health risks discourage staff, healthcare professionals, and legal assistants from engaging with people in prison. These risks exacerbate the challenges faced within correctional facilities.

The spread of diseases is worsened by the lack of ventilation in prisons.<sup>21</sup> The WHO recommends a per-person ventilation standard of 60 Liters per second. This standard is needed in infection control settings. In Brazil, improving ventilation to meet WHO standards resulted in a 38.2 percent reduction in transmission rates.<sup>22</sup> Meeting this standard is challenging. The consequences usually have harsh impacts on the incarcerated individuals. In Brazil, *São Paulo's Casa de Detenção* serves as an example. Inadequate ventilation and the use of metal plates for prison protection led to increased infection rates. Current systems do not provide proper healthcare and living conditions to individuals. This is often extended to the prison environment. Climate conditions can also significantly impact imprisoned people's health, resulting in issues like overheating.

17 Marie Claire Van Hout, Simon Fleißner, and Heino Stöver, "# Me Too: Global Progress in Tackling Continued Custodial Violence against Women: The 10-Year Anniversary of the Bangkok Rules," *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 24, no. 2 (2021): 515–29, <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380211036067>.

18 "Imprisonment and Prison Overcrowding," Penal Reform International, August 24, 2022, <https://www.penalreform.org/global-prison-trends-2022/imprisonment-and-overcrowding/>.

19 "Pattern of Dermatoses among imprisoned people of District Prison- Mangalore," *Indian Journal of Dermatology, Venereology and Leprology*, December 31, 2001, <https://ijdl.com/pattern-of-dermatoses-among-imprisoned-people-of-district-prison-mangalore/>.

20 J García-Guerrero and A Marco, "Overcrowding in Prisons and Its Impact on Health - Scielo España," *Overcrowding in prisons and its impact on health*, 2012, [https://scielo.isciii.es/pdf/sanipe/v14n3/en\\_06\\_revision2.pdf](https://scielo.isciii.es/pdf/sanipe/v14n3/en_06_revision2.pdf).

21 Criminol, Br J . 2021a. "OUP Accepted Manuscript." *British Journal of Criminology*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azab023>.

22 Juliana Urrego et al., "The Impact of Ventilation and Early Diagnosis on Tuberculosis Transmission in Brazilian Prisons," *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 93, no. 4 (2015): 739–46, <https://doi.org/10.4269/ajtmh.15-0166>.

Overcrowded prison in the United States.

Credit: California Department of Corrections



In Brazil, prison temperature conditions have twice led to death and severe illness.<sup>23</sup>

The mass spread of prison illnesses is also attributed to poor sanitation. In the Central African Republic, Malawi, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Senegal, there are non-functional toilets and improper placement of water points near sanitation outflows in prisons.<sup>24</sup> Certain European prisons require people to purchase water with their limited funds. This raises concerns about imprisoned people's access to necessary resources.<sup>25</sup> The International Committee of the Red Cross suggests disinfecting water with chlorine-based disinfectants once or twice a year, but doing this is challenging.<sup>26</sup> 60 percent of detainees in Mexico consider prison water unsafe for consumption. All these poor sanitation conditions have worsened and spread disease.

Pregnant people in prison are highly vulnerable due to poor health conditions. Around six to ten percent of imprisoned people are pregnant in the United States.<sup>27</sup> In the UK, around 600 pregnant people are arrested annually, leading to approximately 100 babies born to them.<sup>28</sup> Pregnant people's needs are often overlooked in prisons. Such facilities are frequently designed without accommodating them. Despite the WHO's call in Moscow, prisons did not prioritize the health and safety of expectant parents.<sup>29</sup> Imprisoned people often face limited medical services. They often lack services such as physical examinations and assessments of reproductive

history. In a prison located in Punjab, Pakistan, healthcare workers mostly offered prescription medications and had little direct patient interactions.<sup>30</sup> Prison health systems often operate independently of their national ministry of health or public health department. This makes it difficult to track pregnancies and live births. As such, monitoring the health of the mother and child becomes challenging.<sup>31</sup> HIV-positive pregnant people risk transmitting the virus to their fetus through vertical transmission without proper healthcare.<sup>32</sup> Pregnancy drug use can harm fetuses, causing prematurity, low birth weight, and fetal death. During pregnancy, only 27 percent of arrested people disclosed drug use.<sup>33</sup> Cannabis is by far the most common. Proper treatments cannot be given to imprisoned people or their children without disclosure.

Pregnancy is not the only medical condition that requires ongoing medical attention. Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) are challenging to screen. This is because of the social stigma surrounding STDs.<sup>34</sup> When individuals experience potential symptoms of an STD, they are likely to hide it from healthcare professionals. Lack of education and conversation around STDs allows stigma to persist. Chronic conditions also demand consideration, with 5.5 percent of imprisoned people having asthma and 3.9 percent affected by type 2 diabetes.<sup>35</sup> Diabetes typically requires a glucometer for monitoring blood glucose levels, insulin injections, and a proper diet to prevent health concerns. Without the appropriate equipment and

23 "HRW: Behind Bars in Brazil (Physical Conditions)," [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org), 2000, <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports98/brazil/Brazil-06.htm>.

24 "Water and Sanitation," Penal Reform International, 2022, <https://www.penalreform.org/global-prison-trends-2022/water-and-sanitation/>.

25 COE, "30th GENERAL REPORT of the CPT" (European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, December 31, 2020).

26 Pier Nembrini, "PRISONS WATER, SANITATION, HYGIENE and HABITAT IN," August 2005, [https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/icrc\\_002\\_0823.pdf](https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/icrc_002_0823.pdf).

27 Robab Latifnejad Roudsari and Somayeh Alirezaei, "Promoting Health Care for Pregnant Women in Prison: A Review of International Guidelines," *Iranian Journal of Nursing and Midwifery Research* 25, no. 2 (2020): 91, [https://doi.org/10.4103/ijnmr.ijnmr\\_169\\_19](https://doi.org/10.4103/ijnmr.ijnmr_169_19).

28 Naomi Delap, Gabrielle Bourke, and Lesley Page, "Maternity Care for Women in Prisons in England and Wales," *British Journal of Midwifery* 24, no. 7 (July 2, 2016): 462–62, <https://doi.org/10.12968/bjom.2016.24.7.462>.

29 Kelsey CM and Medel N, "An Examination of Care Practices of Pregnant Women Incarcerated in Jail Facilities in the United States," *Matern Child Health* 21, no. 6 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-016-2224-5>.

30 K. Siefert and S. Pimlott, "Improving Pregnancy Outcome during Imprisonment: A Model Residential Care Program," *Social Work* 46, no. 2 (April 1, 2001): 125–34, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/46.2.125>.

31 Molly Skerker et al., "Improving Antenatal Care in Prisons," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 93, no. 10 (August 31, 2015): 739–40, <https://doi.org/10.2471/blt.14.151282>.

32 Somayeh Alirezaei and Robab Latifnejad Roudsari, "The Needs of Incarcerated Pregnant Women: A Systematic Review of Literature," *International Journal of Community Based Nursing and Midwifery* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 2022): 2–17, <https://doi.org/10.30476/IJCBNM.2021.89508.1613>.

33 Emmanuel A. Oga, Katrina Mark, and Victoria H. Coleman-Cowger, "Cigarette Smoking Status and Substance Use in Pregnancy," *Maternal and Child Health Journal* 22, no. 10 (June 7, 2018): 1477–83, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-018-2543-9>.

34 Gabrielle Beaudry et al., "Managing Outbreaks of Highly Contagious Diseases in Prisons: A Systematic Review," *BMJ Global Health* 5, no. 11 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2020-003201>.

35 Pearl Steinzor, "Rates of Chronic Conditions, Asthma in Prisons May Be Severely Undertreated, Study Finds," *AJMC*, April 27, 2023, <https://www.ajmc.com/view/rates-of-chronic-conditions-asthma-in-prisons-may-be-severely-undertreated-study-finds>.

treatment, diabetes can severely impact the individual's health. Similarly, hygienic practices are important in health. However, hygiene and clean materials are often a luxury in prisons.

## Mental Health

Prisons often create poor health conditions that can create or worsen the mental conditions of people in prison. In 2023, 32.8 percent of imprisoned people in 36 countries suffered from mental difficulties.<sup>36</sup> Mental illnesses are ignored in prison despite their importance. The primary reason for death among people in prison during COVID-19 was suicide. The European Union reports that five to six percent of men and 20-24 percent of women in prison participated in acts of self-harm.<sup>37</sup> The lack of proper information makes it difficult to determine if reports of self-harm or suicide are real or accidental.<sup>38</sup> Mental difficulties become incredibly difficult when attempting to transition people from prison systems back to normal society.

Prison conditions often make imprisoned people grow distant from others. This includes the families of people in prison. With prisons far from most densely populated areas, people usually need lots of time and money to stay in contact with family. Frequently it is not possible, especially in middle and low-income countries.<sup>39</sup> Imprisoned people who had been visited once a year were 30.7 percent less likely to reoffend. They are also more likely to report having post-release employment opportunities. These studies reviewed people at high risk of reoffending due to the nature of their crime. One five-year study showed a reduction in re-offending when imprisoned people received more phone calls.<sup>40</sup> Contacting

loved ones lowers people's likelihood of reoffending. To help people, the CCPCJ should emphasize the positive impact of outside contact on the justice system.

Solitary confinement is a common punishment in prison. In solitary confinement, individuals are confined to their cells for 22 to 24 hours daily. Its effects can lead to major psychological and physical difficulties. People in prison who experience solitary confinement have increased chances of committing suicide, homicide, or overdose.<sup>41</sup> Confinement can cause 'isolation syndrome'. This leads to mental difficulties like anxiety, depression, paranoia, and psychosis. Post-confinement, few services are provided to cope with the mental and physical stress. Despite the clear consequences of such measures on inmate health, they persist. A study in England and Wales found that people in solitary confinement imprisonment were 20 times more likely to be admitted to a hospital for psychiatric reasons.<sup>42</sup> And yet, little has been done to regulate this abuse.

Other factors that impact people's mental health in prison are more indirect. Most imprisoned people experience trauma before their arrest. This generally leads them to risks of substance use, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and criminal behavior.<sup>43</sup> Without proper treatment, prisons can amplify these issues. The male prison population has a 30 to 60 percent chance of experiencing PTSD after prison.<sup>44</sup> These experiences can lead to more violent overall behavior. This causes a greater risk of substance use, risky sexual behavior, and suicide attempts.<sup>45</sup> Mental health difficulties can lead to drug dependence. A consequence of drug dependency is secondary major mental health issues. This issue is most

36 "WHO Reveals One-Third of imprisoned people in Europe Suffer Mental Health Disorders | UN News," news.un.org, February 14, 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/02/1133507>.

37 Luke Johnson et al., "Scoping Review of Mental Health in Prisons through the COVID-19 Pandemic," *BMJ Open* 11, no. 5 (May 2021): e046547, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-046547>.

38 Seena Fazel et al., "Mental Health of imprisoned people: Prevalence, Adverse Outcomes, and Interventions," *The Lancet Psychiatry* 3, no. 9 (September 2016): 871–81, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366\(16\)30142-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366(16)30142-0).

39 Katie Rose Quandt and Alexi Jones, "Research Roundup: Incarceration Can Cause Lasting Damage to Mental Health," Prison Policy Initiative, May 13, 2021, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/05/13/mentalhealthimpacts/>.

40 Johanna B. Folk et al., "Behind Bars but Connected to Family: Evidence for the Benefits of Family Contact during Incarceration," *Journal of Family Psychology* 33, no. 4 (June 2019): 453–64, <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000520>.

41 Tiana Herring, "The Research Is Clear: Solitary Confinement Causes Long-Lasting Harm," Prison Policy Initiative, December 8, 2020, [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2020/12/08/solitary\\_symposium/](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2020/12/08/solitary_symposium/).

42 Penal Reform International, "Solitary Confinement - Penal Reform International," Penal Reform International, 2013, <https://www.penalreform.org/issues/prison-conditions/key-facts/solitary-confinement/>.

43 Emily Widra, "No Escape: The Trauma of Witnessing Violence in Prison," Prison Policy Initiative, December 2, 2020, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2020/12/02/witnessing-prison-violence/>.

44 Nancy Wolff et al., "Trauma Exposure and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder among Incarcerated Men," *Journal of Urban Health* 91, no. 4 (May 28, 2014): 707–19, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-014-9871-x>.

45 Nancy Wolff et al., "Trauma Exposure and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder among Incarcerated Men."

common in prisoners in their early to mid-twenties. Often caused by extreme stress or boredom, mental health problems are common in prison. Some come from imprisoned people having a maximum work week of 20 hours on average.<sup>46</sup> In an interview, 24 percent of imprisoned people said that they used drugs as a coping mechanism to deal with the environment. There has been an increase in New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). NPS is linked to worsening mental health, paranoia, and prison violence. It is estimated that 30 percent of men and 51 percent of women in incarceration deal with drug abuse in European prisons worldwide.<sup>47</sup>

A major consequence of these negative environmental factors is Depressive Disorders. Rates of depression in prison are very high. In a prison center in Ethiopia, 55.9 percent of prisoners suffered from depression.<sup>48</sup> Major factors that increased the risk of depression in prison were being female, younger, or less educated. The nutrition of people in prison also significantly impacted the rates of depression. Longer sentences cause

increased rates of depression, with a sentence of six years or more leading to high chances of a depressive disorder.<sup>49</sup> The economic status of a country also influences the mental state of detained people. More developed countries have depression rates of 33.1 percent in prisons while developing countries are 39.2 percent. Getting a proper diagnosis for mental illness is more difficult than expected. There is a major difference in results based on prison tools. Proper diagnostic tools such as psychiatrists or psychologists make it easier to gauge a patient's mental health. There was a 19.1 percent prevalence of mental illness when using only these tools in prison. Using screening tools (which check for signs of mental illness), the results had a much higher prevalence of 54 percent.<sup>50</sup>

Another mental health difficulty that impacts detainees is anxiety. It was found that about 20 percent of imprisoned people have an anxiety disorder. Anxiety can cause sleeping difficulties, digestive issues, chest pains, and headaches over a long time. The most common symptom of anxiety was

46 Nick De Viggiani, "Unhealthy Prisons: Exploring Structural Determinants of Prison Health," *Sociology of Health & Illness* 29, no. 1 (February 6, 2007): 115–35, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9566.2007.00474.x>.

47 "Prison and Drugs in Europe," Publications Office of the EU, January 14, 2022, [https://op.europa.eu/publication/manifestation\\_identifier/PUB\\_TDXD22001ENN](https://op.europa.eu/publication/manifestation_identifier/PUB_TDXD22001ENN).

48 Tariku Mengesha et al., "Prevalence and Correlates of Depressive Symptoms among Prisoners in Kaliti Federal Prison in Ethiopia: A Facility Based Cross-Sectional Study," *BMJ Open* 13, no. 1 (January 2023): e061547, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2022-061547>.

49 Solomon Gidey Welu et al., "Prevalence and Associated Factors of Depressive Disorder among imprisoned people in Mekelle General Prison Center, Tigray, Ethiopia: A Cross-Sectional Study Design," ed. Giovanni Galeoto, *Depression Research and Treatment* 2021 (June 1, 2021): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1155/2021/1942674>.

50 Asres Bedaso et al., "Global Estimates of the Prevalence of Depression among imprisoned people: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," ed. Janusz K. Rybakowski, *Depression Research and Treatment* 2020



Solitary Confinement room in Rennes, France Prison.  
Credit: Édouard Hue



insomnia. imprisoned people without insomnia, being 95 percent less likely to have a general anxiety disorder.<sup>51</sup> This disorder can often lead to worse and more serious difficulties like panic disorder or obsessive-compulsive disorder.<sup>52</sup>

Mental health difficulties greatly impact the lives of people in prison. Learning disabilities are especially prevalent in such cases. 31 percent of imprisoned people are reported to have a learning disability, including dyslexia or attention deficit disorder (ADD).<sup>53</sup> Imprisoned people with learning disabilities were less likely to participate in vocational programs and educational services, hindering their ability to rejoin society after their sentences. This is why rates of multiple arrests were higher for imprisoned people with learning difficulties.<sup>54</sup> A study in the United States found that 36 percent of students in their juvenile halls had learning disabilities.<sup>55</sup> These difficulties create hidden harm for people in prison. This includes a lack of knowledge of sentence length and limited information on their release processes.

High-risk mental health difficulties are more common in prisons. Cases of psychosis are at 3.6 percent in men and 3.9 percent in women. Psychosis is a severe mental health disorder that causes an individual to lose sense of reality. imprisoned people most likely to experience psychosis tend to experience it during their first week of arrest. 10.7 percent of men and 15.2 percent of women experienced psychosis during their first week in incarceration. Most studies on this subject found that most imprisoned people experiencing psychosis had their first episode in the first three months of imprisonment.<sup>56</sup> Non-violent offenders are more likely to experience psychosis than violent offenders. This emphasized the vulnerable state imprisoned people are in when entering an institution.

Transferring people from prison to mental health facilities also has problems. A study in England and Wales examined a rule requiring a 14-day transfer period for mentally ill prisoners. It was shown that this transfer only happened 34 percent of the time.<sup>57</sup> There were common delays in assistance with prison mental health. Screening imprisoned people for mental health difficulties should be a priority. Most screenings for substance use, personality, and post-traumatic stress disorders are ignored. This is because of the high number of imprisoned people who need to be transferred. Although screening programs like the Brief Jail Mental Health Screen (BJMHS) already exist, many illnesses are actively being ignored.<sup>58</sup> Over 1 million people are imprisoned in US state prisons, and they are predominantly poor, disproportionately Black, Native, Hispanic, LGBTQ, and targeted by law enforcement from a young age. These same individuals also suffer disproportionately health-wise in prisons. Over half of the people in prison in the US reported suffering from mental health problems. Women and Native people are mentally suffering at even higher rates.<sup>59</sup> The longer most of these people are in prison, the worse their mental health will get.

It is also crucial to consider how prisons treat the illness of addiction. People who use drugs in prison have also dealt with greater health risks during the pandemic. This happened because of underlying health issues and a lack of access to harm reduction and healthcare services. Harm reduction refers to minimizing the dangers of using illegal substances. This can be checking for contamination of drugs, providing clean needles, and any other preventative measures. Worldwide, most prisons still do not provide enough treatment and harm reduction measures for people who use drugs. Internationally,

51 Mengesha Birkie et al., “Depressive, Anxiety Symptom Frequency and Related Factors among imprisoned people during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Northeastern Ethiopia, a Cross-Sectional Study,” *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 13 (May 17, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2022.820015>.

52 Jennifer Bronson and Marcus Berzofsky, “Special Report,” June 2017, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/imhprpji1112.pdf>.

53 Jennifer M. Reingle Gonzalez et al., “Disproportionate Prevalence Rate of Prisoners With Disabilities,” *Journal of Disability Policy Studies* 27, no. 2 (July 25, 2016): 106–15, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1044207315616809>.

54 Jennifer M. Reingle Gonzalez et al., “Disproportionate Prevalence Rate of Prisoners With Disabilities,”

55 “Disability and Criminal Justice Reform – Learning Disabilities Association of America,” accessed September 11, 2023, [https://ldaamerica.org/lda\\_today/disability-and-criminal-justice-reform/](https://ldaamerica.org/lda_today/disability-and-criminal-justice-reform/).

56 Nabila Z. Chowdhury et al., “First Diagnosis of Psychosis in the Prison: Results from a Data-Linkage Study,” *BJPsych Open* 5, no. 6 (October 14, 2019): e89, <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjo.2019.74>.

57 A Forrester et al., “Mental Illness and the Provision of Mental Health Services in Prisons,” *British Medical Bulletin* 127, no. 1 (August 14, 2018): 101–9, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bmb/ldy027>.

58 Tobias Vogel, Stefan Lanquillon, and Marc Graf, “When and Why Should Mentally Ill Prisoners Be Transferred to Secure Hospitals: A Proposed Algorithm,” *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 36, no. 3–4 (May 2013): 281–86, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlp.2013.04.021>.

59 Prison Policy Initiative, “Chronic Punishment: The Unmet Health Needs of People in State Prisons,” Prison Policy Initiative, accessed September 5, 2023, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/chronicpunishment.html>.

women have little to no access to available services. One such example has continued since the COVID-19 Pandemic. In Moldova and Kyrgyzstan, Opioid Agonist Therapy programs were shut down in certain prisons. They still do not run at full capacity today. In some prisons, there is a shortage of mental health professionals, making it hard to provide proper mental healthcare. In Colombia, mental healthcare for female imprisoned people has gotten worse. In Argentina, when family visits were suspended, more imprisoned people needed mental health help, which made it difficult to handle.<sup>60</sup> Without the proper programs and tools being brought back, this problem will only get worse.

