



## II. SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE TOPIC GUIDE

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PRESENTED BY



## II. SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE

### A. The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict (31)

The role of diamonds in fueling conflict was initially brought to the attention of the United Nations General Assembly in 2000 at the request of the United Kingdom. It was discussed from the fifty-fifth to the sixtieth sessions of the UN. At the fifty-fifth session of the UN, the UN passed resolution 55/56 on the topic. This resolution recognized the negative impact of conflict diamonds, known commonly as blood diamonds, on the people of the diamond mining nations of Africa. While the resolution did recognize that most diamonds in the diamond trade are from legitimate sources, the body also recognized that rebel groups use the sale of rough diamonds to fuel their military activities with the intention of undermining legitimate governments.<sup>5</sup>

Within resolution 55/56, the UN moved to embrace and further the efforts of the Kimberley Process, a multilateral trade regime, to ensure valid certification of diamonds as legitimate on the international market. The UN further requested in subsequent sessions that the members of the Kimberley Process submit findings and report updates to the UN. In 2006, Ambassador Outlule of Botswana reported that the Kimberley Process had been met with considerable progress. The nations facing the greatest difficulties have largely returned to peace and stability, including Angola, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The improvements the Kimberley Process brought were not absolute however, with Ambassador Outlule acknowledging difficulties with diamond mines in Côte d'Ivoire.

While significant progress has been made with regard to national governmental buy-in for the Kimberley Process worldwide, concerns remain. One of the largest concerns with sourcing conflict-free diamonds lies with the companies that trade in diamonds. Diamonds have continued to fund and fuel conflicts in the Central African Republic and Zimbabwe. The Global Witness, amongst other organizations, call for the diamond industry itself to reform in order to ensure continued improvements globally.<sup>6</sup> Companies like Brilliant Earth have begun to use very specific, highly vetted sources for their diamonds, attempting to push industry change. As a company, they are also critical of the shortcomings of the Kimberley Process.<sup>7</sup>

An additional and final shortcoming of the Kimberley Process is that it is singularly focused on curbing the sale of rough diamonds that benefit rebel organizations. Because of this, conflicts in Zimbabwe that are fueled by the government and the national military go ignored by the Process and diamonds that lead to the suffering of individuals in the Marange region of Zimbabwe have been officially sanctioned by the Kimberley Process.<sup>8</sup> Conflict diamonds are still an issue, over two decades after the UN first approached the topic. Corporations, national governments, and rebel groups have all benefited from the sale of conflict diamonds.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/ga/62/plenary/diamonds/bkg.shtml>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/conflict-diamonds/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.brilliantearth.com/news/kimberley-process-not-conflict-free/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/05/10/diamond-trade-still-fuels-human-suffering>

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### B. The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity (133)

The Responsibility to Protect, or the “R2P principle,” is an international norm that affirms each state's responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.<sup>9</sup> It also affirms the supporting role of the international community to uphold this responsibility and take collective action in the face of such atrocities. It was endorsed by the General Assembly in the 2005 World Outcome Document.<sup>10</sup>

While the United Nations has vowed to uphold fundamental human rights since its inception, it has also vowed to protect a state's right to sovereignty. These rights are sometimes in tension, which creates ambiguity around the role of international intervention where a sovereign state is unwilling or unable. The devastating wars in the Balkans and in Rwanda in the 1990s bolstered political support for international intervention, leading to R2P and a strengthened UN mandate.

While the Responsibility to Protect was widely supported in principle, its implementation has proved challenging. In 2011, the United Nations Security Council invoked R2P and authorized NATO Intervention in Libya, in order to prevent civilians from the Qaddafi regime's aggression. However, this intervention led to a politicized regime change that proved destabilizing for the country. This made Security Council members, Russia and China, wary of any future invocation of R2P. Both have since exercised their veto power to prevent intervention, notably in the conflict in Syria.<sup>11</sup>

In the current global context, the interpretation and application of R2P remains critical. The conflict in Gaza highlights the tension between state sovereignty and the duty to uphold fundamental human rights. The international community's appetite to intervene, or not, will determine the future of international peace and security in the Middle East and beyond.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.globalr2p.org/what-is-r2p/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml>

<sup>11</sup> <https://world101.cfr.org/understanding-international-system/building-blocks/rise-and-fall-responsibility-protect>

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### C. The Situation in Afghanistan (37)

On August 15, 2021, Afghanistan's government was overthrown by the Taliban. Prior to the recent political instability, 18.4 million (just under half of the country's population) people were in need of direct humanitarian assistance.<sup>12</sup> Now, an estimated 28.3 million (two-thirds of the country's population) civilians are in need of humanitarian assistance, a result of international isolation and economic uncertainty brought by the Taliban's governance.<sup>13</sup> This number continues to rise as a result of climate change which brought flash flooding, droughts, and earthquakes.<sup>14</sup> In addition, economic hardships have led to 90% of the country facing food insecurity.<sup>15</sup> Since the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, that eventually led to the removal of the Taliban from power, it is estimated that 66,000 members of the Afghani military and police were killed, along with 47,245 civilians, and an estimated 51,191 Taliban and other opposition fighters.<sup>16</sup>

The Taliban has promised not to return to their previously brutal rule of Afghanistan that lasted from 1996 until the US invasion toppled their government in 2001. Under this new Taliban rule, Afghanistan has experienced many human rights violations. First, state-sponsored brutality against women, including a ban on access to education. This includes strict rules that do not allow women to leave their homes without being accompanied by a male family member. Despite this, international watchdogs have observed the closing of shelters for survivors of gender-based violence, as well as the release of perpetrators of violent acts against women since the Taliban has reclaimed power.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the Taliban has limited Afghan's freedom of speech through the shutdown of over 300 media outlets.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, in the past year, the Taliban has started holding public floggings against those who were affiliated with the previous government and held its first confirmed public execution this December.<sup>19</sup> In the face of the violence and turmoil caused by the political instability in the country, over 8 million Afghans have been displaced, which includes 3.2 million internally displaced.<sup>20</sup>

Since the US invasion in 2001, Afghanistan's economy has become increasingly dependent on the U.S. dollar, and the country has over \$10 billion in reserves held by its central bank that cannot be

<sup>12</sup> <https://unocha.exposure.co/nine-things-you-need-to-know-about-the-situation-in-afghanistan-right-now>

<sup>13</sup> [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/stories/2-years-after-taliban-takeover-