## Gender Based Violence

A recent survey discovered that the rate of women getting arrested has increased by 60 percent since 2000. Meanwhile, men's rates of incarceration have only increased by 22 percent.<sup>61</sup> This more closely followed the global population growth since 2000, a 30 percent increase. This disproportionate growth of female-to-male arrest rates is different in each country. In Latin America, the rate of women's detention has grown at a rate of 150 percent. It was discovered that this is likely a cause of increased drug laws in the region. There is also a "mano dura" policy, which takes a more aggressive approach to handling criminal networks. These strict laws are a large part of why more women are imprisoned. Women are also mostly arrested for petty offenses and low-level drug offenses. While 25 percent of women are detained for drug offenses, only 12 percent of men are arrested for similar crimes.<sup>62</sup>

Arresting women for 'status offenses' has been a controversial part of the issue. "Status offenses" are non-criminal acts that can be charged if committed by a minor. These "status

offenses" are usually related to abortion, witchery, or sorcery. All these low-level arrests have led to 740,000 women and girls in incarceration. This group consists of both pre-trial detainees and remanded imprisoned people. They are also arrested for 'moral crimes,' which are crimes that are not offenses if done by a man. The United States has the highest number of female imprisoned people. Still, other countries, including China, Brazil, Russia, Thailand, India, Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Mexico, are known for their large female prison population.<sup>63</sup> Women greatly struggle with a lack of programs that support their background. Many women are in charge of taking care of the children in their families. When arrested, they get separated from their kids, which affects the child's health and the imprisoned people.<sup>64</sup> This is why the Bangkok Rules in 2010 aimed to improve women's treatment in the criminal justice system. Nonetheless, achieving this goal has become more difficult as countries like Cambodia, Indonesia, El Salvador, and Guatemala have increased their female prison population by six times their initial rate in 2000.<sup>65</sup> The majority of prisons that women attended were initially only male prisons. This makes the living conditions less adaptive, usually causing higher mortality rates, mental health problems, and limited healthcare and programs. Female prisons also have fewer post-release programs available, making transitioning back to normal life difficult. Women who have been arrested are more likely to be unemployed than men after prison. They also struggle with fulfilling the probation or parole supervision chores because they spend more time caring for their family. This can often result in re-incarceration.

Higher incarceration rates for women make it more difficult to report incidences of sexual assault or rape. This occurrence has been seen in a prison in Iran, where survivors of sexual attacks

60 "Health in Prison," Penal Reform International, May 11, 2021, <https://www.penalreform.org/global-prison-trends-2021/health-in-prison/>.

61 "More Women Are Being Imprisoned. It's Not Making the World Safer.," WOLA, November 3, 2022, <https://www.wola.org/analysis/more-women-imprisoned-not-making-world-safer/>.

62 "Incarcerated Women and Girls – The Sentencing Project," The Sentencing Project, April 3, 2023, <https://www.sentencingproject.org/fact-sheet/incarcerated-women-and-girls/>.

63 Helen Fair and Roy Walmsley, "World Female Imprisonment List Fifth Edition Women and Girls in Penal Institutions, Including Pre-Trial Detainees/Remand imprisoned people," 2022, [https://www.prisonstudies.org/sites/default/files/resources/downloads/world\\_female\\_imprisonment\\_list\\_5th\\_edition.pdf](https://www.prisonstudies.org/sites/default/files/resources/downloads/world_female_imprisonment_list_5th_edition.pdf).

64 Triona Lenihan, "Addressing the 105,000 Increase in the Global Female Prison Population, Ten Years after the Bangkok Rules Were Adopted," Penal Reform International, December 10, 2020, <https://www.penalreform.org/blog/addressing-the-105000-increase-in-the-global-female/>.

65 "New Birkbeck Research Shows the World Female Prison Population Has Increased by 60 percent since 2000," Birkbeck, University of London, October 19, 2022, <https://www.bbk.ac.uk/news/new-birkbeck-research-shows-the-world-female-prison-population-has-increased-by-60-percent-since-2000>.

were forced to spread the news through a social media app called Clubhouse. After the news was leaked, the jail reported both the staff and interrogation team of assaulting the women. With such a roundabout method of reporting incidents, there are concerning implications about how many incidents go unreported.<sup>66</sup> Sexual assault and rape are acknowledged as torture by the UN. The International Human Rights law makes it the responsibility of a country to protect individuals from this torture. Custodial staff breaking these laws should be prevented by the state, especially with the risk of the psychological damage such acts could cause. This is because most women arrested have had traumatic experiences of abuse before their sentencing. Certain countries even considered abolishing the arrest of arrested women if they fit certain conditions that showed they were needed for their family or had poor mental health from abuse. The goal of this would be to lower the mortality rates of women and reduce the number of children that live with an arrested mother. This would go against the legal equality principles, which claim that all parties should be treated equally in the legal system regardless of race, gender, or background.<sup>67</sup>

The resources available to women are also limited. Legal information on their parental rights is often difficult to find. Women typically have restricted legal resources, especially when they do not have access to education. This leads to them pleading guilty because they do not understand the case or their legal rights. This lack of awareness of their human rights extends to their time in prison. There is also an overall lack of legal resources available in certain countries. Sierra Leone has less than 300 practicing lawyers, and only seven work in rural areas. Getting these resources to non-male prisons is even more complicated, as there are typically more cases in fully male prisons. The country's judicial system has cases progressing slowly without this legal assistance.<sup>68</sup>

Getting the help needed after incarceration is a labor-intensive task. Female imprisoned people are usually excluded from the discussion of women's rights. Such as the Generation Equality Forum in 2021 where there was no mention of the topic. This puts less political pressure on governments to address this issue, limiting funding and policy reforms. 115 organizations wrote a letter addressing this issue to encourage women with experience in the criminal justice system to discuss their experiences publicly. Despite all this effort, a survey done by Women Beyond Walls shows that 60 percent of advocacy organizations for women in prison are in unstable financial situations.<sup>69</sup>

The cycle of gender-based violence and abuse functions in and out of prison. There are pathways established before incarceration that led to continued abuse in prison. The "criminalization" of women's strategies for survival, "entrapment" into crime by abusers and by oppression based on gender, and "enforcement violence" by the government through coercive laws, immigration policies, social welfare policies, and law enforcement practices are the processes that turn victims into offenders. In a 2002 US based study, the six pathways of abuse into incarceration are abused and runaway girls, women forced into sex work, women with untreated addictions, women arrested for economic crimes (sometimes coerced by abusers), women arrested for harming others (either falsely or for defending themselves), and women affected by enforcement of discriminatory and coercive welfare, immigration, and corrections policies and drug laws.<sup>70</sup> Most women and girls in US prisons are abuse victims while in prison.<sup>71</sup> Based on these results, it would seem that more study is urgently required to understand the paths from victimization to jail and to document abuse by law enforcement. This also demonstrates the critical need for advocacy and services for women on-site in all areas of the

66 Golnaz Esfandiari, "Women Share Stories of Sexual Abuse in Iranian Prisons," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, May 31, 2021, <https://www.rferl.org/a/women-sexual-abuse-iran-prisons/31282808.html>.

67 Dawn Beichner and Otmar Hagemann, "A Global View of Women, Prison, and Aftercare: A Call for Reform," *Violence against Women* 28, no. 8 (April 27, 2022): 1788–1808, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012221085997>.

68 Sabrina Mahtani, "Women and the Criminalization of Poverty: Perspectives from Sierra Leone," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 39, no. 1 (September 2013): 243–64, <https://doi.org/10.1086/670919>.

69 Sarah Johnson, "Alarming Rise of Women in Prison Must Be Addressed, Rights Summit Told," *The Guardian*, July 17, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/jul/17/alarming-rise-in-female-inmates-must-be-addressed-womens-rights-summit-told>.

70 Mary Gilfus, "Women's Experiences of Abuse as a Risk Factor for Incarceration," VAWnet.org, December 1, 2002, <https://vawnet.org/material/womens-experiences-abuse-risk-factor-incarceration>.

71 "Why Policing and Prisons Can't End Gender Violence," *Boston Review*, January 24, 2022, <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/why-policing-and-prisons-cant-end-gender-violence/>.



Exhibits from a museum, depicting a Vietnamese women's prison during the 1970.

Credit: Kerbald König

criminal justice system. Gender-based violence in prisons, by far, impacts women the most.<sup>72</sup>

About one in three women worldwide have experienced sexual and other forms of violence.<sup>73</sup> Worldwide, women represent between two percent and 10 percent of national prison populations but face far greater violence than their counterparts. Women are frequently sentenced to prison for economic, non-violent offenses often connected to their financial circumstances or past exposure to abuse. On top of this, poverty, ongoing discriminatory laws, a lack of economic happiness, and impediments to social and cultural rights increase women's chances of being detained. Internationally, women are also accused of various crimes that men do not usually face. These are 'moral' offenses, such as witchcraft, adultery, and dress code infractions. Women and girls have been jailed for fleeing their homes frequently to avoid forced prostitution, sexual or physical abuse, and underage marriage. Many countries jail women for getting abortions. This occurs even in instances of rape and assault. In addition, administrative detention has been used to hold female sex workers, domestic abuse victims, victims of crimes of honor, and victims of sex trafficking. This is supposedly

<sup>72</sup> "UNODC Gender in the Criminal Justice System," United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime, accessed September 11, 2023, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/justice-and-prison-reform/cpcj-gender.html>.

<sup>73</sup> "UNODC Gender in the Criminal Justice System," United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime.

<sup>74</sup> Aleksandra Plesko, "Women and Detention," September 2014, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/OnePagers/Women\\_and\\_Detention.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/OnePagers/Women_and_Detention.pdf).

done for their safety or rehabilitation. Because women are being arrested at an increasingly alarming rate and are being detained separately, they face an additional variety of abuses. Imprisoned women are subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment when being detained. They are occasionally stripped naked, "virginity tested," body inspected, and even assaulted by prison officials. Imprisoned women may experience various forms of violence, including rape by other imprisoned people and guards, forced prostitution, sexual contact, surveillance while showering, and wearing revealing prison uniforms.<sup>74</sup>

All of these issues can be traced back to the fact that prisons were originally designed by and for men. As a result, only a few institutions are equipped to handle the unique requirements of female imprisoned people. The absence of gender-specific rehabilitation programs, such as those for sexual and reproductive health, mental health, substance misuse, and counseling for victims of physical and sexual abuse, is frequently the reason women commit crimes in the first place. Women still face similar discrimination and prison abuses as their counterparts, but there are still clear differences. Several communities have unique needs. In prisons, these groups are the following: Pregnant women, girls,

women with disabilities, women suffering from mental illness, substance abuse, or HIV and AIDS, women imprisoned in armed conflict, women who are foreign nationals or from Indigenous or minority communities, and lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women.<sup>75</sup> This reiterates the need to cater to a variety of specific necessities.

Given the CCPCJ's mandate, delegates must consider how gender-based violence will impact the efficiencies of crime prevention and criminal justice. There are a clear number of disparities that women face while in prison. These differences must be accounted for, as it is clear that the international community must continue the path set by the current agreements that are in place. Delegates should consider a variety of solutions to improve quality of life, as well as the use of different resources to address these issues.

## Private Prisons

Countries experiencing overcrowding, a lack of funding, and increasing incidence reports attempted to solve this issue by using private prisons. Private prisons are prisons that are outsourced to companies by a country. These companies are for-profit and, in theory, would be able to give more attention to the conditions of the prisons. This seemed to be the case with the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The United Kingdom reported being able to save a large amount of money for the country. The Netherlands provided more education, catering, and laundry resources through their private prisons.<sup>76</sup> Private prisons have also been shown not to save countries money on funding prisons and have high corruption. Although the United Kingdom was able to save money on their prisons, there have been reports of accusing more misdemeanors and extending sentences to prevent imprisoned people from leaving the system. Prisons are paid, on average, 60 USD for each imprisoned person they have. This encourages private prisons to maximize the number of

imprisoned people in custody. Many countries have based their private prison systems similarly to how the United States private prison system operates. The Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) in El Salvador is well-connected to the Latin American prison system. imprisoned people affiliated with the MS-13 are hired as mercenaries for larger cartels like Los Zetas. These groups then operate their systems out of prison.<sup>77</sup>

One specific case in Bloemfontein, South Africa, shows the consequences of unrestricted private prisons. This prison is the second largest in the world, with 3,000 imprisoned people living there. Owned by the company G4S, its contract with the South African Government was set to last for 25 years. Many reports of abuse from this company include electroshock, forced medication, and prolonged solitary confinement. G4S was getting paid for the quantity of imprisoned people they could hold and not the quality of the prison. This company expanded its reach to include probation services, immigration detention centers, and psychiatric clinics. G4S created more facilities in other countries because of their ability to cut costs. To ensure their reputation, any reports of their poor living conditions were suppressed.<sup>78</sup> These acts of torture and abuse reveal the silenced voices of many imprisoned people.

Corruption from these private companies has spread to influence the criminal justice system. Judges and government bodies are influenced to give longer sentences and create laws with higher penalties. There has been an increase in sentence lengths for property damage, fraud, and non-violent drug crimes.<sup>79</sup> A famous case is the “Cash for Kids” scandal held in the United States, where judges were bribed to give harsher sentences to juvenile offenders. This was done so that more people would be in the for-profit detention centers, increasing their profit. A study in a United States private prison found that imprisoned people served four to seven percent longer sentences than those in public prisons with a similar sentence. These private prisons are also known for hiring inexperienced

<sup>75</sup> Aleksandra Plesko, “Women and Detention.”

<sup>76</sup> “Prison Privatization: The Many Facets of a Controversial Industry: V.1: The Environment of Private Prisons; v.2: Private Prisons and Private Profit; v.3: The Political Climate of Prison Privatization,” *Choice Reviews Online* 50, no. 11 (July 1, 2013): 50-6453-50-6453, <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.50-6453>.

<sup>77</sup> “Zetas,” InSight Crime, March 27, 2017, <https://insightcrime.org/mexico-organized-crime-news/zetas-profile/>.

<sup>78</sup> “The Business of Private Prisons,” Global Justice Program, accessed September 11, 2023, <https://globaljustice.yale.edu/news/business-private-prisons>.

<sup>79</sup> “Privatized Prisons Lead to More Inmates, Longer Sentences, Study Finds,” WSU Insider, accessed September 11, 2023, <https://news.wsu.edu/press-release/2020/09/15/privatized-prisons-lead-inmates-longer-sentences-study-finds/>.

guards who are more likely to provide infractions. These infractions make it more difficult for imprisoned people to get out for good behavior. imprisoned people were 15 percent more likely to receive infractions than in public prisons.<sup>80</sup>

The number of people in prison worldwide is increasing despite the constant discussion about the necessity of decreasing our reliance on prison-based penalties. It grew by 24 percent between 2000 and 2018, roughly equal to the growth rate of the entire population during this time. 10.74 million individuals are reportedly in prison worldwide, but when researchers concentrate on imprisonment rates rather than on raw numbers, obvious geographical variations in the distribution of these convicts become muddled. The 50 largest prison systems worldwide are represented by their 2018 prison populations in a US assessment of the global prison population. About 90 percent of the world's imprisoned people are housed in prisons or jails in these countries. The top 10 countries are the United States, China, Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, Thailand, Indonesia, Turkey, Iran, and Mexico. 17 of these top 50 countries presently handle all or a portion of their jail systems through private businesses. With nine of the 12 countries in the Americas (North, Central, South, and Caribbean) participating in the sector, the region has the highest rate of jail privatization. At the other end of the spectrum, 16 of the 50 largest prison systems in 2018 are found in Asia. Only two of these 16 states (the Republic of South Korea and Japan) have incorporated the private sector in jail management, and only Japan utilizes a private corporation to oversee reentry.<sup>81</sup> It seems that with growing detention rates, prison privatization grows too. Private prisons are not just used for imprisoned people. They are also used to detain immigrants in many countries. Similar to the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia have prioritized immigrant detention for privatization. In the United Kingdom, 73 percent of immigrant imprisoned people are housed in private

facilities, and Australia has an entirely private immigrant detention system.<sup>82</sup>

The GEO Group and two British businesses, G4S and Serco, dominate the prison privatization market outside the United States.<sup>83</sup> GEO Group, Core Civic, and LaSalle Corrections are the market leaders in the US.<sup>84</sup> Even with all this industry growth surrounding the private prison industry, it does not always have positive societal impacts. Research from the United States has been reflected in media reports from countries like the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada, revealing that private prison firms' profit-driven practices frequently result in subpar services and hazardous conditions. The level of prison privatization might vary depending on whether for-profit or non-profit groups carry it out. For instance, when Germany hired its first private prison in 2004, government authorities continued to oversee all imprisonment services. Meanwhile, the first private prison in Japan was established in 2007, and it operates under a less restrictive version of privatization in which most aspects of management, including security, are handled by private actors. Privatized prisons clearly stretch human resources and economic capital thin. Regardless, the privatized prison industry constantly tries to motivate them to invest in them. According to strategic reports, US private prison organizations have targeted the Conservative government of Canada for potential prison and detention contracts. These companies include The GEO Group and Management and Training Corporation (MTC).<sup>85</sup>

According to US studies, private jails are more motivated to increase profits and cut costs than to deliver high-quality services since they are profit-driven. Prisons do not have to pay as many useless expenses, which typically leads to higher staff turnover rates, lower employee pay and benefits, and fewer training possibilities. Private prison corporations have occasionally come under fire for offering subpar services, such

<sup>80</sup> Josh Sanburn, "Privately-Run Prisons Hold Inmates Longer, Study Finds," *Time*, June 19, 2015, <https://time.com/3928184/private-prisons-longer-incarceration/>.

<sup>81</sup> James Byrne, Kimberly R. Kras, and Lina Maria Marmolejo, "International Perspectives on the Privatization of Corrections," *Criminology & Public Policy* 18, no. 2 (May 2019): 477–503, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12440>.

<sup>82</sup> Human Rights First, "International Human Rights Law on Solitary Confinement," 2015, <https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/media/publications/International%20Human%20Rights%20Law%20on%20Solitary%20Confinement%2C%20HRF%2C%202015.pdf>.

<sup>83</sup> Human Rights First, "International Human Rights Law on Solitary Confinement."

<sup>84</sup> "Private Prisons in the United States – The Sentencing Project," The Sentencing Project, June 15, 2023, <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/private-prisons-in-the-united-states/>.

<sup>85</sup> Human Rights First, "International Human Rights Law on Solitary Confinement."

as healthcare and hygiene. Prisons internationally do not spend much on non-necessities. But as a result, it frequently leads to less employee pay and benefits, less training, and increased turnover rates. Private prison companies have occasionally come under fire for providing inadequate services, such as healthcare and hygiene. These factors can interact to create unpredictable circumstances that are more likely to involve abuse, aggression, harm, and even death. One of the prime examples of this kind of unpredictable outcome happened in Australia. In their immigration detention facilities, where the conditions led to violent brawls between detainees and employees, these flaws have contributed to several violent riots and allegations of abuse. As increasingly popular as privatization of prisons has become, research from the United States has discovered that private jails do not always result in cost reductions.<sup>86</sup> As more reports come out, it can be expected that there will be more points raised about the minimal cost-effectiveness of privatized prisons.

In some cases, private prisons have even been seen as more dangerous than those that are publicly run. According to the US Department of Justice study of federal prisons, violent attacks by imprisoned people on correctional employees were 163 percent more frequent in private prisons than in public ones. Assaults between imprisoned people were around 30 percent more frequent in private than in public. Many policies, particularly the United States' "Tough On Crime," have been cited as one of the reasons for the rampant growth in the imprisoned population. This is what first caused overpopulation, which governments found required privatized prisons.<sup>87</sup> With the start of the new millennium, the country's prison population is reportedly getting close to two million. It is extremely difficult for prison managers and the federal, state, and local governments that must pay for the institutional confinement of such a vast population to secure and house imprisoned people. Although the privatized prison industry had predicted a 20 percent cost with their development, this

study showed only a 1 percent difference.<sup>88</sup> With this lack of cost-effectiveness, the CCPCJ must question the efficiency of such facilities.

Not only do privatized prisons tend to have no effective cost value, they also have exploitative labor practices. According to a prison labor survey, 70 percent of laborers could not afford necessities with their prison wages, and 64 percent say they have felt concerned for their safety while working. According to a poll by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, more than 76 percent of imprisoned people report being forced to labor or risk receiving harsher punishments like solitary confinement. In reality, the most widely acknowledged employment safeguards are expressly disallowed for jailed workers under US law (as well as the laws of many other countries). This means there are no minimum wage laws, overtime protections, workspace safety guarantees, or the right to unionize. imprisoned people in the United States make, on average, between 13 cents and 52 cents per hour. These wages do not change with inflation. imprisoned people are not compensated for most job assignments in seven states.<sup>89</sup> Given that prison conditions are not only overcrowded but unsafe and inhumane, delegates of the CCPCJ must consider the impacts of privatized prisons on efficient prison systems and justice systems.

### **The Intersectionality Between Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Prisons**

Race, gender, and sexuality play a role in discrimination. It is important to consider the concept of intersectionality in prison systems and their role in abuse and neglect. Intersectionality defines how a combination of identities can result in different types of discrimination that often go unaddressed. Kimberlé Crenshaw created this concept along with the Black feminist theory. Kimberlé discovered in the 1980s that companies were prone to hiring women and black men but had almost no black women.<sup>90</sup> This concept is amplified in prisons, where

86 Human Rights First, "International Human Rights Law on Solitary Confinement."

87 "The Case Against Private Prisons," AFSCME, accessed September 11, 2023, <https://www.afscme.org/blog/the-case-against-private-prisons>.

88 Bureau of Justice Assistance, "Emerging Issues on Privatized Prisons," accessed September 12, 2023, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/bja/181249.pdf>.

89 ACLU, "Captive Labor: Exploitation of Incarcerated Workers," American Civil Liberties Union, June 15, 2022, <https://www.aclu.org/news/human-rights/captive-labor-exploitation-of-incarcerated-workers>.

90 Patricia Hill Collins, "Black Feminist Epistemology," in *Black Feminist Thought, 30th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 319–45, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781003245650-14>.

a person's identity affects their entire life and treatment.<sup>91</sup> Despite the difficulties of summarizing an individual's identity, recognizing intersectionality is the best way to understand the lives of imprisoned people.

Racial discrimination has caused minorities to be more likely to get unlawfully detained. This is seen in the United States, where Black and Latino people are 37 percent more likely to be arrested than the average population. Rates of black women in the United States are also more likely, with them being four times more likely to be arrested than white women. That increased rate of arrests was caused by the War on Drugs, which increased drug-related arrest rates to lower the amount of illegal drug use in the USA. These arrests were prejudiced and people's race, gender, and identity largely impacted who would be in prison.<sup>92</sup> This discrimination also holds for immigrants. Minimum income requirements and probation periods can hurt the lives of immigrant spouses, leading to potential arrest. This is dangerous because it causes people to stay in abusive relationships to avoid getting arrested or separated from their kids. That was seen with a British immigrant woman who had a Pakistani background. These women were more likely to be targeted for crimes if they weren't in a legal relationship.<sup>93</sup> Migrants are also being deprived of legal resources. This has been seen in Italy with migrants from African countries. They are held in detention centers for 120 to 135 days while awaiting deportation. There are reports of a lack of psychological support, legal assistance, and language courses for migrants and people of color (POC). This leads to higher detention rates and longer sentences. Biased migration and arrest policies cause all.<sup>94</sup> One's cultural and religious identity can largely impact the racial discrimination they face. As seen by the mistreatment of

Rohingya refugees in Southeast Asia. These refugees are being aided by the United Nations and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). These resources are being restricted because of the social-political climate. This is causing healthcare issues like malnutrition and infectious diseases. These Rohingya refugees are having high rates of mental health issues. Especially with women, who have been experiencing higher incidents of rape and sexual assault.<sup>95</sup> Understanding why people of different racial backgrounds are being discriminated against and treated worse in prisons requires this intersectional approach to understand who is being arrested.

People in the LGBTQ+ community often face systematic discrimination. This is most commonly seen with transgender imprisoned people, who frequently experience discrimination based on their intersectional identities. Transgender people are likely to experience violence and poor healthcare. Their experiences differ based on race, age, and social status. They will regularly face barriers related to gender transition, hormone therapy, and mental health. This increases rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide among transgender imprisoned people. Specifically, transgender women of color have the highest risk of experiencing sexual assault and violence during detention.<sup>96</sup> Transgender imprisoned people often suffer from a 'Double punishment' where they are punished for their crime and their identity in their sentence. In 2019, the South African Equality Court held the case of *September v Subramoney*. Caused by the dangerous environment for transgender individuals, the South African Government decided to implement separate housing because of the issue.<sup>97</sup>

It is crucial to take into account the concept of personhood in prisons. Many aspects of personhood, such as sex, race, ethnicity, class, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability,

91 Greta R. Bauer et al., "Intersectionality in Quantitative Research: A Systematic Review of Its Emergence and Applications of Theory and Methods," *SSM - Population Health* 14 (June 2021): 100798, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100798>.

92 Kerry E. Bell, "Prison Violence and the Intersectionality of Race/Ethnicity and Gender," *Actual Problems of Economics and Law* 12, no. 1 (March 16, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.21202/1993-047x.12.2018.1.132-148>.

93 Kaveri Qureshi, "Transnational Divorce and Remarriage between Pakistan and Britain: Intersectionality, Harmful Immigration Rules and Internal Racism," *Population, Space and Place* 28, no. 5 (November 3, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2396>.

94 Alice Autin, "Disastrous Clamp Down on Migrants Rights in Italy," Human Rights Watch, May 12, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/05/12/disastrous-clamp-down-migrants-rights-italy>.

95 Nivedita Sudheer and Debanjan Banerjee, "The Rohingya Refugees: A Conceptual Framework of Their Psychosocial Adversities, Cultural Idioms of Distress and Social Suffering," *Global Mental Health* 8 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1017/gmh.2021.43>.

96 Nivedita Sudheer and Debanjan Banerjee, "The Rohingya Refugees: A Conceptual Framework of Their Psychosocial Adversities, Cultural Idioms of Distress and Social Suffering," *Global Mental Health* 8 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1017/gmh.2021.43>.

97 Marie Claire Van Hout, "Navigating the Complexities of (Trans) Gender Equality Rights within the Parameters of Reasonable Accommodation and Security Tensions in South African Prisons: The Judgement of *September v Subramoney*," *Forensic Science International: Mind and Law* 3 (December 2022): 100077, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fsimpl.2022.100077>.



relationship status, and faith, are seen as singular categories for people who are recorded upon entering prison. One such journal discussing this problem with the singularity of identity considers the prison system as a micro-society mirroring broader social structures but with distinct differences in social roles, power dynamics, and personal agency. In this context, personhood is referenced as being a valued human with a past, present, and future connection to self and identity rather than an imprisoned person. Prison life limits individuals' ability to express themselves as they would in the outside world. The prison environment transforms identities and modifies shared social meanings.<sup>98</sup> These conflicts with the notion that maintaining and expressing identity is crucial in prisons for survival and rehabilitation.

In terms of the current context of prisons and overpopulation and overcrowding internationally, there is also a suppression of the expression of identity. Prison staff must primarily focus on essential custodial services, so there is little consideration for the nuances of how these services are provided and their implications for imprisoned people's personhood and identity. While some progress has been made in recognizing and supporting diversity within prisons, these efforts still focus on specific aspects of personhood. This approach is causing a crisis due to its historical tendency to treat individuals as single-dimensional entities, exacerbated by the current financial, political, and staffing challenges that prisons face. Upon further study with AI research, it was seen that most prison stories highlighted the need for conditions that reflected a whole person, not just individual characteristics. According to this study, theories of intersectionality explain how overlapping characteristics of personhood create experiences of oppression and discrimination. When multiple characteristics overlap and have overlapping discrimination, this can be better seen through intersectionality. As the prior section talked about gender-based violence, it is important to understand that oppression, especially in prisons, is also related to race, sexuality, class, and various other factors.<sup>99</sup> If

prisons continue to single out various identities of imprisoned people, this problem will only worsen.

Feminist theory emphasizes how gendered social control mechanisms perpetuate inequality. Prisons reinforce and reproduce gender inequality and discrimination against women of color, those lacking capital, and individuals with non-normative identities. Staff sexual misconduct and intimate partner violence are linked to the commodification of women's sexuality. This can particularly play into racial stereotypes of different women. The control of women's sexuality leads to control over their bodies, a significant aspect of prison. This is also built upon by various nonconforming gender identities. People with nonconforming gender identities face additional disadvantages within the criminal justice system. Gender identity, expression, and sexual orientation introduce intersectional elements that complicate their experiences. These imprisoned people's intersectional differences are not catered to in a prison environment. Transgender individuals, in particular, often face scorn, harassment, and assault in prison. Gender-variant individuals experience additional threats to their safety inside prisons due to historical rigidity around gender issues and societal marginalization.<sup>100</sup>

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is pushing for the development and validation of the Women's Correctional Safety Scales (WCSS). This would help assess imprisoned people's perceptions of safety and violence in women's correctional facilities. The process involved building on focus group data, creating a comprehensive instrument, and beta testing it on almost 900 participants. The survey aims to measure concerns about different forms of violence in imprisoned women's lives and account for various intersections, including gender. There has been a shift in understanding women's experiences of safety and violence in prisons. Initially focused on sexual violence and safety perceptions, a deeper analysis revealed that previous studies had missed important aspects. While prior studies focused solely on the issue of gender, deeper analysis revealed that previous studies had missed important aspects.

98 Crime and Justice UK, "Intersectionality and the Prison Crisis: What Is It as a Concept and Why Does It Matter Today in Understanding Current Problems in Prison?" *Prison Service Journal* 1, no. 243 (May 2019), [https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/PSJ243 Intersectionalityandtheprisoncrisis.pdf](https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/PSJ243%20Intersectionalityandtheprisoncrisis.pdf).

99 Crime and Justice UK, "Intersectionality and the Prison Crisis."

100 University of California Press, "Intersectional Inequality and Women's Imprisonment," accessed September 11, 2023, <https://content.ucpress.edu/chapters/13080.ch01.pdf>.

While women's prisons may seem safer compared to male settings, an intersectional perspective unveils more intricate forms of conflict, risk, and violence.<sup>101</sup>

One US Study highlights the impacts of intersectionality of race, sexuality, and gender on prison violence. This study discusses the impact of mass detention on minority men and women and its correlation with increased prison violence. This study focuses on the intersectional criminology approach to understanding prison violence among female imprisoned people in a large western state, Washington. Intersectional criminology examines how individuals' interconnected statuses relate to crime. The study's findings indicate that applying an intersectional approach yields more conclusive statistical outcomes when evaluating prison violence. Notably, minority women are found to commit more violent infractions in prison compared to White women. According to the Bureau of Justice, Black women are 1.6 to 4.1 times more likely to be arrested than White women across all age groups. Black women are not the only racial minority groups with higher detention rates. This goes to show that mass detention has had a devastating impact on minority women. This also extends to prison violence. Imprisonment is a significant form of social control in the United States and is relevant to intersectionality and crime research. There is a lack of research examining how the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, and gender influences violence despite its importance in an era of mass detention. Data from this study concluded that considering the intersectionality of race/ethnicity and gender is more important than analyzing them as separate characteristics in understanding prison violence.<sup>102</sup> For the CCPCJ, it is invaluable for all delegates to consider the impacts intersectionality has on one's understanding of abuse and neglect in prisons.

## Current Status

### Overcrowding

The repeated problem seen in many prisons worldwide is overcrowding. Prison overcrowding is a major contributor to poor jail conditions. It is a pressing issue that hinders prisons from fulfilling their functions. In extreme cases, it can even be life-threatening. According to the Global Prison Trends 2021 report, over 118 countries' prisons exceeded their maximum occupancy rate. 11 national jail systems are operating at more than double their capacity.<sup>103</sup> More people paired with low resources make overcrowding a scary threat. Safe prison operations and prison living conditions hang in the balance.

In the last few years, high rates of prison overcrowding have been found in all regions of the world.<sup>104</sup> In 2022, France's prison population peaked at an all-time high. In a country with a prison capacity of 60,666 people, there are now 74,513 individuals.<sup>105</sup> The implications of such high numbers can translate to several problems within prisons. Overcrowding can result in increased prison violence or even spikes in the spread of airborne diseases and infections. Another example of the overcrowding problem can be seen in the United States. David Fathi, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's National Prison Project, said jails have been deplorable in the last few months. He added, "I don't remember any other time when there seem to be so many large jails in a complete meltdown."<sup>106</sup> Atlanta's Fulton County jail reported crumbling infrastructure, and in Seattle's King County Jail, there's been "murky brown drinking water."<sup>107</sup>

Many of the issues related to the well-being and human rights of imprisoned people are directly affected by overcrowding. Understaffed prisons also add to this problem. The guard's union in the United States has disputed that members

101 University of California Press, "Intersectional Inequality and Women's Imprisonment."

102 Kerry E. Bell, "Prison Violence and the Intersectionality of Race/Ethnicity and Gender," *Actual Problems of Economics and Law* 12, no. 1 (March 16, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.21202/1993-047x.12.2018.1.132-148>.

103 Thailand Institute of Justice, "Executive Summary: Global Prison Trends," 2021, [https://cdn.penalreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/GPT-2021\\_Exec-summary\\_EN.pdf](https://cdn.penalreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/GPT-2021_Exec-summary_EN.pdf).

104 "Prison Overcrowding," Penal Reform International, May 3, 2013, <https://www.penalreform.org/issues/prison-conditions/key-facts/overcrowding/>.

105 Lara Bullens, "France's Overcrowded Prison Population Reaches All-Time High – for Months on End," *FRANCE 24*, August 6, 2023, <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20230806-france-s-overcrowded-prison-population-reaches-all-time-high>.

106 Keri Blakinger, "Why So Many Jails Are in a 'State of Complete Meltdown,'" *The Marshall Project*, November 4, 2022, <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2022/11/04/why-so-many-jails-are-in-a-state-of-complete-meltdown>.

107 Keri Blakinger, "Why So Many Jails Are in a 'State of Complete Meltdown.'"



Poor sanitation in Bunia Prison.  
Credit: Caroline Gluck/Oxfam

overuse sick leave, claiming they are absent due to on-the-job injuries or exhaustion. These two are direct consequences of overcrowding. This creates a cycle of dire conditions. With fewer officers, those who remained are frequently required to work longer hours, including double and even quadruple shifts. Fewer jail personnel can also make detainees' lives more difficult and create a space for abuse. Fewer personnel mean less people to let imprisoned people out of their cells, transport them to court, teach their educational programs, access medical care, or attend to their most basic needs.<sup>108</sup>

Moreover, overcrowding, as well as related problems such as lack of privacy, can also cause increased rates of violence, especially among imprisoned people. A study conducted in 2020 showed that increased levels of overcrowding were associated with higher prevalence estimates of prison violence.<sup>109</sup> For example, in England and Wales, most prisons provide inadequate conditions or unacceptable treatment because of overcrowding and other issues that have consequences. This news involves repeated prison deaths, suicides, and serious assaults on imprisoned people and staff.<sup>110</sup> To illustrate,

<sup>108</sup> Keri Blakinger, "Why So Many Jails Are in a 'State of Complete Meltdown.'"

<sup>109</sup> Stéphanie Baggio et al., "Do Overcrowding and Turnover Cause Violence in Prison?," *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 10 (January 24, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2019.01015>.

<sup>110</sup> Michael Savage, "Three-Quarters of Prisons in England and Wales in Appalling Conditions as Overcrowding Fears Grow," *The Guardian*, August 5, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/aug/05/three-quarters-of-prisons-in-england-and-wales-in-appalling-conditions-as-overcrowding-fears-grow>.

<sup>111</sup> Lizzie Dearden, "Government Warned over Prison Overcrowding as Suicides and Violence Soars," *The Independent*, July 28, 2023, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/prisons-overcrowding-suicides-bristol-violence-b2383155.html>.

<sup>112</sup> Keri Blakinger, "Why So Many Jails Are in a 'State of Complete Meltdown.'"

in England, assaults increased by 11 percent in a year, and serious attacks of imprisoned people from another increased by a third.<sup>111</sup>

This issue also affects imprisoned people's access to healthcare services. Many prison populations have complex healthcare needs, including an increased risk of infection with Hepatitis, HIV/AIDS, and other diseases. This happens because of factors such as poor prior access to healthcare and poor prison conditions that overcrowding can exacerbate. As correctional facilities struggle to accommodate an excessive number of imprisoned people, resources become stretched thin, impacting the provision of essential medical care. Limited space, facilities, and medical personnel can result in delays in receiving medical attention, reduced frequency of check-ups, and inadequate treatment for both acute and chronic conditions. For example, in February 2022, a man in Rikers Island choked on an orange and died after staff failed to intervene in time. He was one of the 18 people who have died in the city's jail this year.<sup>112</sup> Also, the increased demand for healthcare services due to overcrowding can overwhelm medical staff, leading to rushed assessments

and limited one-on-one consultations. Moreover, infectious diseases can spread more easily in crowded environments, posing additional health risks to imprisoned people. In such environments, access to necessities like proper bedding, sanitation, and ventilation becomes compromised, directly affecting physical and mental health. Overall, overcrowding exacerbates the challenge of maintaining adequate healthcare services within prisons, jeopardizing the well-being and health outcomes of imprisoned people.

The mental health of imprisoned people also gets incredibly impacted by overcrowding. For instance, the UK has been reporting serious situations of overcrowding, and more recently, it was reported suicides have increased by 26 percent in a year, with 88 imprisoned people committing suicide in the year to March.<sup>113</sup> The effects of overcrowding and its consequences disproportionately impact the mental health of more vulnerable populations. For example, there has been an alarming rise in the rates of self-harm in women's prisons, up 51 percent in the year to June.<sup>114</sup> It was reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) in Europe that the most prevalent condition among imprisoned people was mental health disorders. At least one mental health condition affected 32.8 percent of the prison population. This statistic likely represents a considerable underreporting because most noncommunicable diseases were poorly recorded, and estimates were lower than predicted. Only about half of the countries polled provided data.<sup>115</sup> Detention should never result in poor health. Regardless of their legal status, sentence, race, gender, or religion, all imprisoned people have the right to high-quality healthcare. To achieve this, overcrowding must be tackled according to each unique situation in each country.

The causes of overcrowding vary from country to country. A few causes remain consistent in most cases. One of the main reasons is stringent sentencing policies. Countries with criminal justice policies that emphasize punitive approaches over rehabilitation and restorative measures tend to have

more issues with overcrowding. For example, the European Court of Human Rights has largely criticized the problem of overcrowding in French prisons. Many French politicians have argued that the system is "rigorous." Likewise, Alabama has the most overcrowded prisons in the United States, and soaring parole denials and harsh sentences have fueled mass detention.<sup>116</sup> Tough sentencing laws, such as mandatory minimums and lengthy sentences, contribute to higher detention rates and overcrowding. Policies that criminalize non-violent offenses without considering alternative punishments or diversion programs further strain prison capacities. Lastly, delays in legal proceedings and limited access to pretrial services can keep individuals in custody for extended periods.

The lack of effective alternatives to detention also plays a significant role in overcrowding. When the criminal justice system lacks diverse options for addressing offenders, non-violent individuals who could benefit from community-based programs or diversion initiatives end up being imprisoned. Without viable alternatives, those who do not pose a serious threat to society are sent to prisons, contributing to the strain on resources and facilities and elevating their chances of being arrested again. Emphasizing alternative measures like probation, parole, restorative justice, and treatment programs can alleviate overcrowding by diverting appropriate cases away from imprisonment and promoting rehabilitation while maintaining public safety. It is crucial to prioritize alternatives to detention, promote restorative justice, and focus on effective rehabilitation measures to alleviate the burden on correctional facilities.

As seen, overcrowding contributes to a cycle of deteriorating conditions, strained mental health, and hindered prospects for positive change among the prison population. This is why many countries, international organizations, and NGOs have been working to create solutions for the global issue of prison overcrowding. For example, Penal Reform International has a 10-point plan to address prison overcrowding. The plan

113 Keri Blakinger, "Why So Many Jails Are in a 'State of Complete Meltdown.'"

114 Michael Savage, "Three-Quarters of Prisons in England and Wales in Appalling Conditions as Overcrowding Fears Grow."

115 World Health Organization: WHO, "One-Third of People in Prison in Europe Suffer from Mental Health Disorders," *World Health Organization: WHO*, February 15, 2023, <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/15-02-2023-one-third-of-people-in-prison-in-europe-suffer-from-mental-health-disorders>.

116 Michael Sainato, "Incarcerated People Use TikTok Videos to Expose Alabama's Prison Conditions," *The Guardian*, May 26, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/may/26/alabama-prison-conditions-tiktok>.

includes measures such as investing in alternatives to detention, both pretrial and post-sentencing and investing in long-term crime prevention and reduction strategies.<sup>117</sup> Another example is the Handbook on Strategies to Reduce Overcrowding in Prisons by the UNODC. This can be a general guide for many countries to start crafting solutions for their prison systems.

Looking at countries that have successfully managed overcrowding can also be helpful when crafting solutions. A great example of this is Norway. Norway had an overcrowding issue in the 1990s. Approximately 70 percent of all released criminals committed new offenses within two years of release. That rate is roughly identical to the current rate of being arrested again in the United States.<sup>118</sup> Norwegian lawmakers realized that the method being used was ineffective, as crime and second arrests were both high. Assaults, riots, and escapes were also common in prisons. The country's prison system was overhauled, and a new one was created to cater to the country's needs and fill the gaps with the previous system. A great change that worked successfully was getting rid of large centralized jails. Norway now utilizes a system of small, community-based correctional facilities that focus on rehabilitation and return to society. They also allow imprisoned people to have visitors up to three times per week, as the country believes imprisoned people benefit from socialization with close friends and family. A strong emphasis is placed on relationships so that imprisoned people have a strong support system after their release.<sup>119</sup>

Addressing the issue of prison overcrowding is an urgent imperative that demands prompt action. The adverse effects of overcrowding on imprisoned people's well-being, rehabilitation prospects, and public safety cannot be ignored. It is crucial to recognize that while successful strategies and approaches exist, no universal solution can be applied uniformly across all countries and systems. Each state must consider its own unique circumstances, legal frameworks, and societal values when formulating tailored solutions to combat overcrowding. By prioritizing alternatives to detention, promoting

rehabilitation, and investing in innovative programs, countries can work towards more effective, humane, and just criminal justice systems that alleviate the strain of overcrowding and uphold the dignity and rights of all individuals involved.

## Role of Technology in Prison Systems

Technology's involvement in jail systems is becoming increasingly important in determining the face of modern correctional facilities. As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, many countries have moved to digital and other techniques to reduce the danger of transmission through human contact in detention facilities. In prisons around the world, video visitation has replaced in-person visits. Also, because of the constraints enforced during the epidemic, online access for training and education purposes in prisons has increased, and some jails are preparing detainees for employment in the tech sector. In many prisons, imprisoned people are rehabilitated, and security is maintained through surveillance, communication, education, and healthcare advancements. Technology can offer a variety of techniques that can both improve the well-being of those imprisoned and maximize the overall efficiency of prison operations.<sup>120</sup> As technology transforms these systems. It also brings questions about affordability and effectiveness in prisons around the world.

Technology has significantly improved jail monitoring and security methods. Closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras continuously monitor crucial areas in hundreds of prisons worldwide. This prevents potential events and increases prison and staff safety. More recently, other types of technology have been used to increase security and surveillance. For example, in the Netherlands, the Detention Concept Lelystad, every move of the imprisoned people is tracked, with continual RFID tag pings from mandatory wristbands. The bracelets set off an alarm if they are tampered with or removed. This facility also has computerized emotion-recognition software that watches real-time jail discussions to detect potentially

117 "Prison Overcrowding," Penal Reform International, May 3, 2013, <https://www.penalreform.org/issues/prison-conditions/key-facts/overcrowding/>.

118 First Step Alliance, "What We Can Learn From Norway's Prison System: Rehabilitation & Recidivism," *First Step Alliance* (blog), January 3, 2022, <https://www.firststepalliance.org/post/norway-prison-system-lessons>.

119 First Step Alliance, "What We Can Learn From Norway's Prison System: Rehabilitation & Recidivism."

120 "Role and Use of Technologies," Penal Reform International, May 11, 2021, <https://www.penalreform.org/global-prison-trends-2021/role-and-use-of-technologies/>.

explosive scenarios.<sup>121</sup> Another relatively new technology for monitoring and surveillance is biometrics. Biometric systems, such as fingerprint or iris scanners, provide secure access control and prevent unauthorized entry. For example, a prison in Glasgow uses biometrics for officer control. These types of technologies for control and surveillance have been proven to be generally effective. Not many prisons worldwide have systems like this to support their facilities. The National Institute of Justice found few jails and prisons use biometrics identification systems. According to Dr. Al Turner, biometrics in corrections varies greatly, partly because it involves new technologies, and few correctional administrators know what they are or how they can be utilized.<sup>122</sup> Tagging and tracking systems are another emerging technology that can help manage prisons more effectively and reduce abuse inside these facilities. These systems can help manage both imprisoned people and guards on patrol. For example, indoor tracking systems can monitor guards and imprisoned people. This way, it is easier to ensure the safety of everyone inside the facility.<sup>123</sup>

Another area where technology can be included in correctional facilities is to ensure the well-being of imprisoned people and workers in reporting and transparency. It is essential to consider platforms and technological tools that enable imprisoned people to report abuse, wrongdoing, and concerns in a secure and confidential environment. Venues allowing sharing of timely information about emergencies are becoming more common among law enforcement. For example, Open Fox is a law enforcement software that provides information and data sharing.<sup>124</sup> OpenFox offers different platforms and programs that could allow imprisoned people to share important information. For example, guards could instantly report an emergency, such as a violent event or a medical emergency. Incarcerated people could have a different type of access than

officers do. This way, they could report any situation that threatens their well-being or the well-being of others.

Technology can be used to improve rehabilitation and return to society as well. Technology that focuses on communication would be a helpful tool to create and run educational programs that provide imprisoned people with possibilities for learning, vocational training, and skill development. In 2019 the Corrective Services New South Wales (CSNSW) developed a program to transform imprisoned people's rehabilitation through digital technology. They determined that imprisoned people spent too much unproductive time in their cells, so CSNSW sought ways to increase opportunities for purposeful activity and engagement during this period. Technology offered a solution to this issue. The program aims to use tablet computers and other digital technology to improve the delivery of corrective services. The main objective is to reduce reoffending following release from prison.<sup>125</sup> This type of technology can also be used to allow imprisoned people to communicate with their families and friends. It has been proven to decrease the chances of recidivism, better parole outcomes, and fewer disciplinary infractions.<sup>126</sup> Likewise, outside prisons, mobile devices can help former imprisoned people manage their behavior and reduce their chance of returning to detention. For example, a court-issued mobile device or app on a personal phone could assist parole officers in staying in touch with parolees. It could provide a secure communication channel or allow the parole officer to track the parolee's movements and intervene before they enter high-risk circumstances.<sup>127</sup>

Technology can also provide more information and make it more accessible for imprisoned people regarding their hearings, cases, and other factors. Remote hearings and videoconference

121 Katherine Harmon Courage, "5 High-Tech Prisons Where Even Stallone and Schwarzenegger Couldn't Break Out," *Scientific American*, October 16, 2013, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/5-high-tech-prisons-where/>.

122 National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC), "Biometrics In Corrections," n.d., accessed September 11, 2023.

123 Jay Palter, "Law Enforcement Technology and the Future of Prison Systems," *Real Time Networks* (blog), November 21, 2021, <https://www.realtimeneetworks.com/blog/law-enforcement-technology-and-the-future-of-prison-systems>.

124 Jay Palter, "Law Enforcement Technology and the Future of Prison Systems."

125 Justice Trends, "Transforming Rehabilitation through Digital Technology in New South Wales Corrections - JUSTICE TRENDS Magazine," *JUSTICE TRENDS Magazine*, April 26, 2023, <https://justice-trends.press/transforming-rehabilitation-through-digital-technology-in-new-south-wales-corrections/>.

126 "Family Ties During Imprisonment: Do They Influence Future Criminal Activity?," Office of Justice Programs, accessed September 11, 2023, <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/family-ties-during-imprisonment-do-they-influence-future-criminal>.

127 Jay Palter, "Law Enforcement Technology and the Future of Prison Systems," *Real Time Networks* (blog), November 21, 2021, <https://www.realtimeneetworks.com/blog/law-enforcement-technology-and-the-future-of-prison-systems>.

courts have been employed for the first time in Albania, Peru, India, Myanmar, Morocco, Kenya, and Nigeria. In Bangladesh, for example, virtual hearings were legalized under a Supreme Court Ordinance that allowed bail applications to be lodged online, and the UN Development Program provided technical assistance. In Tunisia, remote hearings were permitted by a 2020 ministerial decree amending the Code of Criminal Procedure and have been used in some jurisdictions, supported by funding from the United States. Virtual courts that existed before the epidemic saw a considerable increase in use. In Ireland, where the first video-link case was held in 2009, its utilization nearly doubled in 2020 from 30 to 58 courts, with more than double the number of video-link cases heard than the previous year. From January to July 2020, video-link usage from prisons to courts and state solicitors in Croatia nearly tripled to 1,431 uses, up from 573 in the same period in 2019. Online hearings in criminal prosecutions have prompted concerns about due process, understanding procedure, and access to the ability to interact anonymously with legal representation. Some judges, for example, have objected to Turkey's e-hearing system, warning that it may jeopardize some fair trial standards. Issues such as arbitrary duration limits on witness evidence to comply with free video conferencing software and poor connection quality arose in countries where remote hearings were used as emergency workarounds without significant testing or training.<sup>128</sup>

Another concern raised with the involvement of technology in prison and judicial systems is the risk of discrimination and racial bias in algorithmic profiling. In its guideline to prevent racial profiling, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination emphasized the serious risk posed by the expanding use of algorithmic profiling in court systems in November 2020. Such technologies are now utilized for several purposes, including determining whether someone should be imprisoned, released on bond, or receive another penalty. Authorities collect information on several factors of the individual's identity. This can include criminal history,

family, friends, and social circumstances, including their career and academic history. This practice estimates the degree of 'risk' posed by the person based on a score generated by the algorithm, which is normally kept private. While technology offers efficiency and transparency, its implementation must be guided by safeguards to ensure fairness and prevent unintended consequences. Issues such as bias in algorithms, invasion of privacy, and data security breaches must be diligently addressed.<sup>129</sup>

Although technology's inclusion could create some benefits, many prisons are slow to integrate it. There are security concerns, limited budget, and resistance to change. Security is the priority for most prisons, and technology can compromise that. Allowing imprisoned people to have greater access to the internet has been argued to compromise the safety of both criminals and the public. Additional security measures must be implemented to stop unauthorized network access that may lead to illicit activity. In terms of investment, prisons have limited finances, and buying and maintaining these technologies can be expensive. Adding new technologies to existing prisons has proven to be a difficult task. Depending on the wiring of the building, it could potentially be even more expensive to accommodate the technology. This results in a disruptive and cost ineffective solution. Many world leaders and prison staffs resist these changes. These people are used to traditional methods of imprisonment. Staffs may not be used to new tools, nor would they want to implement new procedures.<sup>130</sup> This raises questions for delegates regarding how to implement technology that works around these concerns.

The human element of justice, including the need for empathy, discretion, and ethical decision-making, should not be overshadowed by technological solutions. Collaborative efforts involving legal experts, technologists, human rights advocates, and stakeholders are essential to strike the right balance between technological innovation and the preservation of justice, integrity, and the rights of all individuals involved. While incorporating technology into

128 "Role and Use of Technologies," Penal Reform International, May 11, 2021, <https://www.penalreform.org/global-prison-trends-2021/role-and-use-of-technologies/>.

129 "Role and Use of Technologies," Penal Reform International.

130 "Why Are Prisons Slow to Adopt New Digital Technologies? The Challenges and Solutions - JUSTICE TRENDS Magazine," JUSTICE TRENDS Magazine - Exclusive criminal justice and correctional topics worldwide, April 26, 2023, <https://justice-trends.press/why-are-prisons-slow-to-adopt-new-digital-technologies-the-challenges-and-solutions/>.

prison systems can improve security, rehabilitation, and transparency, it is critical to approach this transformation with caution. Technology solutions must be tailored to individual countries' distinct needs and settings, considering their legal systems, societal values, economic capabilities, and existing issues. Technological deployment should be done carefully, with a strong understanding of potential dangers and ethical considerations. Ensuring technology is used correctly helps avoid unintended outcomes that could lead to injustices or inequality. A balanced approach driven by human rights values, a focus on fairness, and continuing evaluation are required to maximize the benefits of technology in prison systems without jeopardizing the dignity, rights, and well-being of imprisoned people.<sup>131</sup>

## Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were approved by The United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to improve the world and ensure that by 2030, all people will enjoy peace and prosperity. There are 17 SDGs, and they are all interconnected, recognizing that action in one area impacts others and that development and prosperity must balance economic, social, and environmental sustainability. To fulfill the SDGs in this case, creativity, technology, financial resources, and holistic plans are required.<sup>132</sup> Several SDGs are relevant to combating abuse and neglect in prison systems, directly or indirectly. Although all 17 SDGs are relevant to this topic, four are especially relevant.

SDG 3: Good health and Well-Being is directly related to the physical and mental state of those imprisoned. Under this SDG, there are specific goals that relate to the topic. The most relevant targets are Target 3.8: "Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for

all."<sup>133</sup> Ensuring access to quality healthcare within prisons is essential for preventing neglect and providing necessary medical care to imprisoned people. Target 3.3: "End the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases"<sup>134</sup> This can ensure that infectious and sexually transmitted diseases are controlled and not spread further. Target 3.2: "Reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births."<sup>135</sup> This SDG is important, considering that 58 thousand pregnant women are admitted to jails and prisons annually in the United States alone.<sup>136</sup>

SDG 5: Gender equality is also relevant to this issue. The specific targets relating to the topic are Target 5.1: "End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere," Target 5.2: "Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation," and Target 5.6: "Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights."<sup>137</sup> Abuse and neglect in prison systems and its consequences can disproportionately affect women and girls. Addressing gender discrimination and promoting gender equality can contribute to better treatment and conditions for female imprisoned people.

SDG 10: Reduced inequalities is also relevant to tackle the issue. In this SDG, specific targets are Target 10.2: "Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status," Target 10.3: "Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies, and action in this regard," and lastly Target 10.4: "Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and

131 "Role and Use of Technologies," Penal Reform International.

132 "Sustainable Development Goals," UNDP, accessed September 11, 2023, <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>.

133 "Goal 3," Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed September 11, 2023, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>.

134 "Goal 3," Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

135 "Goal 3," Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

136 Prison Policy Initiative, "Unsupportive Environments and Limited Policies: Pregnancy, Postpartum, and Birth during Incarceration," Prison Policy Initiative, accessed September 11, 2023, [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/08/19/pregnancy\\_studies](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/08/19/pregnancy_studies).

137 "Goal 5," Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed September 11, 2023, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>.



progressively achieve greater equality.”<sup>138</sup> Addressing abuse and neglect in prison systems involves reducing inequalities within the justice and economic systems and providing equal treatment and opportunities to all individuals, including imprisoned people.

Finally, SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. The targets that are most important for the mandate of this committee and the topic are Target 16.1: “Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere,” Target 16.3: “Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all,” Target 16.5: “Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms,” and Target 16.6: “Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.”<sup>139</sup> SDG 16 emphasizes the importance of effective, accountable, and transparent institutions and access to justice, which are crucial for preventing abuse and ensuring the rights of imprisoned people.

These SDGs are crucial to consider. If well implemented, they can help to minimize abuse and neglect in correctional facilities. Teamwork between governments, institutions, civil society, and activists is critical for turning these SDGs into concrete actions that improve imprisoned people’s well-being and human rights.

## Bloc Analysis

### Points of Division

Corruption and detention levels are tied together in a difficult and dependent relationship. This significantly impacts prison systems worldwide. High levels of corruption can lead to various issues within the justice and prison system. This can be seen as unfair sentencing, resource allocation, and compromised oversight. All of these contribute to substandard prison conditions. High arrest rates frequently result from severe sentencing policies and insufficient access to justice. This can

drain resources, fuel the issue of multiple arrests, and create a climate conducive to corruption and abuse. By analyzing the connection between these two factors, it is possible to understand the complexities of each country’s situation. Understanding this will help the committee create more specific resolutions, and solutions can be created to address each country’s challenges. Countries with high arrest and corruption levels could benefit from focusing on transparency and fixing oversight. In countries with high arrest rates but low corruption, efforts could be directed toward allocating resources and improving current prison systems.

While there is no way to measure corruption levels objectively, the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is widely used. The CPI was developed by Transparency International, a global movement dedicated to ending corruption worldwide. The CPI rates countries by their perceived levels of public sector corruption. Expert assessments and opinion surveys determine this.<sup>140</sup> The World Prison Brief (WPB) is another helpful tool to determine blocs. The WPB is an online database providing free information about prison systems worldwide. It also promotes evidence-based development of prison policy and practices around the world.<sup>141</sup> Another way to research a country’s levels of imprisonment is to check the reports or indices made by the country itself.

In all cases, the relevant documents must be considered for a whole and effective approach. It is crucial to always check and take into account documents on the subject of abuse in prisons. These are the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of imprisoned people, the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention and Imprisonment, the Basic Principles for the Treatment of imprisoned people, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Custodial Measures (Tokyo Rules), and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women imprisoned people and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (Bangkok Rules).

<sup>138</sup> “Goal 10,” Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed September 11, 2023, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal10>.

<sup>139</sup> “Goal 16,” Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed September 11, 2023, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>.

<sup>140</sup> “About,” Transparency.org, November 18, 2019, <https://www.transparency.org/en/about>.

<sup>141</sup> “World Prison Brief,” an online database comprising information on prisons and the use of imprisonment around the world, accessed September 11, 2023, <https://www.prisonstudies.org/>.

## High Incarceration and Corruption

Corruption and high arrest rates are interconnected issues that negatively impact the other. These prisons' conditions tend to be ignored in countries with high corruption rates. This was the case with Brazil's prisons, infamous for their excessive arrest rates and lack of government support. Imprisoned people would outnumber the guards, allowing gang bosses to continue running drug empires digitally. As conflicts between prison gangs rose, the staff could not control the conflict. In 2017, a major riot resulted in 125 prison deaths in Manaus, Brazil.<sup>142</sup> The case came from gang clashes and poor living conditions. A lack of resources from the government to provide proper staff and medical assistance eventually led to this tragedy.

Political corruption has also largely comprised the justice system. Leading to extreme cases of corruption. This leads to skewed trials, selective prosecution, and unequal access to legal representation. When there is political opposition, the figures involved will likely be arrested for politically motivated reasons. According to the Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) in Africa, which reviewed the conditions of 35 African countries, 28 percent of citizens paid bribes to the police. With 25 percent of citizens in these areas thinking judges and magistrates are corrupt.<sup>143</sup> This can lead to people lacking faith in the criminal justice system. This can cause gangs to develop so the people can have their own sense of justice.

The effects of government corruption also influence forced labor inside prisons. Countries in these situations have imprisoned people whom the facilities force to work with poor living conditions. Often, these facilities will withhold wages and threaten physical abuse. This changed prison labor into forced labor. The International Labor Organization's study on forced labor emphasized how prison labor can be exempted from the definition of forced labor as long as certain conditions are met. These conditions include ensuring that the labor is

voluntary. Corrupt governments have taken advantage of this exception, forcing imprisoned people into coerced labor.

Corruption also presents itself in the form of bribery. In El Salvador, seven mega-prisons were approved by the government in 2016 to host only gang members.<sup>144</sup> The largest, located outside the capital, San Salvador, hosts up to 40,000 imprisoned people at a given moment.<sup>145</sup> Despite crackdowns that prevent family visitations, keep their imprisoned people in cells 24 hours a day and deny imprisoned people hygiene products, the vast network of gangs like the MS-13 encourages bribery of guards. The cartels often tip off prison security large sums to provide amenities to important arrested members. For instance, guards will disregard fights or help smuggle in goods for imprisoned people to use. The US estimates that in the US alone, cartel traffickers' profit about USD 500 million a year, resulting in a USD 13 billion market cap as of 2023. Combined with the profit of European and Latin American clients, cartels have copious wealth to spend on prison bribes when necessary.

## High Incarceration, Low corruption

One of the greatest issues faced in countries with high arrests and low corruption levels is high rates of multiple arrests. Recidivism refers to the rate at which arrested members return to prison after already serving a sentence. In many cases, individuals in countries with high arrest rates tend to struggle with this, suggesting that the prison environments themselves make imprisoned people more criminal during their time in prison.<sup>146</sup> As of May 2023 in the United States, 44 percent of imprisoned people will return to prison within the first year of their release. Although this rate is significantly down from 77 percent in 2010, the trend of multiple arrests continues and keeps arrest rates high. Formerly imprisoned people in Alabama, California, and Texas imprisoned people reported that the US prisons they were housed in focused on discipline

142 "Reforming Prisons," *The Economist*, May 27, 2017, [https://biblio.helmo.be/opac\\_css/doc\\_num.php?explnum\\_id=6279](https://biblio.helmo.be/opac_css/doc_num.php?explnum_id=6279)

143 "Delivering Justice in Zimbabwe's Courts - Blog," *Transparency.org*, n.d., <https://www.transparency.org/en/blog/delivering-justice-in-zimbabwes-courts>.

144 "The Unbelievable Hell inside El Salvador's Prisons," *InSight Crime*, March 27, 2017, <https://insightcrime.org/news/analysis/unbelievable-hell-inside-el-salvador-prisons/>.

145 View Author Archive and Get author RSS feed, "Impossible to Escape: El Salvador Unveils New Mega-Prison," February 26, 2023, <https://nypost.com/2023/02/26/impossible-to-escape-el-salvador-unveils-new-mega-prison/>.

146 World Population Review, "Recidivism Rates by State 2020," *worldpopulationreview.com*, 2022, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/recidivism-rates-by-state>.

and punishment for crimes.<sup>147</sup>

A byproduct of high arrest rates and multiple offenses is difficulty rejoining society. Many imprisoned people will serve sentences that last decades and have difficulty adapting to life once they are out since they are not adapted to the cultural and technological changes. Governments have attempted to improve upon this issue by creating programs to help, such as Brazil's "Reintegration Program" which was introduced in 2016.<sup>148</sup> Imprisoned people are paired with professional counselors and psychologists to help them find housing and job opportunities upon their release. They also offer educational programs in prison so that imprisoned people interested in learning can gain skills while arrested.

Arrests for non-violent crimes also fuel high arrest and multiple offense rates. For instance, marijuana is criminally illegal in most countries with high arrest rates, such as China, Brazil, Indonesia, and India. Non-violent offenders arrested on charges like cannabis are grouped with violent offenders. Combined with a strict security mentality like what is mentioned in the United States example, non-violent imprisoned people tend to turn violent during their sentence. Although it is possible to consider legalization as a solution, most countries cannot afford the cost of legalization, which requires heavy government regulation. This means that countries falling in this block should consider economically feasible solutions, even if there is low corruption.

### Low Incarceration, High Corruption

Countries with low arrest rates but high corruption often cannot afford the cost of arresting individuals, putting them through trial, and hosting them for many years in a correctional facility. These also tend to be underdeveloped or developing countries with poor economies, warfare, and more. The African continent appears to suffer the most from this, predominantly the Central African Republic, Congo,

Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Sudan, South Sudan, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Liberia, Niger, Chad, and Mozambique.<sup>149</sup> In the Central African Republic, which has the lowest detention rate of 16 imprisoned people for every 100,000 in the population, the United Nations previously stepped in to assist when a Muslim rebel group overtook the government under the greater Seleka. When this group was overthrown by Christian militants in 2014, the country was sent into turmoil.<sup>150</sup> The resulting violence meant that there was no clear government to enforce the law and make arrests – this concurrently meant that there was no clear justice system and no clear enforcement in the prisons themselves. The United Nations Multidimensional Integration Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) has attempted to play a role in prison reform with peacekeepers and by helping organize criminal court sessions in coordination with local governments.<sup>151</sup> Despite this, the issue of corruption within the prisons themselves still exists. It is reported that officers are trained to beat imprisoned people who are of unfavorable political parties or are suspected of certain affiliations. A similar trend is seen in other countries that have endured civil conflict, such as Sudan and South Sudan.

### Low Incarceration, Low Corruption

Countries with low arrest rates and low corruption tend to have the most success with prison reformation. This includes the likes of Norway, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Japan, and more. These countries tend to have smaller populations and higher GDP per capita than others. They also tend to emphasize the importance of rehabilitation over punishment. For instance, Finland has a system of "open prisons," which refers to the ability of imprisoned people to apply to live in certain buildings and to leave the prisons for limited periods, so long as they abide by the rules of the prison itself.<sup>152</sup> If imprisoned people don't abide, they are sent to "closed prisons,"

147 Equal Justice Initiative, "Prison Conditions | Equal Justice Initiative," Equal Justice Initiative, 2019, <https://eji.org/issues/prison-conditions/>.

148 UN Development Program, "A Second Chance," Medium, November 28, 2022, <https://undp.medium.com/a-second-chance-b3c9a6266119>.

149 FactsMaps, "Top 30 Countries with the Highest and Lowest Number of imprisoned people per Capita," FactsMaps, November 17, 2018, <https://factsmaps.com/top-30-countries-highest-and-lowest-number-of-imprisoned-people-per-capita/>.

150 "Central African Republic Country Profile," BBC News, August 1, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13150040>.

151 "Justice and Corrections Section," MINUSCA, June 19, 2015, <https://minusca.unmissions.org/en/justice-corrections>.

152 Natalie Moore, "Finland's Open Prisons," Pulitzer Center, September 2, 2021, <https://pulitzercenter.org/projects/finlands-open-prisons>

which still offer many liberties like the ability to work and visitation. Other countries like Japan impose strict schedules on imprisoned people to encourage discipline.<sup>153</sup> Imprisoned people in Japanese prisons can work for pay and have access to radios, televisions, and books. The rates of being arrested multiple times in these countries are also meager, meaning that imprisoned people are significantly less likely to return to prison after they are released.

With the focus on rehabilitation, the countries falling in this block provide many health care amenities, such as maternal care, consistent psychiatric treatment, and access to hospitals outside the facility when necessary. These prisons also go out of their way to provide a sense of normalcy and engage imprisoned people in extracurricular activities, such as sports and arts. It is important for countries falling in this block to consider the affordability of these solutions, seeing as many prisons worldwide do not have the same capacity to provide given their budgets or the sheer number of imprisoned people per capita.

## Committee Mission

The CCPCJ's main role is to be the principal policy-making body of the United Nations (UN) regarding crime prevention and criminal justice.<sup>154</sup> Therefore, the delegates should aim to support international efforts against national and transnational crime by taking action via resolutions and decisions.<sup>155</sup> The issue of prison reform is directly linked to human rights and scarce resources. Both must be considered to create the most efficient criminal justice and crime prevention methods. Since the cost-effectiveness of prison tends to be low, reducing the impact and long-term costs is also essential to the committee mission of the CCPCJ. Successful crime prevention and criminal justice happen with the most efficient legal systems. Delegates must consider the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Imprisoned People, the

Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention and Imprisonment, the Basic Principles for the Treatment of Imprisoned People, the Tokyo Rules, and the Bangkok Rules. Since human rights are typically not a sufficient argument for these reforms to happen, the delegates must highlight the many issues within prison abuse. It is the committee's mission to push the most effective programs. Delegates must convince states to create or modify their justice systems to meet these goals. The CCPCJ must propose resolutions that accommodate and motivate countries based on their human and economic resources.<sup>156</sup>

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"Open Correctional Treatment of imprisoned people in Finland | Office of Justice Programs," ojp.gov, accessed August 19, 2023, <https://ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/open-correctional-treatment-imprisoned-people-finland>.

<sup>153</sup> "What Is Life like in Japanese Prison?" English Lawyers Japan, February 18, 2020, <https://englishlawyersjapan.com/what-is-life-like-in-japanese-prison/>.

<sup>154</sup> "Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice," Geneva Internet Platform Digwatch, accessed August 22, 2023, <https://digwatch.actor/un-commission-crime-prevention-and-criminal-justice>

<sup>155</sup> "CCPCJ Mandate and Functions," United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime, accessed September 5, 2023, [https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CCPCJ/CCPCJ\\_Mandate-Functions.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CCPCJ/CCPCJ_Mandate-Functions.html).

<sup>156</sup> "Prison Reform and Alternatives to Imprisonment," United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime.



CCPCJ

NHSMUN 2024

# TOPIC B: TERRORIST, GANG, AND ORGANIZED CRIME RECRUITMENT VIA THE INTERNET

Photo Credit: AMISOM Public Information

## Introduction

The Internet was introduced to the public in the early 1990s. Now, it has completely changed how humans spend their time, communicate, and interact. The internet has allowed people to connect in a way that had never been possible. A few clicks is all it takes for information to travel from one side of the world to the other in only a matter of seconds. From news articles to encyclopedia entries and forum posts, the web has democratized information for many of the world's population. Never before had such large numbers of people had so much data within their reach. It has given a voice to everyone with access to it. People have the platform to voice their opinions and be noticed by users worldwide. In this sense, the Internet has become a prominent defender of freedom of speech. It has been recognized as one of the most important inventions in the history of humanity.<sup>1</sup> It has been deemed “possibly the greatest engineering achievement of the twentieth century.”<sup>2</sup> On paper, it is an invention that should unite societies and states in a more efficient and coordinated way. It has undeniably accomplished that to a degree. The Internet brings people together in communities regardless of location. Despite these advantages, the Internet still has a long way to go. It is not yet the haven that scientists imagined in the twentieth century.

The online space has become a mirror of our offline society. The same problems have plagued it since it first went public. The prejudices that have been a part of our communities for centuries have found their way onto chat rooms, blogs, and social media platforms. Online, unfiltered ideas can spread anonymously. Those who spread these ideas often face no consequences. Criminal activity has also grown in a space that has proven difficult to patrol. It is a space where interactions feel much less human. Because of this, actions would appear to be free of consequence. The Internet has become a potent tool for users seeking to take advantage of other people. This can be done through false advertisements and scamming people out of their money. There are also instances of impersonation, commonly known as “catfishing,” to earn their trust for harmful purposes.

Better-established criminal groups have also found the Internet to be a perfect platform to carry out their operations. Armed groups use the web to spread their messages and reach

much wider audiences than before.<sup>3</sup> Terrorist groups began to develop complex strategies to reach people in countries they did not have access to before.<sup>4</sup> One of the most alarming uses of the internet is organized crime recruitment. The Internet allows for the rapid spread of propaganda and misinformation. This can lead to easier radicalism, which is when someone drastically changes their beliefs.<sup>5</sup> It has the power to create echo chambers and isolate its users into believing harmful ideas.<sup>6</sup> Terrorist organizations, gangs, and drug cartels can reach people who have previously shown interest in their views. They then lure them into performing activities that can be dangerous and harmful to other individuals and groups. The actual risks of the Internet are exposed when said activities reach the offline world.

As countries become more polarized, radical and extremist voices on the Internet, have become much more prominent. Potential recruits can be exposed to harmful propaganda from the comfort of their homes and join dangerous organizations

1 Jessica Leggett and Natalie Wolchover, “20 inventions that changed the world”, *LiveScience*, accessed August 17, 2023, <https://www.livescience.com/33749-top-10-inventions-changed-world.html>.

2 “Great feats of engineering,” Engineers Ireland, accessed August 17, 2023, <https://www.engineersireland.ie/Schools/Explore-Engineering/What-do-engineers-do/Great-feats-of-engineering>.

3 “The use of the Internet,” United Nations Office on Drugs and crime, accessed on June 21, 2023, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/terrorism/expertise/the-use-of-the-Internet.html>.

4 Rosanna E. Guadagno, Adam Lankford, Nicole L. Muscanell, Bradley M. Okdie, Debra M. McCallum, “Social influence in the online recruitment of terrorists and terrorist sympathizers: Implications for Social Psychology Research,” *Revue Internationale de psychologie sociale* no. 23 (January 2010): 25 - 56, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-internationale-de-psychologie-sociale-2010-1-page-25.htm>.

5 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System* (Vienna: United Nations, 2019), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3825914/files/dee195f7-en.pdf>.

6 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation*.

with the tap of their finger. Countries must establish proper frameworks for preventing and countering online recruitment and radicalization. This could prevent future acts of organized crime and terrorism. This committee must push against criminal behavior online and ensure that the Internet is used for the betterment of humanity.

## History and Description of the Issue

### A History of Criminal Recruitment on the Internet

The modern Internet originated in the early 1970s.<sup>7</sup> Now, it is seen as a dangerous tool that can threaten countries' security. The Internet was initially created as a line of defense against international threats. One of the main purposes of the earliest versions of the World Wide Web was the decentralization of American communication networks, especially those of the Department of Defense. At the height of the Cold War, it was believed that keeping all important information in a few computers could make said data much more vulnerable to Soviet attacks. That is why a connected web of several computer networks was created. The Internet expanded throughout the 1980s with the help of many academic researchers who worked on its development. Then, the web opened to a commercial audience, completely changing its purpose and the profile of its users. The web was now available to a much wider audience, and its accessibility would continue to grow throughout the 1990s. It is estimated that 60 million users, spread across all continents, had access to the Internet by 1995. With the popularization of the online space came an unprecedented way to interact with people worldwide. Online communities soon formed, mirroring those that existed in the real world. However, these groups were completely unrestricted by physical barriers. The Internet connects businesses, governments, and individuals. It also was the arrival of groups that saw the web as a perfect tool to

expand upon their criminal activities.<sup>8</sup> Early into the use of the Internet, there were no regulations or security measures. The web's effective, inexpensive, and far-reaching capabilities proved very attractive to leaders. They were eager to distribute propaganda and carry out complex operations. Groups such as al-Qaeda were already taking part in "cyber-planning." Cyber-planning is an early term on the Internet for digital criminal planning<sup>9</sup>

Terrorist presence on the Internet can be traced back to the late 1990s.<sup>10</sup> One of the earliest instances of online recruitment for criminal purposes took place in 1995. A computer science major named Ziyad Khalil created a website supporting radical Muslim ideologies, which brought him to the attention of Osama bin Laden and other leaders of al-Qaeda. He would go on to become the organization's procurement officer in the United States. In 1996, the United States designated 30 armed groups as "Foreign Terrorist Organizations." It is estimated that half of them already had their own websites by 1998. Eventually, all terrorist organizations had made their way onto online platforms. Online terrorist groups continued to grow in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on the United States. With the start of the Iraq War, al-Qaeda launched a massive recruitment campaign. They encouraged people to join the fight against the invading American forces. Individuals who fell prey to the campaign were instructed on how to be a terrorist. They were also fed religious and anti-American propaganda. They were eventually given detailed instructions to go to Iraq. In public chat rooms, words of motivation to protect Iraq were often followed by requests to keep discussing matters on other websites like PalTalk. These platforms allowed terrorists to address their potential recruits without the fear of being monitored.<sup>11</sup>

One of the main features of the web was always freedom of expression. This allowed terrorist groups to manipulate their messages in the ways they saw fit. It was a feature that also encouraged the participation of many repressed groups

7 Gabriel Weimann, *How modern terrorism uses the Internet* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, March 2004), <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr116.pdf>.

8 Weimann, *How modern terrorism uses the Internet*.

9 Timothy L. Thomas, "Al Qaeda and the Internet: The Danger of "Cyberplanning," *Parameters* 23, no. 1 (2003): 112 - 123, <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/al-qaeda-and-Internet-danger-cyberplanning>.

10 Gabriel Weimann, *Going darker? The challenge of dark net terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: Wilson Center, 2019), [https://cyber.haifa.ac.il/images/Publications/darkweb\\_Gabriel%20Weimann.pdf](https://cyber.haifa.ac.il/images/Publications/darkweb_Gabriel%20Weimann.pdf).

11 Weimann, *How modern terrorism uses the Internet*.

worldwide. A 2004 report by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) found terrorist groups active on the Internet on several continents. These included al-Qaeda and the Japanese Red Army, based in Asia; the Corsican Army and the Irish Republican Army, based in Europe; and the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia and the Peruvian Shining Path, based in South America. A typical terrorist-operated website (TOW) in the mid-2000s presented thorough accounts of the history of the organization. It also drew attention to the group’s political ideology by including biographies of its founders, leaders, and heroes. Constantly updating news feeds and detailed maps of the territories where the groups were operating tended to accompany these websites. The sites were missing descriptions of the violent activities committed by the groups and their consequences. It was clear that these sites were built to spread propaganda and contribute to the image-building of these terrorist organizations.<sup>12</sup>

With terrorist-operated websites, there were supporter sites and ideologically adjacent sites.<sup>13</sup> It is estimated that 4500 Jihadist websites were used by al-Qaeda in 2006 to spread its ideology in a growing multimedia campaign. This campaign saw the terrorist organization quadruple its production of

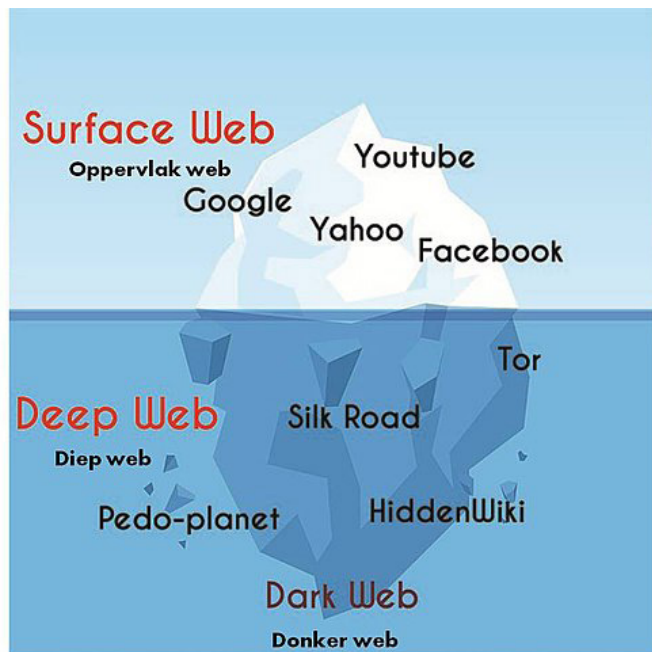
videos in a single year. It was an effort that also included the spread of its political ideology via email distribution lists, forums, discussion boards, and downloadable documents. By 2007, much of the terrorist propaganda on the web could already be found translated into languages such as English and French. This was meant to attract potential recruits’ attention in developed or Western countries. Early video streaming platforms also became infected with terrorist propaganda. Organizations often circulated violent, graphic videos of suicide attacks. These videos were meant to show the commitment of terrorists to their ideology.<sup>14</sup> Videos posted online also demonstrated the capabilities of terrorist groups when it came to decimating militarily superior armies. The War on Terror was launched by the United States in 2001 as a direct response to the September 11 attacks. During this time, the Internet became a potent weapon to spread political ideas and misinformation to a massive audience at an alarmingly fast rate.

By the early 2010s, the Surface Web (the way the public came to know the readily accessible Internet) had become far more regulated and surveilled. The posting of terrorist content became more complicated. Any criminal using the Surface

12 Weimann, *How modern terrorism uses the Internet*.

13 Maura Conway and Séan Looney, *Back to the future? Twenty first century extremist and terrorist websites* (Luxembourg: Publications office of the European Union, 2021), <https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-03/Terrorist%20Operated%20Websites%20Workshop-paper.pdf>.

14 Guadagno, Lankford, Muscanell, Okdie, McCallum, “Social influence in the online recruitment of terrorists.”



Graphic depicting the surface and deep web.

Credit: Sobaka



Web with no means to conceal their identity could be easily identified.<sup>15</sup> This is why criminal organizations began to turn to the Dark Net instead. The Dark Net is “the hidden collective of websites only accessible by a specialized web browser.” It allows individuals to browse the Internet free from government surveillance and censorship. It has also become a perfect breeding ground for illegal activity.<sup>16</sup> Sites on the DarkNet can only be accessed via specialized browsers, through many layers of encryption. It has been estimated that these sites make up over 400 times more websites than those found on the Surface Web. In 2019, 57 percent of the Dark Net’s content was found to be illicit. Terrorist groups have used the Dark Net since 2013, when the United States National Security Agency intercepted the encrypted communications between Nasir Al-Wuhaysi and Ayman al-Zawahiri, two leaders of al-Qaeda.<sup>17</sup> In 2015, following a series of terrorist attacks in Paris, a campaign was launched to take down websites associated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS). Known as Operation Paris, this was the most extensive operation ever carried out by a collective of hackers known only as Anonymous.<sup>18</sup> It managed to take down over five thousand Twitter accounts associated with the Islamic State and hundreds of websites.<sup>19</sup> This massive campaign led the Islamic State to move most of its activity onto the DarkNet, where it would be safe from so-called “hacktivists.” Instructions were posted on one of the organization’s main online forums so members could reach a new, encrypted website. This website was home to many ISIS propaganda materials, including a documentary film titled *The Flames of War*.<sup>20</sup>

A large part of domestic terrorism in the United States is also organized online. One of the main problems that the country faces is how white supremacists manage to stay connected but decentralized online.<sup>21</sup> One of the key issues is regarding individual attacks as “lone acts of violence.” This is rarely the case. White nationalists who are banned from popular social

media sites have established an “alt-tech ecosystem.”<sup>22</sup> Alt-tech platforms fall into two categories: closed-community communication applications like Telegram, Discord, and Parler, and alt-tech social networks like Gab, Bitchute, and Voat. The first enables private group talks, and the second resembles mainstream social media and encourages unfiltered extreme speech. White supremacists use alt-tech platforms for a variety of activities. These can be recruiting, coordination, and debates of extreme views. Hateful behavior is made possible by these platforms’ dedication to free speech and self-management. These sites appeal to hate actors because they offer secrecy and quick response times. Extremists frequently modify their language and employ words with many meanings to remain on mainstream platforms. To avoid enforcement, they also will use dog whistles or alternative languages when naming groups and websites. Dog whistles allow those controlling the sites to connect to others indirectly. This is how online communities of white supremacists have formed over the years. When groups get removed from one platform, they simply move to the next. White supremacists use a hierarchy of communication channels on their platforms. The level of open violence increases as it reaches the central layers of these online communities. These groups also try to keep a respectable public persona while embracing violence and extremist ideologies in private. For instance, while promoting “white pride” in public, the Charlottesville rally’s organizers incited violence and fascist beliefs in private Discord talks. Despite their inherent extremism, some extremist organizations set rules against radical and foul language. These organizations’ leaders frequently break these rules. This allows them to maintain their platforms and move around guidelines. Alt-tech platforms are intended to support mainstream social media rather than replace it, making it easier for hate to spread via connected online areas. Former neo-Nazi “Luke” (anonymous title) is one example. He utilized Bitchute for white nationalist content and YouTube for “normie content” (content that is

15 Weimann, *Going darker? The challenge of dark net terrorism*.

16 “What is the deep and dark web?,” Kaspersky labs, accessed July 17, 2023, <https://www.kaspersky.com/resource-center/threats/deep-web>.

17 Weimann, *Going darker? The challenge of dark net terrorism*.

18 Tara John, “Anonymous Launches ‘Biggest Operation’ Against ISIS in Response to Paris Attacks,” *TIME*, November 16, 2015, <https://time.com/4114182/anonymous-paris-attacks/>.

19 Rory Cellan-Jones, “Anonymous takes on ISIS,” *BBC News*, November 17, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-34850573>.

20 Weimann, *Going darker? The challenge of dark net terrorism*.

21 “The Problem - Violent White Supremacy,” Jigsaw, accessed September 11, 2023, <https://jigsaw.google.com/the-current/white-supremacy/the-problem/>.

22 “The Problem - Violent White Supremacy,” Jigsaw.

regularly consumed by the public). This demonstrates how alternative technology platforms can support current ones.<sup>23</sup> In these situations, the development of online spaces for white supremacists is clear.

The Dark Net has allowed terrorists to be safer online than ever before. It allows for anonymity and protects their leaders from counter-terrorist attacks like those carried out in 2015. Providing information, spreading propaganda, radicalizing, and recruiting are all actions that have been moving further and further into the deeper layers of the Internet as the years have passed. As terrorist presence on the Dark Net expands, its operations become more complex and sophisticated. Governments, intelligence services, and counter-terrorism agencies have a tough challenge when it comes to keeping up with the way crime groups use the online space. Strategies to fight against this misuse of the Internet must be constantly updated.

### The Logistics of Online Recruitment

Criminal groups employ “sophisticated social influence techniques” in their quest to secure new members over the Internet.<sup>24</sup> Recruitment does not usually happen overnight. Interactions with potential recruits usually begin with simple, innocent requests that slowly escalate. These interactions grow to demand more commitment to the cause. This is not too different from how armed groups usually recruit members in person.<sup>25</sup> This has been the case with terrorists and other criminal groups that used to have rigid, structured, hierarchy-based organizations. Many have shifted into more independent groups with no single commanding structure. The Internet has allowed for broad recruitment instead of the hierarchical kind during in-person interactions. As a result, crime on the Internet has become increasingly decentralized and has a wider reach.<sup>26</sup>

The specific methods used to recruit people over the Internet

vary. They are tailored to every individual’s specific context and circumstances. However, there are five consistent stages in all recruitment attempts: the searching, seduction, captivation, persuasion, and operative stages.<sup>27</sup> Internet users entirely carry out the first as they search for content, they are interested in. This leads them to discover websites with views that align with theirs. In the second stage, “seduction,” Internet users dive deeper into the content they have encountered. They form connections between their personal experiences and the causes supported by extremist groups. This is the stage in which extremist narratives affect an individual’s perception. In the “captivation” phase, visits are made to platforms that allow users to interact. These are usually forums, blogs, and chat rooms. Most of these platforms are not available on the Surface Web. This is the phase in which users tend to start making use of the Dark Net. They become more exposed to the violent ideas expressed by extremist groups. Throughout the captivation phase, users are passive pieces of the recruitment process. In the “persuasion” phase, users begin to interact with other group members as active participants. Potential recruits and members of the organization begin to tell one another whether they are experienced or a recent addition. Interactions become more frequent and significant until the final “operative”, phase is reached. This is the stage where recruits are introduced to the inner workings of the group they have joined. This is often when physical contact comes into place. This can include the recruit meeting other group members or the request to carry out criminal activities in the offline world.<sup>28</sup>

The searching stage does not usually start on deeply hidden terrorist websites but rather on ideologically similar sites. These are colloquially known as “fellow traveler” sites. Normally, these web pages do not seem affiliated with any criminal organization. However, they do share their political ideas.<sup>29</sup> They attract people who think alike and are drawn to the causes these sites defend. In the age of social media and algorithms, a user’s experience on the Internet is heavily

23 “The Problem - Violent White Supremacy,” Jigsaw.

24 Guadagno, Lankford, Muscanell, Okdie, McCallum, “Social influence in the online recruitment of terrorists.”

25 Guadagno, Lankford, Muscanell, Okdie, McCallum, “Social influence in the online recruitment of terrorists.”

26 Weimann, *How modern terrorism uses the Internet*.

27 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System* (Vienna: United Nations, 2019), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3825914/files/dee195f7-en.pdf>.

28 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation*.

29 Maura Conway and Séan Looney, *Back to the future? Twenty first century extremist and terrorist websites* (Luxembourg: Publications office of the European Union, 2021), <https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-03/Terrorist%20Operated%20Websites%20Workshop->

influenced by the searches they have previously carried out and the websites they have previously visited. Because of this, likely, a user who has already shown interest in certain political views will be directed toward “fellow traveler” websites by targeted advertising. Ideologically adjacent sites found on the Surface Web are sometimes run by violent terrorist groups. The Nordic Resistance Movement was one of these online groups. They are a far-right, neo-Nazi organization that exists mainly in Sweden. Now, they have several branches in Iceland, Denmark, Norway, and Finland. This organization’s goal is to create a white, pan-Nordic state and often embraces violent strategies to accomplish its goals. It is banned in Finland for carrying out illegal activities. In the United States, the Daily Stormer is one of the most prominent far-right websites. They support a variety of extremist groups, many of which support violent and illegal behavior.<sup>30</sup> Encrypted applications for mobile phones, such as Telegram, are used for untraceable communication and are widely available to the public. When asked about terrorist organizations using the site, the CEO of Telegram, Pavel Durov, said, “I think that privacy, ultimately, and our right for privacy is more important than our fear of bad things happening, like terrorism.”<sup>31</sup> Terrorists can use these platforms to establish reliable communication with potential recruits.

Al-Qaeda has employed the Internet and new media for recruitment, disseminating its messages, and inspiring sympathizers.<sup>32</sup> Terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda employ gradual social influence techniques to draw individuals into supporting their ideologies. This starts with simple online requests as they slowly escalate commitments to influence Internet users’ support for extreme ideologies. Extremist websites use online platforms to highlight the group’s history, achievements, and ideology while fostering social identity and empathy. Membership requires commitment to ideology, obedience, and sacrifice, appealing to individuals’ desire to be

part of an in-group, and preying on the vulnerability of those discovering such online paths. Recruits start with gradual commitments. They explore websites and then advance to more significant tasks. These commitments demonstrate loyalty to both group leaders and themselves while providing comfort and easy access to the familiar interface of the Internet. Gradual commitments may lead to offline activities like meetings and interactions with other members. These activities cement social bonds and further involve recruits in the group’s activities.<sup>33</sup> In these scenarios, the online has finally moved offline. For those who have not found in-person communities, this setting quickly motivates them to commit to their newfound group.

Research on social influence in computer-regulated contexts shows that people respond to influence appeals similarly to other written media, with some key differences. Comparing face-to-face and computer-mediated communication, studies found that computer-based recruitment allowed for greater control. This is what creates the appeal for terror groups looking for recruits. Differences include relative anonymity, reduced significance of physical appearance, lessened physical distance, and increased control over interaction timing and pace. This becomes the perfect environment for entrapment. Relative anonymity on the Internet appeals to terrorist organizations as a recruiting tool. Online interactions allow for anonymity, which depersonalizes people and, eliminates individuality, lessens responsibility, and boosts group loyalty. In computer-mediated communication (CMC), physical proximity is irrelevant, and physical appearance has less significance. Because CMC users have more control over interaction timing and duration, recruits could feel more confident. Nonverbal indicators are absent in CMC, which increases anonymity and encourages recruitment. Because of physical distance from recruiters, control over interaction pace, curiosity-driven exploration, lack of nonverbal indications that boost recruits’

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paper.pdf.

<sup>30</sup> Conway and Looney, *Back to the future? Twenty first century extremist and terrorist websites.*

<sup>31</sup> Sarah Kaplan, “Founder of app used by ISIS once said ‘We shouldn’t feel guilty.’ On Wednesday he banned their accounts,” *The Washington Post*, November 19, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/11/19/founder-of-app-used-by-isis-once-said-we-shouldnt-feel-guilty-on-wednesday-he-banned-their-accounts/>.

<sup>32</sup> Guadagno, R., Lankford, A., Muscanell, N., Okdie, B., McCallum, D. “Social influence in the online recruitment of terrorists and terrorist sympathizers: Implications for Social Psychology Research.” *Revue Internationale de psychologie sociale* no. 23 (January 2010): 25 - 56. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-internationale-de-psychologie-sociale-2010-1-page-25.htm>.

<sup>33</sup> Rosanna Guadagno et. al, “Social Influence in the Online Recruitment of Terrorists and Terrorist Sympathizers: Implications for Social Psychology Research.”

comfort and commitment, relative anonymity is essential for online terrorist recruitment.<sup>34</sup>

There is a strong stream of recruitment via online platforms.<sup>35</sup> These platforms' allure stems from their capacity to disseminate misinformation, customized messaging, and recruitment tactics to large audiences. Online radicalization can affect various populations regardless of education level or socioeconomic status.<sup>36</sup> It does not just affect certain individuals. People who experience a void in their lives and are sympathetic to a cause are more prone. Through downloads, chat rooms, social media pages, donations, and downloads, the Internet enables terror organizations to recruit new members.<sup>37</sup> Due to their wide audience reach and capacity to sow fear, win support, and create a feeling of community, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are particularly alluring to terrorist organizations. These organizations have employed video content, open-source journals and magazines, and even video game technologies for recruiting and propaganda. Terrorists conduct virtual operations, radicalize, recruit, and even train people with greater ease and with less risk than with conventional tactics thanks to technology and the Internet. The CCPCJ must consider the drastic impacts Internet access has had on recruitment, as delegates should consider how to counter the logistics of online recruitment.

### Most Vulnerable Groups in the Online Space

The most reported factors leading to recruitment into organized criminal groups include social ties, criminal background and skills, educational background, and economic conditions.<sup>38</sup> Social ties include parental, familial, friendships, as well as other types of social relationships. Social and criminal connections are usually interrelated and mutually reinforcing, creating opportunities for criminal activities. Family ties can

help facilitate the cultural transmission and learning processes necessary for recruitment into criminal organizations. This is especially true for traditional groups such as mafia groups, where being born into a family involved can often lead to involvement in the organization. For example, the role of family is powerful for Italian mafias, as being born in one usually means being part of the criminal organization's activities.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, friendships can also be conditioning for the recruitment into organized crime groups, as they usually rely on close friendships due to the need for high trust levels.

Moreover, studies have emphasized the relevance of experience in criminal activities to recruitment into organized criminal groups. Their members are typically characterized by having a history of violent and criminal careers preceding their joining the organization. Furthermore, a criminal past can include imprisonment time. This can help establish relationships with other criminals, incentivizing their future recruitment.

Low socio-economic status and overall poor economic conditions facilitate recruitment into organized crime groups. Research has highlighted that many members of criminal groups had low educational achievement. This lack of education limits the opportunities for individuals to explore the market, which can lead them to fall for the high compensations offered by criminal recruiters.<sup>40</sup> 82 percent of individuals convicted of mafia association in Italy had reported having only between five and eight years of education.<sup>41</sup> The lack of legitimate jobs can also work as an incentive to join a criminal organization. For example, a study showed that the probability of becoming a gang member within a group of prisoners was three times higher for people with a lack of employment history compared to individuals who did have it.

The recruitment of children and adolescents by terrorist and

<sup>34</sup> Rosanna Guadagno et. al, "Social Influence in the Online Recruitment of Terrorists and Terrorist Sympathizers: Implications for Social Psychology Research."

<sup>35</sup> Maeghin Alarid, "Recruitment and Radicalization: The Role of Social Media and New Technology," accessed September 11, 2023, [https://https://cco.ndu.edu/Portals/96/Documents/books/Impunity/CHAP\\_13%20Recruitment%20and%20Radicalization.pdf?ver=2017-01-19-102815-587](https://https://cco.ndu.edu/Portals/96/Documents/books/Impunity/CHAP_13%20Recruitment%20and%20Radicalization.pdf?ver=2017-01-19-102815-587).

<sup>36</sup> Maeghin Alarid, "Recruitment and Radicalization."

<sup>37</sup> Maeghin Alarid, "Recruitment and Radicalization."

<sup>38</sup> Francesco Calderoni, Gian Maria Campedelli, Tommaso Comunale, Martina E Marchesi & Ernesto U Savona, *Recruitment into organised criminal groups: A systematic review*, (Australia: Australian Institute of Criminology, January 2020), [https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/ti583\\_recruitment\\_into\\_organised\\_criminal\\_groups.pdf](https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/ti583_recruitment_into_organised_criminal_groups.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> Pino Arlacchi, *Mafia, peasants, and great estates : society in traditional Calabria*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>40</sup> Francesco Calderoni, Gian Maria Campedelli, Tommaso Comunale, Martina E Marchesi & Ernesto U Savona, *Recruitment into organised criminal groups: A systematic review*.

<sup>41</sup> Pino Arlacchi, *Mafia, peasants, and great estates : society in traditional Calabria*



Child Soldiers.  
 Credit: Hossein Zohrevand

extremist groups has gained a lot of international attention in recent years.<sup>42</sup> However, it has been taking place for a very long time. According to UNICEF, there is confirmation of 105,000 child soldiers that were recruited between 2005 and 2022.<sup>43</sup> The total number is estimated to be much higher. Terrorist organizations are known to recruit children either for direct engagement in terrorist acts (such as participation in riots or suicide missions) or for subordinate roles (such as cooking or serving).<sup>44</sup> Young women are also especially exposed to sexual, gender-based violence when recruited into organizations such as these.<sup>45</sup> Children and young people are affected by the Internet in a manner much different than adults. To begin with, they tend to use it far more than people of an older age. In 2021, 22 percent of Internet users were under 24 years old.<sup>46</sup> In the United States, it is estimated that 99.6 percent of all members of Generation Z (people born between 1996 and

2012) will be active users of the Internet by 2026.<sup>47</sup> Since the younger generations spend more time online, they are prone to come across online content without actively looking for it.<sup>48</sup> In a recent survey, it was found that 35 percent of Generation Z participants spent over two hours on social media, while as little as 14 percent of older generations engaged in similar amounts of social media activity.<sup>49</sup> The time they spend online is also greatly impacted by the social media algorithms designed to maximize engagement and keep users online with targeted advertisements.<sup>50</sup> Recommendation algorithms easily become tools for manipulation when they display incorrect, misleading, or biased information.

Young people are also at an age where they are much more vulnerable to social influence than their adult counterparts. Human brains have been found to continue developing until

42 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation*.

43 “Children recruited by armed forces or armed groups,” UNICEF, December 22, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/protection/children-recruited-by-armed-forces>.

44 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation*.

45 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation*.

46 Ani Petrosyan, “Distribution of Internet users worldwide as of 2021, by age group,” Statista, February 23, 2023, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272365/age-distribution-of-Internet-users-worldwide/>.

47 Sara Lebow, “The kids are online: Gen Z is poised to become the most connected generation—for now,” *Insider Intelligence*, March 16, 2022, <https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/kids-online-gen-z-surpass-millennial-Internet-usage>.

48 Fabienne Zogg, Annukka Kukri, Veera Tuomala, Rosa Haavista, *Youth as a target for extremist recruitment* (Finland: Save the Children Finland, 2021), [https://pelastakaalapset.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/main/2022/02/17133213/youth-as-a-target-for-extremist-recruitment\\_stc\\_en.pdf](https://pelastakaalapset.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/main/2022/02/17133213/youth-as-a-target-for-extremist-recruitment_stc_en.pdf).

49 Coe, Erica, Andrew Doy, Kana Enomoto, and Cheryl Healy, “Gen Z Mental Health: The Impact of Tech and Social Media.” McKinsey & Company, April 28, 2023, <https://www.mckinsey.com/mhi/our-insights/gen-z-mental-health-the-impact-of-tech-and-social-media>.

50 Zogg, Kukri, Tuomala, Haavista, *Youth as a target for extremist recruitment*.

age 25.<sup>51</sup> Before that, people are more likely to act out of impulse, without a deliberate judgment. Surges of emotion can deter people from seeing the long-term consequences of their actions.<sup>52</sup> This has led most terror groups to target their propaganda at underage people. Hanna Markkula, Secretary-General of Save the Children Finland, has stated that young people are “in a very vulnerable stage of their development,” which “makes them more susceptible to grooming and manipulation.”<sup>53</sup> Minority groups and youth that feel isolated from the society that surrounds them are among the most vulnerable groups to fall prey to extremist ideologies.<sup>54</sup> Children and adolescents are easier to coerce into believing misinformation and dangerous ideologies. They are also cheaper to recruit than their adult counterparts.<sup>55</sup> Children are almost always paid less than adults, and they cost far less to feed as well. This has led countless criminal groups to develop strategies targeting young people, specifically. This includes infiltrating popular games or social media platforms with a large underage audience.<sup>56</sup>

Grooming is one of the main strategies used by terror groups to lure children into their encrypted chat rooms and websites. Even though it usually refers to the deceitful manipulation of children for sexual exploitation, grooming can refer to any kind of online scheme aimed at controlling kids. When recruiting children, criminals on the Internet tend to appeal to their emotional side, aiming to create a strong emotional connection with them. These connections are what allow recruiters to manipulate them into acting however they want them to. Young people, who are starting to develop identities of their own, are more susceptible to forming close emotional bonds with people they have never met face to face. This is especially true of young men and women who have never formed close bonds with the people they are surrounded by.<sup>57</sup> Grooming is in direct violation of Article 16 of the United

Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, which states that “all children have the right to privacy.”<sup>58</sup> By stripping away their privacy, violent groups also leave the door open for many more of their rights to be breached. Young children are at a greater risk of finding themselves in exploitative situations online since they are not fully aware of their rights.

Since children are among the most vulnerable users on the Internet, it is important to ensure that strategies to combat the rise of online recruitment are created with the youth’s best interests in mind. Besides the actions taken to counter criminal recruitment specifically, it is also critical to educate children on the safe and proper use of the Internet from an early age. Media literacy is one of the most powerful tools that can be used in the fight against the spread of false propaganda and misinformation. Parental supervision also plays an essential role in the prevention of children falling victim to criminal recruitment on the Internet. When criminal groups contact underage users online, they usually attempt to alienate them from their parents and their families.<sup>59</sup> This makes it easier for children to be drafted into criminal organizations with no one to oppose. Children are left far more vulnerable to manipulation when there is a psychological barrier separating them from their parents.<sup>60</sup> This environment is exactly what online crime groups try to create. Parents are encouraged to learn about the Internet and the threats that it can pose to their children to provide them with the right tools to avoid recruitment by terrorist or criminal groups. Children must be motivated to make the right decisions online, so they make the best use of the modern technologies that they have at their disposal.

Other important vulnerabilities in the online space can apply to various groups. Sometimes people’s motivations can be compliance (forced entry due to situational pressures) or

51 University of Rochester Medical Center, “Understanding the teen brain,” accessed August 8, 2023, <https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?ContentTypeID=1&ContentID=3051>.

52 University of Rochester Medical Center, “Understanding the teen brain.”

53 Zogg, Kukri, Tuomala, Haavista, *Youth as a target for extremist recruitment*.

54 Zogg, Kukri, Tuomala, Haavista, *Youth as a target for extremist recruitment*.

55 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation*.

56 Chris Dalby, “How Mexico’s Cartels Use Video Games to Recruit Children,” *InSight Crime*, October 15, 2021, <https://insightcrime.org/news/mexico-cartels-use-video-games-recruit-new-hitmen/>.

57 Zogg, Kukri, Tuomala, Haavista, *Youth as a target for extremist recruitment*.

58 UNICEF, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, GA resolution 44/25, November 20, 1989, <https://www.unicef.org/au/united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child>.

59 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation*.

60 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation*.

internalization (voluntary entry based on personal qualities).<sup>61</sup> One such study of these factors involved ex-members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The survey asked various questions to divide the former members into two categories. The 3-N model identifies need, narrative, and network as common factors that lead people to join violent groups. They use the groups to satisfy their need for significance, adopt an ideological narrative, and gain social advantages. Through terrorism and guerilla tactics, the LTTE sought to create an ethnostate (a state consisting of only one ethnicity) for the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. With an overt/semi-covert political branch and a covert military wing, the LTTE had a well-developed organizational structure. Over time, it changed, developing expertise in guerilla and mobile combat while retaining terrorism as a tactic. It also formed partnerships with other businesses to get money and assistance. Although the LTTE's operational ability on the ground was later stopped, its international networks are still active. This continues to be a threat to Sri Lanka. Most members reported being coerced into joining. Others were persuaded by charisma and propaganda. Over half of the participants cited some type of compliance as their primary motivation for signing up.<sup>62</sup> In general, those who fall into the categories of need, narrative, and network are likely to fall victim to compliance or internalization strategies. Terror groups can target vulnerable people like these with charm and propaganda.

## The Prevention of Online Radicalization

Traditional methods of radicalization have proven to work exceptionally well over the Internet because of the “echo chamber” phenomenon. The Internet allows for the creation of closed communities of people who share the same beliefs and views as each other. Echo chambers amplify opinions and allow them to propagate much further. They can happen more easily online than in real life, as interactions on the Internet take place in a much more controlled way. Opinions on criminal networks are rarely challenged. These ideas are

instead validated by individuals with similar world views. Ideas can easily be amplified by users constantly repeating the same arguments. People who have different points of view about specific topics are often ostracized from the platform. These echo chambers, supporting all sorts of views from all over the political spectrum, lead to such quick radicalization in the online space. Extremist and criminal views are allowed to continue spreading, as they remain largely unquestioned.<sup>63</sup>

Many groups oppose the further spread of radical propaganda on the Internet. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), for instance, has determined that the best way to combat the misinformation spread by terrorist groups is by providing alternative and counter-narratives. Alternative narratives introduce potential recruits to different actions, perspectives, and role models. Counter-narratives, meanwhile, directly target those damaging messages spread by online groups. They are specifically tailored to discredit and debunk these messages. Both actions are ways of combating the spread of misinformation and criminal propaganda. The introduction of opposite views can challenge the opinions of individuals online who have been radicalized by extremist propaganda. Campaigns that promote them should take place both online and offline to catch the attention of people who reside in these “echo chambers” on the Internet.<sup>64</sup>

In its manual for the prevention of online recruitment and exploitation by terrorist and violent extremist groups, the UNODC outlines how alternative narratives should lead an individual to wonder what they stand for or against.<sup>65</sup> This can be carried out by spreading positive stories that promote virtues and democratic values. Another message that is highly important to spread is the acceptance of other groups and ideas. Meanwhile, counter-narratives should “challenge and deconstruct violent extremist messaging,” by pointing out the flaws in these messages. To do this, it is recommended that both emotion and humor is used. Counter-narratives are also established to point out the hypocrisy that often takes place in extremist propaganda. All civil society sectors are encouraged to

61 Ángel Gómez et al., “Why People Enter and Embrace Violent Groups,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (January 7, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.614657>.

62 Ángel Gómez et al., “Why People Enter and Embrace Violent Groups.”

63 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation*.

64 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation*.

65 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation*.

be targeted by these narratives via different kinds of media. It is also necessary that governments employ strategies for strategic communication. Government transparency has proven to be a key tool in preventing the spread of criminal narratives. When representatives are not honest with their populations, misinformation is allowed to spread. It is easy for criminal groups to step in and take charge when people feel uncertain about the way they are being governed. Developing proper communication strategies can allow leaders to build much closer relationships with their audiences. Government policies must be thoroughly explained to stop their misinterpretation and prevent misinformation.

One key aspect to keep in mind is that alternative and counter-narratives must be appropriate for individuals of all ages. Children and adolescents are very susceptible to criminal recruitment over the Internet. This is why all strategies to combat terrorist and violent narratives must keep their worldviews in mind, as well. Another distinction that should be made when crafting alternative narratives is whether they will be traveling upstream or downstream. Upstream strategies target a wide audience and aim to fight criminal narratives by spreading knowledge and giving lessons in online safety. Their main goal is to inform as many people as possible and strengthen resistance against misinformation and propaganda. Downstream strategies, on the other hand, refer to one-to-one interactions with users of the Internet who already hold radical ideas to help them deconstruct their worldviews. These latter strategies, much like all criminal recruitment on the Internet, rely highly on the amount of trust perceived by the potential recruit. The trust the receiver will put in this sender depends on various factors. These are the channels the messages are sent in, the distance over which communication happens, and the time it takes to receive the messages. It has been found, as well, that independence from any government ties can increase the amount of trust that individuals on the Internet feel towards each other. In the end, a good counter-narrative

strategy can be measured by four aspects: its intended reach, its creativity, its simple structuring of complex messages, and its ability to think outside the box, not just limiting itself to be a directly negative response to the criminal narratives that it is fighting against.<sup>66</sup> To truly eradicate the problem, counter-terrorist initiatives should be as proactive as they are reactive. They should help Internet users tackle their feelings of discrimination, alienation, anger, or lack of economic opportunities in ways that do not lead to violent extremism.

Another strategy that has been found to push against the spread of online misinformation and propaganda is the removal of dangerous criminal sites and content from the Internet. This effort must take place in partnership with various Internet service providers.<sup>67</sup> It must be used as a proactive measure, not just as a reactive response when dangerous sites are found. Some social media sites already use artificial intelligence to identify and block harmful criminal content, with measures set by companies such as Google.<sup>68</sup> In 2023, Jigsaw (Google's tech-safety platform) partnered with the United Nations' Tech against Terrorism initiative to create a counter-terrorist moderation tool.<sup>69</sup> Expected to be free, this tool will help take criminal content down from small websites across the Internet. In the words of Yasmin Green, chief executive of Jigsaw, these smaller websites "just don't have any people to do the enforcement. It is a labor-intensive thing to even build the algorithms [and] then you need all those human reviewers."<sup>70</sup> Therefore, it is important to encourage the further development of automatic software that can identify, label, and alert about the presence of dangerous content on the Internet. For these software programs to reach into the Dark Net and other remote areas of the online space, additional research is required.

Some countries have created policies to take action against online recruitment. In the European Union, the 2022 Digital Services Act aims to "create a safer digital space in which

66 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation*.

67 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation*.

68 Stuart Macdonald, Sara Giro Correia and Amy-Louise Watkin, "Regulating terrorist content on social media: automation and the rule of law," *International Journal of Law in Context* 15, no. 2 (June 2019): 183 - 197, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-journal-of-law-in-context/article/regulating-terrorist-content-on-social-media-automation-and-the-rule-of-law/B54E339425753A66FECD1F592B9783A1>.

69 Cristina Cridde, "Google develops free terrorism moderation tool for smaller websites," *Financial Times*, January 3, 2023, <https://www.ft.com/content/c2da6eb1-ba81-40c5-a411-dfc94ea280db>.

70 Cridde, "Google develops free terrorism moderation tool."





Yasmin Green leads the team's innovation efforts and oversees projects on counter-radicalization.

Credit: nrkbeta

the fundamental rights of all users of digital services are protected.”<sup>71</sup> It has set out to do so by establishing a new set of rules for the management of content online.<sup>72</sup> This includes stricter measures to counter illegal services. Among them the improvement of “flagging” mechanisms that allow for normal users to report dangerous content, as well as the establishment of flagging networks. Large platforms that reach more than 10 percent of the Union’s population are required to comply with harsher security standards, and strict codes of conduct will discourage the spread of hateful, violent, or abusive narratives on the Surface Web.<sup>73</sup> In the United Kingdom, meanwhile, the Online Safety Bill aims to make this country “the safest place in the world to be online.”<sup>74</sup> It introduces a variety of obligations that must be followed by any tech firm aiming to create an online platform. It specializes in moderating online content, especially on bigger websites such as WhatsApp or Wikipedia. Criminal groups commonly use these websites to

spread misinformation.<sup>75</sup>

The removal of information from the online space remains a controversial topic, as it interferes with individuals’ freedom of expression. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, freedom is enshrined by Article 19.<sup>76</sup> Because of this, Internet service providers are highly encouraged to provide online content creators with the reasoning behind the takedown of their content. Content creators are also allowed to contest the decisions taken by their Internet service providers if they consider their content is not harmful and their freedom of speech is being violated.<sup>77</sup> Removing content from the Internet is proper when the speech that it promotes is a threat to individuals’ security, equality, or freedom of any kind. Holistic approaches are needed to tackle the online radicalization of individuals on the Internet. Local, national, and international agreements must be established in collaboration with various actors and partners. Informing about the dangers of online

71 “The Digital Services Act package,” European Commission, updated June 6, 2023, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act-package>.

72 “The Digital Services Act: ensuring a safe and accountable online environment,” European Commission, 2022, [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/digital-services-act-ensuring-safe-and-accountable-online-environment\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/digital-services-act-ensuring-safe-and-accountable-online-environment_en).

73 “Europe fit for the digital age: new online rules for platforms,” European Commission, 2022, [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/digital-services-act-ensuring-safe-and-accountable-online-environment/europe-fit-digital-age-new-online-rules-platforms\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/digital-services-act-ensuring-safe-and-accountable-online-environment/europe-fit-digital-age-new-online-rules-platforms_en).

74 Jon Porter, “The UK’s tortured attempt to remake the Internet, explained,” *The Verge*, May 4, 2023, <https://www.theverge.com/23708180/united-kingdom-online-safety-bill-explainer-legal-pornography-age-checks>.

75 Porter, “The UK’s tortured attempt to remake the Internet.”

76 United Nations General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, GA/RES/217/A (December 10, 1948), <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

77 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation*.

recruitment is a vital action. The CCPCJ must ensure that the Internet is used not for criminal purposes, but for the betterment of all humankind.

## Current Status

### Gangs and Mobs on Social Media Platforms

The online space has provided a perfect platform for developing communities that appeal to certain age groups. As touched upon earlier, many young people look to the Internet in search of a sense of belonging and group identity. Finding a community to belong to is an essential part of teenagers' development, leaving them vulnerable to influence from online groups targeting promotional material. It should come as no surprise, then, that much like terrorist organizations, street gangs have also adapted to take advantage of the opportunities provided by social media. Social media has grown to influence not just how gang members behave at an individual level but also the way gangs act as groups.<sup>78</sup> It has also had a role in how modern gangs mature, moving away from recreational pursuits and more into criminal activities. Newer, less established gangs, for instance, are more likely to have a greater presence on the Internet, as they can use it for both expressive and instrumental purposes.<sup>79</sup> Interactions on social media allow for gang identity consolidation and reputation building. To these new gangs, "the digital street has become as meaningful and consequential as the physical street."<sup>80</sup> One activity that street gangs have found the Internet to be very useful for is recruitment. Gangs attract new members in a less subtle, much flashier way than terrorist organizations do.<sup>81</sup> Some have been found to go as far as to produce intricately

choreographed music videos to capture the attention of as many potential recruits as possible. These music videos have a reputation for glorifying violence. As previously explored, they can serve as propaganda for online indoctrination. Gang members also tend to make posts showcasing their "everyday lives." These often include enviable displays of wealth. They are an effective way of captivating the attention of impressionable young people.<sup>82</sup>

Around the world, one of the countries that has been the most affected by gang violence in recent years has been Haiti. This country has a severe gang crisis that has already seen attempted intervention by the United States.<sup>83</sup> Between January 1 and March 26, 530 people are estimated to have died as a result of gang violence.<sup>84</sup> Nearly 187 people were killed in just two weeks.<sup>85</sup> Most of the violence takes place in the capital city of Port-au-Prince, and it has various causes. However, gangs mainly continue trying to seize control given the power vacuum that was left in the state following the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021.<sup>86</sup> They are typically immersed in long and grueling turf wars that aim to take control over certain portions of the territory. Citizens living in these areas are terrified to leave their homes, and the government has done little more than deploy its young and inexperienced military in zones where the conflict is at its worst.<sup>87</sup> Haiti is a developing country where the Internet only reaches less than half of the population (41.2 percent, as estimated in early 2022).<sup>88</sup> Still, access to the Internet has been increasing rapidly over the past few years. In 2021 alone, 540 thousand residents joined the online space, amounting to a growth of 12.7 percent in just one year.<sup>89</sup> This has led to a rapidly expanding number of users across all social media platforms. The armed gangs in this country use these platforms to instill fear in the population,

78 Andrew Whittaker, James Densely, Karin Mosler, "No two gangs are alike: The digital divide in street gangs' differential adaptations to social media," *Computers in human behavior* no. 110 (September 2020): <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563220301564>.

79 Whittaker, Densely, Mosler, "No two gangs are alike."

80 Whittaker, Densely, Mosler, "No two gangs are alike."

81 Chris Melde and Frank Weerman, *Gangs in the era of Internet and social media* (Cham: Springer Nature, 2020), [https://pure.eur.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/53346554/2020\\_Bookmatter\\_GangsInTheEraOfInternetAndSoci.pdf](https://pure.eur.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/53346554/2020_Bookmatter_GangsInTheEraOfInternetAndSoci.pdf).

82 Melde and Weerman, *Gangs in the era of the Internet and social media*.

83 Ellen Jones, "Haiti's gang violence crisis, briefly explained," *Vox*, March 26, 2023, <https://www.vox.com/world-politics/2023/3/26/23657163/haitis-gang-violence-crisis-explained>

84 Jones, "Haiti's gang violence crisis."

85 Jones, "Haiti's gang violence crisis."

86 Al Jazeera Staff, "Haiti sees rise of 'vigilante justice' as gang violence soars," *Al Jazeera*, May 17, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/17/haiti-sees-rise-of-vigilante-justice-as-gang-violence-soars>.

87 Jones, "Haiti's gang violence crisis."

88 Simon Kemp, "Digital 2022: Haiti," *Datareportal*, February 16, 2022, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-haiti>

89 Kemp, "Digital 2022: Haiti."

intimidate their rivals, and boost the morale of their followers. TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter are, by far, the most widely used platforms used by gang leaders to get their messages across.<sup>90</sup> In June 2022, the amateur rapper “Izo” spoke on Instagram on behalf of his gang, named “5 Gonn.” He stated that if a single member of his gang were to be assassinated, he would murder thirty people in return. The social media platforms allowed him to speak live in front of hundreds of thousands of his followers, to whom he stated, “you don’t have to wait to follow my orders.”<sup>91</sup> He was able to threaten his fellow citizens and incite violence against them. “Izo” did not show the gun he was reportedly holding, as the platforms would frown upon that. Even though gangs have been a problem for Haiti for many generations, a lot of observers consider that social media has deeply aggravated the issue. “The bandits would never have been as powerful as they are in Haiti without social media,” said analyst Yvens Rumbold, “without these platforms, they would not be as famous.”<sup>92</sup> Gangs in Haiti announce alliances on YouTube, post threats on Twitter, and send pictures of corpses as blackmail over WhatsApp. Social media has provided all violent groups in the country with the perfect tool to terrorize and manipulate an already vulnerable population.

The climate of widespread publicity for gangs on Haitian social media has created an environment ripe for the recruitment of young people on these sites. In a country in which a large amount of the population does not have access to basic goods, displays of wealth carried out by gang members on social media are especially impactful. Paper currency, expensive watches, and golden chains are all examples of the items that tend to appear in photographs that attract young people to these groups and their ways of thinking. The social media platforms where this content is posted need to stand against the actions and harmful content of these organizations. TikTok’s rules stand strictly against its use by criminal organizations, and

harmful profiles are usually taken down once the platform has been notified about them. Twitter is constantly analyzing profiles and tweets that can be considered harmful. Meta, Facebook and Instagram’s parent company, has a group of native Creole speakers in charge of monitoring their platforms in search of profiles and groups that violate their Dangerous Individuals and Organizations policy. Even then, Haitian gang leaders usually resurface online mere days after having their original platforms taken down. After having his account on TikTok suspended, Izo took to Instagram, where he redirected his followers to a different TikTok account of his. “God forbid I had another account,” he stated.<sup>93</sup> Solutions aimed at this problem must make sure that all accounts from dangerous groups are suspended, rather than only one of them at a time. It is also important, however, that these platforms continue to enshrine the liberty of expression of all its users. The average person on the web should not have to suffer any restrictions born from the increased surveillance of dangerous groups. It is necessary to develop more sophisticated systems to quickly and accurately identify gang members and take away their audience before it is allowed to grow.

Italy is another country with a very high rate of organized crime. The country’s security scored a 3.5 on the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Report in 2017, making it one of the most insecure countries in the world.<sup>94</sup> The country continues to be plagued by large mafia groups such as Cosa Nostra, Camorra, and ‘Ndrangheta.<sup>95</sup> The presence of North African gangs has also been rising ever since the widespread refugee crisis of the mid-2010s.<sup>96</sup> Much like the gangs in Haiti, Italian mafia groups have transferred a lot of their operations onto the online space. In 2020, over EUR 10 million were found to have been laundered all over Europe through a series of hacking and violent coercion.<sup>97</sup> The people behind these activities are allied with skilled, computer-savvy experts who enable them to carry out hacks and cyberattacks.

90 Wildore Mérancourt, Amanda Coletta, “Haiti’s gangs use TikTok, Instagram, Twitter to recruit and terrorize.” *The Washington Post*, June, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/06/11/haiti-gangs-social-media-cherizier-izo/>.

91 Mérancourt, Coletta, “Haiti’s gangs.”

92 Mérancourt, Coletta, “Haiti’s gangs.”

93 Mérancourt, Coletta, “Haiti’s gangs.”

94 Oscar Williams-Grut, “The 15 countries with the worst organized crime problems in the world,” *Business Insider*, November 25, 2017, <https://www.businessinsider.com/wef-countries-worst-organised-crime-problems-gangs-mafia-2017-11>.

95 Williams-Grut, “The 15 countries with the worst organized crime problems in the world.”

96 Williams-Grut, “The 15 countries with the worst organized crime problems in the world.”

97 Shannon Vavra, “The Mafia Finds a New Frontier for Crime: the Internet,” *The Daily Beast*, September 3rd, 2021, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-mafia-finds-a-new-frontier-for-crime-the-Internet>.

'Ndrangheta, one of the most powerful mob families in Europe, has been found to have links with a technology company named eSurv. This company creates spyware to surveil criminals. However, its technology has been abused by the mafia. These groups use it to spy on ordinary citizens. Italian authorities have described the online mafia as more tightly-knit than the country's traditional mob organizations.<sup>98</sup>

Most Italian mafia groups try to keep a low profile on the Internet, operating in secrecy and carrying out their operations beneath the Surface Web.<sup>99</sup> However, the last few years have seen the rise of so-called "Mobfluencers" across social media platforms. As the name suggests, these are crime bosses who use the Internet to spread their influence across the continent. The countless videos in which members flaunt their wealth has become some of the most prominent online propaganda in all of Europe. The group that has come to have the greatest social media presence is the Camorra mafia, which operates around Naples and Campania. Camorra is known for having younger members than other mobs in Italy. Crescenzo Marino, son of one of Camorra's bosses, for example, is one of the best known Mobfluencers on the Internet, with well over 40 thousand followers on TikTok. His videos have garnered more than one million likes. They show him traveling around Paris in luxury cars such as Ferraris, wearing designer clothes and expensive watches. His fellow mobsters post videos of themselves drinking champagne at parties they attend in exclusive clubs. This flaunting is a very clear attempt to inspire young Internet users to join these criminal organizations in hopes they will achieve a similar lifestyle. Marcello Ravveduto, an expert on mafia communication, has stated that young mafia members are drawn to social media platforms because "for the first time, they have found a direct way to speak up about their lives."<sup>100</sup> He claims that TikTok, specifically, has become so widely used by them because it is faster to use and has fewer

rules than other social media platforms. Camorra also uses TikTok to make alliances with other criminal organizations in the region and to publicize vendettas they have against groups and individuals alike. When a member of the group was assassinated in 2022, they urged the police to bring the people responsible to justice within one week. Camorra threatened they would take matters into their own hands and "raise hell against them."<sup>101</sup> All of this highly sensationalized behavior is frowned upon by the older members of the mafia, who are vocal about keeping a low profile on the Internet.<sup>102</sup> Another of the most influential parts of Camorra's Internet campaign came in May 2022. In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, and with TikTok usage at an all-time high, a video went viral using the song "Sì Sto' Carcerato" ("Yes, I'm locked up"). The video was shot inside an actual jail cell, inside a prison most commonly associated with the Camorra mafia. Even though the video was taken down from TikTok, it continued to garner attention on YouTube afterward.<sup>103</sup>

## Radicalization and Recruitment in Online Videogames

Video gaming is a large and growing industry, with over 2.8 billion gamers worldwide. Online gaming is a major part of this industry, with over 900 million players.<sup>104</sup> The growth of online gaming is due in part to the development of game hosting and communication platforms specially designed for gamers. There are some benefits to gaming, such as the improvement of cognitive skills, the promotion of social interaction, and the reduction of stress. However, there are also potential harms associated with gaming. These include addiction, cyberbullying, and exposure to violence.<sup>105</sup>

There is a growing global concern that online video games and associated platforms are being used by extremists and terrorists to spread propaganda, radicalize individuals, and recruit new

98 Vavra, "The Mafia Finds a New Frontier for Crime."

99 Tim Hanlon, "New generation of Italian 'TikTok mafia' flaunt wealth to the anger of old guard," *The Mirror*, July 26, 2022, <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/new-generation-italian-tiktok-mafia-27575907>.

100 Hanlon, "New generation of Italian 'TikTok mafia' flaunt wealth to the anger of old guard."

101 Hanlon, "New generation of Italian 'TikTok mafia' flaunt wealth to the anger of old guard."

102 Hanlon, "New generation of Italian 'TikTok mafia' flaunt wealth to the anger of old guard."

103 Enrico Nocera, Dario D'Avino, "The Italian Mafia is on TikTok," *Vice News*, September 21, 2020, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/qj4qxx/the-italian-mafia-is-on-tiktok>

104 Suraj Lakhani, *VIDEO GAMING AND (VIOLENT) EXTREMISM*, European Commission, (Luxembourg: 2021), [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-02/EUIF%20Technical%20Meeting%20on%20Video%20Gaming%20October%202021%20RAN%20Policy%20Support%20paper\\_en.pdf](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-02/EUIF%20Technical%20Meeting%20on%20Video%20Gaming%20October%202021%20RAN%20Policy%20Support%20paper_en.pdf)

105 Suraj Lakhani, *VIDEO GAMING AND (VIOLENT) EXTREMISM*.

members. Organized crime groups' use of gaming content and spaces includes the creation of new video games, the use of gaming and culture references, and the use of gaming platforms to communicate with potential recruits, among others.<sup>106</sup>

Terrorists have been making use of popular violent video games or media platforms to radicalize and recruit new members.<sup>107</sup> On popular games, such as GTA 5 and Call of Duty, have been able to easily spread propaganda, reaching larger audiences. First-person shooter video games are currently being investigated for their potential instigation of violence. It was discovered that terrorist groups copy violent video games to make their activities more appealing to potential recruits. Islamic State propaganda and recruitment videos copy popular video games such as Call of Duty. These games are played by millions of people, usually under the age of 35 and 90 percent male, which is the target of terrorist organizations. Overall, video game manufacturers do not promote the use of violence. However, terrorist groups take advantage of their popularity

and copy their techniques to reach a larger audience. These groups, such as ISIS, are also known for designing entertaining violent applications for young children. For example, Huroof is an educational app for children to match Arabic letters to pictures of bombs, weapons, and other military symbols.

However, big terrorist organizations such as ISIS are not the only actors that use video games as a method of propaganda. Smaller terrorist groups have been copying these strategies as well.<sup>108</sup>

Games such as Second Life and World of Warcraft are used by terrorist groups to recruit new members.<sup>109</sup> In Mexico, these platforms and their young audiences have been taken advantage of by the country's biggest drug cartels. In 2021, authorities were shocked by the finding of five kidnapped children ranging between the ages of 12 and 15 in the state of Oaxaca.<sup>110</sup> The infamous Northeastern Cartel took them. The Northeastern Cartel is one of the top ten drug trafficking organizations in the country. These children were expected to

106 Galen Englund, *Exploitation of Gaming Platforms by Violent Extremists, Organization of American States, (Mexico City: May 2023), [https://www.oas.org/es/sms/cictel/docs/PVE/EGRN\\_%20OAS\\_Short%20Briefing\\_16May23\\_V2%20.pdf](https://www.oas.org/es/sms/cictel/docs/PVE/EGRN_%20OAS_Short%20Briefing_16May23_V2%20.pdf)*

107 Katelyn Ferguson, Moon Jung Kim & Martyna Dobrowolska, "The Role of Video Games and Online Platforms in Terrorist Radicalization and Recruitment," The Counter Terrorism Group, accessed on August 28, 2023, <https://www.counterterrorismgroup.com/post/the-role-of-video-games-and-online-platforms-in-terrorist-radicalization-and-recruitment>.

108 Ferguson, Jung Kim & Dobrowolska, "The Role of Video Games and Online Platforms in Terrorist Radicalization and Recruitment."

109 Chris Dalby, "How Mexico's Cartels Use Video Games to Recruit Children," *InSight Crime*, October 15, 2021, <https://insightcrime.org/news/mexico-cartels-use-video-games-recruit-new-hitmen/>.

110 Adry Torres, "Mexican authorities rescue five kidnapped children, aged between 12 and 15, who were recruited through online video games to work for a drug cartel," *The Daily Mail*, October 12, 2021, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10084749/Mexican-cops-rescue-five-kidnapped-children-cartel-lured-video-game.html>.

Grand Theft Auto (GTA).

Credit: GillyBerlin



join their ranks. They were found to have been lured in by a 13-year-old boy while they played the popular game Free Fire. Their platform for communicating outside the online game was a WhatsApp chat, through which the 13-year-old sent multiple photographs showcasing enormous amounts of cash. According to one of the boys' mothers, he would show them up to ten thousand pesos and claimed that he had made them by "working."<sup>111</sup> He made promises of similar wealth if his new "friends" were to join the cartel for which he worked. The children were eventually abducted from their houses and taken to Oaxaca. They were tracked via their telephones to a bus station, where they were expecting to take a bus to Mexico City. After that, they would be flown to the northern city of Monterrey to directly take part in the cartel's activities.<sup>112</sup> It is unknown whether the Northeastern Cartel has targeted other children in Oaxaca.

Another video game in which Mexican drug cartels have been found to operate is Grand Theft Auto (GTA). In the game, players are tasked to rise through the criminal underworld of fictional American cities while committing a series of crimes. It is a highly popular video game around the world, with well over 90,000 players logging into it every single day.<sup>113</sup> Drug cartels use this video game to recruit children either late at night or during the early hours of the morning.<sup>114</sup> These are when children are often left alone by their parents. Members of cartels on these platforms are open about their intentions, and, as happens very often with online recruitment, they attract young people by promoting a luxurious lifestyle. For example, on September 18, 2021, a teenage boy playing Grand Theft Auto at 3:00 in the morning was sent a message by a fellow player who, pretending to also be a young man, invited him to an event inside the game. Said event was an "open recruitment"

for the thirty-fifth battalion of the Northeastern and Old School Zetas cartels.<sup>115</sup> Another case of recruitment via Free Fire was discovered in November 2021. A girl named Alyssa Navarro was found driving a Jeep that contained 60 kilograms of methamphetamine in Arizona.<sup>116</sup> When interrogated, she revealed she had met a man called George when playing GTA. After communicating with him via Snapchat, they met in real life. He asked her whether she would like to earn up to USD 2,000 by becoming a "runner."<sup>117</sup> She was told she would be transporting electronics across the border. She was provided with the truck and sent on a dangerous mission that could have very easily gone wrong for an inexperienced, underage person.<sup>118</sup>

Other cartels have been found to use this tactic. The New Generation Jalisco Cartel and the Sinaloa Cartel have both been involved in some of the worst cases of armed violence in Mexico over the past decade.<sup>119</sup> Many other video games have been infiltrated by undercover cartel members. These games include Minecraft and Fortnite.<sup>120</sup> After children are contacted by members of the cartels through video games, they are usually invited to in-person meetings. Once there, children are kidnapped and forced to take part in the cartels. They can be used as mules, hitmen, or as cheap labor in drug manufacturing facilities. Investigative journalist Óscar Balderas points out that, even though recruiting through video games may be seen as ineffective, it is precious to cartels as it is a silent and discreet way to recruit young people.<sup>121</sup> It is also very low-risk. Online video games, unfortunately, have fewer systems in place than social media platforms to protect their users, even when a substantial portion of their users consists of children. There are, however, many consoles that do allow guardians to set up parental controls. There are also external

111 Torres, "Authorities rescue five kidnapped children."

112 Torres, "Authorities rescue five kidnapped children."

113 Liam Mackay, "How many people play GTA Online? 2023 player count stats," *Charlie Intel*, August 7, 2023, <https://www.charlieintel.com/gta/gta-online-player-count-167041/>.

114 Chris Dalby, "How Mexico's Cartels Use Video Games to Recruit Children," *InSight Crime*, October 15, 2021, <https://insightcrime.org/news/mexico-cartels-use-video-games-recruit-new-hitmen/>.

115 Dalby, "How Mexico's cartels use video games."

116 Thomas Brewster, "How Mexico's Real Life Cartels Recruit Drug Mules On Grand Theft Auto Online," *Forbes Magazine*, January 24, 2022, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/thomasbrewster/2022/01/24/mexican-cartels-recruit-drug-mules-on-grand-theft-auto-online/?sh=77894f2169f6>.

117 Brewster, "How Mexico's Real Life Cartels Recruit Drug Mules."

118 Brewster, "How Mexico's Real Life Cartels Recruit Drug Mules."

119 Dalby, "How Mexico's cartels use video games."

120 Brewster, "How Mexico's Real Life Cartels Recruit Drug Mules."

121 Dalby, "How Mexico's cartels use video games."

software programs that parents can install into their children's games. These allow for time management and the supervision of all the activities children participate in online.

In response to the growing concern about the potential for online video games to be used for radicalization and recruitment, several organizations have begun to research this issue and develop interventions to counter it. Some examples of these organizations include the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), the European Union Internet Forum (EUIF), the Extremism and Gaming Research Network (EGRN) and the Global Internet Forum to Counterterrorism (GIFCT), among others.<sup>122</sup> One of the challenges of policy intervention is that video games and chat rooms are relatively difficult to monitor. It is easy to host private game servers or chat rooms free from any moderation. Additionally, the target audience for video games is often young people, who may be particularly vulnerable to radicalization. Thus, any interventions by policymakers, such as counter-terrorist messages, may escape target audiences unless considering popular trends among the youth.<sup>123</sup> Understanding radicalization and recruitment in online video games and building the necessary strategies to combat it requires much knowledge of the social dynamics and cultures in these spaces.

## Sustainable Development Goals

Established by the United Nations in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals were successors to the Millennium Development Goals, which came to an end in that same year. Emphasizing the importance of connected and international collaboration, they tackle a wide range of issues the world faces today. These go from poor education and widespread poverty to creating friendlier cities and healthy environments for everyone. The most relevant Sustainable Development Goal to the topic of recruitment for violence over the Internet

is goal number 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. Like most of the Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring its success requires close collaboration between all levels of government, as well as independent organizations, in all countries. A holistic approach is required to create “peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”<sup>124</sup>

Criminal recruitment on the Internet has come to the attention of the United Nations because it actively fuels activities that disrupt the peace in the countries in which it takes place.<sup>125</sup> As has been well established throughout this guide, it is a problem suffered by both developing and developed states. Terrorism—both domestic and international—gang tensions and cartel violence are but a few of how the Internet has proven to threaten the development of peaceful and fair societies. Its use by terror groups has allowed it to become a tool for the destabilization of some of the most powerful, well-established institutions. In recent years, it has even come close to tearing apart the governing systems of two democratic states. The 2021 siege of the Capitol in the United States and the 2023 attack on the National Congress in Brazil were unprecedented events in the modern history of the two countries. They were both staged by terror groups that did not agree with the result of a democratic election. The two attacks were immensely fueled by extremist propaganda posted on social media platforms. In the United States, much of the blame has been laid on content posted on Twitter. This includes former president Donald Trump's Tweet that has been described as the “explosive invitation” for the event: “Be there, will be wild!”<sup>126</sup> His interactions on said site during this day are said to have incited a lot of the violence that would go on to take place. In Brazil's case, meanwhile, many people point to WhatsApp groups and Telegram channels as the main mediums through which

122 Menso Hartgers & Eviane Leidig, “Fighting extremism in gaming platforms: a set of design principles to develop comprehensive P/CVE strategies,” The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, accessed August 28, 2023.

123 Menso Hartgers & Eviane Leidig, “Fighting extremism in gaming platforms: a set of design principles to develop comprehensive P/CVE strategies.”

124 United Nations, “Goal 16: promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies,” accessed July 5, 2023, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>.

125 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *The use of the Internet for terrorist purposes* (New York: United Nations, 2012), [https://www.unodc.org/documents/terrorism/Publications/Use\\_of\\_Internet\\_for\\_Terrorist\\_Purposes/ebook\\_use\\_of\\_the\\_Internet\\_for\\_terrorist\\_purposes.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/terrorism/Publications/Use_of_Internet_for_Terrorist_Purposes/ebook_use_of_the_Internet_for_terrorist_purposes.pdf).

126 Joanna Robin, “January 6 committee reveals how a tweet from Donald Trump and an ‘unhinged’ meeting at the White House sparked the Capitol riot,” ABC news, July 22, 2022, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-07-13/donald-trump-tweet-sparked-capitol-riot-jan-6-committee-hears/101231128>

the extremist movement gained traction.<sup>127</sup> Both movements showcased the rapid spread of misinformation that can take place online. Said misinformation reached thousands of people in seconds and was then taken advantage of by groups aiming to further their political agendas. The CCPCJ is meant to create fair and strong institutions for the safeguarding of peace and democracy around the whole world. It is important to pressure big technology companies so that they have tighter control over the content users can post on their platforms. Doing this while continuing to enshrine all people's right to freedom of speech is not an easy task.

Reducing the number of people who get recruited by criminal groups online also contributes to the accomplishment of Sustainable Development Goal number 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth. It is a goal that aims to “promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all.”<sup>128</sup> This has become especially relevant in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which millions lost their jobs. It is estimated that, in 2020 alone, 225 million people worldwide were left unemployed due to the effects of the crisis.<sup>129</sup> It led to one of the worst economic crises in decades and undid a lot of the progress that had been accomplished towards reaching goal 8.<sup>130</sup> In total, 208 million people are estimated to be unemployed in 2023. This is a dramatic rise from 204 million people in 2015 when the Sustainable Development Goals were first introduced.<sup>131</sup> This last figure contributes greatly to recruiting people for organized crime. Unemployed people are much more likely to be recruited for criminal activities, as they have no other way of providing income to their families.<sup>132</sup> As has been explored throughout this background guide, criminal groups have developed strategies to appeal greatly to the unemployed. Individuals left without jobs are more likely to turn to radical ideas and buy into propaganda that wrongfully aims

to explain why that might be the case. This puts them in a situation where they are more likely to turn to the criminal actions promoted by dangerous groups. Livestreams of crime are rarely as profitable as kingpins on the Internet usually depict them. They make up some of the most dangerous jobs in the world. The creation of new jobs and the promotion of entrepreneurship are vital to eradicate the need for the unstable, illicit, and dangerous jobs brought about by Internet recruitment. When used properly, the Internet can be handy to provide people with decent, legal, and well-paid jobs that transcend geographical barriers. Further efforts must be carried out to ensure that even people in developing countries have access to these novel opportunities. The United Nations aims to secure “full productive employment” and a decent job for all people around the world by the year 2023.<sup>133</sup>

## Bloc Analysis

### Point of division

Around the world, levels of employment and education have been found to be two determining factors when it comes to the amounts of people who become radicalized by online media. Higher levels of education tend to be associated with the ability to evaluate information critically. Well-educated people are more likely to question extremist propaganda and identify attempts at radicalization. This usually makes them less susceptible to online recruitment efforts. Proper education allows people to recognize the manipulative tactics used by organized crime. A country's level of employment and economic opportunity, meanwhile, acts as a direct deterrent against radicalization by making individuals less likely to be won over by warped ideas that promise change and solutions. It has also been found that people in a stable and fulfilling

127 Elizabeth Dwoskin, “Come to the ‘war cry party’: How social media helped drive mayhem in Brazil,” *The Washington Post*, January 9th, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2023/01/08/brazil-bolsanaro-twitter-facebook/>.

128 United Nations, “Goal 8: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all,” accessed August 18, 2023, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/economic-growth/>.

129 Nina Larson, “225 million jobs were lost worldwide in 2020 thanks to the pandemic, report finds,” *CTV News*, January 25, 2021, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/225-million-jobs-were-lost-worldwide-in-2020-thanks-to-the-pandemic-report-finds-1.5281152>.

130 United Nations, “Goal 8.”

131 United Nations Development Programme, “The SDGs in action,” accessed August 18, 2023, <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>.

132 Kartika Bhatia and Hafez Ghanem, *How do education and unemployment affect support for violent extremism? Evidence from eight Arab countries* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, March 2017), [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/global\\_20170322\\_violent-extremism.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/global_20170322_violent-extremism.pdf).

133 United Nations, “Goal 8.”



work environment are more likely to feel a sense of belonging and purpose. This ultimately counteracts the appeal of terror groups and their ideas.<sup>134</sup> Areas with less employment and economic opportunities provide criminal organizations with a greater appeal. Communities in more progressive countries are much less likely to be marginalized. Thus, they are less likely to turn to violent means to accomplish their goals. Keeping these two key factors in mind, the countries that make up this committee can all be located within one of three groups:

### Internet-browsing countries with high rates of education and employment

These countries are the least affected by the presence of criminal groups on the Internet. It does not mean they are entirely exempt from their populations being recruited for organized crime through the online space, however. They have enacted laws and regulations that make it illegal to recruit or facilitate the recruitment of individuals into organized crime groups through online platforms. They also work closely with law enforcement agencies and social media platforms to identify and remove content being used for recruitment.

However, countries in this bloc are still significantly influenced by online recruitment with criminal intentions. The United States, despite having one of the lowest unemployment rates in the world, is the country in North America with the highest Global Terrorism Index.<sup>135</sup> In developed countries, criminal threats come from within their borders. This can be in the form of domestic terrorism or “lone wolf” attacks carried out by individuals who have pledged allegiance to specific groups. Still, features of online recruitment, such as alienation and echo chambers, as well as educational gaps, can be apparent in these countries and are essential to recognize. Countries in this bloc must cooperate to strengthen existing procedures and systems to detect and prosecute criminal behavior on the Internet. Most European countries are a part of this bloc,

including Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro being among the few exceptions.

Countries in this bloc are committed to protecting their citizens from the harmful effects of criminal activity online. They have enacted laws and regulations, invested in law enforcement and social welfare programs, and cooperated with international organizations to combat terrorism and organized crime. While they are not immune to these threats, they are taking steps to mitigate them and to make their countries safer.

### Internet-browsing countries with low rates of education and employment

Largely located in the regions of Latin America and Asia, countries in this bloc are the most widely affected by the problem of online recruitment. Poor social conditions, marginalized groups, and economic uncertainty are all factors that lead people to turn to radical ideas and seek insecure jobs on the Internet. These countries tend to be plagued by inequality and a digital divide. This means there is a stark social and economic contrast between the population that uses the web and the population that cannot use the web.<sup>136</sup> People who do get Internet in these countries do not have access to high-speed broadband. When adopting the Internet, these countries benefited greatly from the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is estimated that 466 million people began to use the Internet due to the pandemic.<sup>137</sup>

Countries in this bloc include India, the country with the second-most presence on the Internet, with over 836 million users, accounting for 59 percent of the country’s population.<sup>138</sup> It is estimated that 70 percent of the country’s adult population does not have a secondary education.<sup>139</sup> This also includes the bloc of Latin American countries such as Colombia and Mexico. These two states have largely unequal societies, high crime rates due to drug-related violence, and over 55 percent of their

134 Bhatia and Ghanem, *How do education and unemployment affect support for violent extremism?*

135 Vision of humanity, “Global terrorism index,” accessed August 18, 2023, <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/global-terrorism-index/>.

136 Landry Signé, “Fixing the global digital divide and digital access gap,” *Brookings*, July 25, 2023, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/fixing-the-global-digital-divide-and-digital-access-gap/>.

137 Signé, “Fixing the global digital divide and digital access gap.”

138 International Telecommunication Union, “Measuring digital development: facts and figures 2021,” accessed August 18, 2023, <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/facts/default.aspx>.

139 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, “Education at a glance: 2019,” accessed August 18, 2023, [https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2019\\_CN\\_IND.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2019_CN_IND.pdf).

population online.<sup>140</sup> Iran has a staggering 88.8 percent of its population on the Internet and an unemployment rate of over 10 percent.<sup>141</sup> Nigeria has the highest number of Internet users in Africa (an estimated 136 million), but continues to have an alarming unemployment index. Many Nigerian jobs have not returned after the pandemic, and the country is estimated to reach an unemployment rate of 41 percent by the end of 2023.<sup>142</sup> These countries should be playing the most active role in the fight against online radicalization and recruitment. This is where collaboration between different bodies must be ensured. Government initiatives, community programs, and online campaigns are vital to promoting counter-narratives. A special emphasis on education and employment must also be made. This is the root cause of the problem. If these countries are to accomplish the protection and proper use of their online spaces, it is necessary that they first ensure a proper quality of life for all of their inhabitants.

### **Countries with very limited access to the Internet**

Composed mainly of developing states, this bloc refers to all the countries that are not at risk of having their populations recruited for criminal activity over the Internet. They rarely have access to the Internet to begin with. In April 2023, there were 5.18 billion Internet users worldwide, amounting to 64.6 percent of the global population.<sup>143</sup> Most of the missing thirty-five percent reside in Asia and the Pacific. The 2021 estimate for the percentage of Internet users was 64.3 percent, and the estimate in Africa was only 39.7 percent.<sup>144</sup> This bloc must determine strategies to expand upon current efforts to provide their inhabitants with access to the web. As they construct their connected networks, however, they must implement

innovative measures to prevent them from becoming plagued by criminal activity.

Many countries that lack access to the Internet also have very high rates of violence, organized crime, and terrorism. Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso, for example, rank among the countries with the most terrorism according to Vision of Humanity's Global Terrorism Index.<sup>145</sup> They also rank among the countries with the lowest percentages of Internet access worldwide.<sup>146</sup> Guinea only has 20 percent of its population online. Somalia only has an alarming 1.7 percent. Both countries suffer from high levels of recruitment for maritime piracy and paramilitary groups that carry out attacks against their own populations.<sup>147</sup> The right steps must be taken to prevent these groups from finding footing as the online presence of their countries begins to grow. This way, these countries might be able to avoid the same mistakes that Internet-browsing countries have been experiencing for the past thirty years.

Another aspect of the lack of internet access to consider is governmental regulation. As these countries gain access to the internet, many of their governments have full control over their internet usage. For example, Myanmar has seen a massive spike in internet usage. In 2013, only two percent of Myanmar's population was using the internet, and by 2021, 44 percent was reportedly using the internet.<sup>148</sup> However, this progress has not come without consequences. UN experts have found that Myanmar's military junta is "orchestrating an online campaign of terror and weaponizing social media platforms to crush democratic opposition."<sup>149</sup> Pro-junta actors have taken advantage of websites like Telegram to spread hate speech and violent content and threaten women's safety by publishing private information, such as names and addresses,

140 International Telecommunication Union, "Measuring digital development: facts and figures 2021."

141 International Telecommunication Union, "Measuring digital development: facts and figures 2021."

142 Anozie Egole, "Nigerian unemployment rate to hit 41% in 2023 – KPMG," *Punch Newspapers*, April 11, 2023, <https://punchng.com/nigerian-unemployment-rate-to-hit-41-in-2023-kpmg>.

143 "Number of Internet and social media users worldwide as of April 2023," Statista, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/>.

144 International Telecommunication Union, "Measuring digital development: facts and figures 2021."

145 Vision of humanity, "Global terrorism index," accessed August 18, 2023, <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/global-terrorism-index/>.

146 International Telecommunication Union, "Measuring digital development: facts and figures 2021."

147 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Maritime Crime," accessed June 21, 2023, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/piracy/index.html>.

148 The World Bank, "Individuals Using the Internet (% of Population) - Myanmar," accessed September 2, 2023, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=MM>

149 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Myanmar: Social media companies must stand up to junta's online terror campaign, say UN experts," Press Release, March 13, 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/myanmar-social-media-companies-must-stand-juntas-online-terror-campaign-say>.

accompanied by calls for violence and arrest by the junta.<sup>150</sup> Though governmental control can be an avenue to prevent terrorism from spreading online, it is not a foolproof prevention method due to circumstances like those in Myanmar.

## Committee Mission

The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice serves as the United Nations' main body for preventing all crime worldwide. Alongside the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, it has been spotlighting crimes committed over the Internet for several years.<sup>151</sup> The partnership between the CCPCJ and UNODC aims to counteract organized crime and prevent its expansion. They are well experienced when handling organized crime. Whether it be international terrorists, domestic terrorists, street gangs, or drug cartels, this committee is meant to address it. They are currently in the process of developing stronger measures to fight the presence of these groups online.<sup>152</sup> However, these measures take time to be fully implemented and, with the constantly changing landscape of the Internet, require the full cooperation of the commission's member states and private entities such as internet providers, technology companies, and social media platforms.

This commission's mandate allows it to review and improve the systems put in place to combat crime. It must ensure that all procedures within these systems are fair and efficient.<sup>153</sup> It also has the faculty to carry out international actions to prevent national and transnational crimes.<sup>154</sup> As a whole, the CCPCJ is aimed at the realization of a safe and secure society. This should be a society that properly implements the technological innovations that have been provided to it by science. This commission must remember all the positive potential the Internet holds as one of the most revolutionary tools for international cooperation and communication.

When crafting policies to address online radicalization and recruitment, delegates must keep in mind the vital role that the Internet has played in the spread of freedom of speech in many countries where said human rights would otherwise be limited. Delegates are expected to ponder at which point it is that one user's freedom can become harmful to that of others.

This commission seeks to establish holistic solutions focused on improving the existing frameworks in place to prevent the spread of misinformation and propaganda online. It must also lay the groundwork for establishing new procedures to identify and prosecute users who use the web with criminal intentions. If channeled correctly, the same technology that allows criminals to recruit people on the other side of the world will be the one to put an end to their criminal activities. Even though the newer generations cannot remember a world without it, the Internet is still a relatively new invention. Online communities continue in their infancy, and so do the measures put in place thus far to protect the safety of their users. The Internet has proven to be a marvelous, world-changing tool that has made lives easier and brought people closer together. It is not inherently a good or bad thing. Much like any invention in the history of humanity, the true consequences of its use depend on the hands it falls into. It is the mission of the United Nations and its member countries to prevent radical and criminal presence. Creating a safer online space will create a more secure and better society. Once an online space free of crime has been ensured, humanity can take full advantage of the limitless potential offered by the Internet.

150 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Myanmar: Social media companies must stand up to junta's online terror campaign, say UN experts," Press Release, March 13, 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/myanmar-social-media-companies-must-stand-juntas-online-terror-campaign-say>.

151 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *The use of the Internet for terrorist purposes* (New York: United Nations, 2012), [https://www.unodc.org/documents/terrorism/Publications/Use\\_of\\_Internet\\_for\\_Terrorist\\_Purposes/ebook\\_use\\_of\\_the\\_Internet\\_for\\_terrorist\\_purposes.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/terrorism/Publications/Use_of_Internet_for_Terrorist_Purposes/ebook_use_of_the_Internet_for_terrorist_purposes.pdf).

152 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *The use of the Internet for terrorist purposes*

153 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice* (Vienna: UNODC, 2019), [https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/19-10645\\_CCPCJ.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/19-10645_CCPCJ.pdf).

154 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice*

## Research and Preparation Questions

Your dais has prepared the following research and preparation questions as a means of providing guidance for your research process. These questions should be carefully considered, as they embody some of the main critical thought and learning objectives surrounding your topic.

### Topic A

1. What type of justice system does your country use and how do they deal with convicted criminals? Is there a federal prison system, or are they private jails, or other forms of detainment centers?
2. What is the rate of repeat offenders in your country?
3. What is the death and injury rate of convicted criminals in your country? Have any policies been enacted to address this?
4. Are there notable cases where jails or prisons have been shut down due to abuse of prisons? What actions did your country take to punish those responsible?
5. What are your country's laws on restorative justice? Are there any legal requirements directly related to restorative principles in prison systems?
6. How does your country usually treat and view criminals? Are convicted people able to lead a life once out of prison?

### Topic B

1. Does your country have widespread access to the Internet, and what measures have been taken to bridge any digital divide that affects access to online platforms?
2. How has the Internet, including various online platforms, influenced the way in which crime is carried out in your country? What are specific examples of criminal activities facilitated or influenced by online platforms?
3. If any, what policies or regulations has your country implemented to address the misuse of online platforms for recruitment by terrorist, gang, and organized crime groups?
4. Are there any notable cases or examples in your country where effective policies or interventions have been implemented to counter online recruitment? What were the key factors contributing to their success?
5. How does your country collaborate with online service providers, such as social media platforms, to combat online recruitment and the spread of extremist ideologies?

## Important Documents

### Topic A

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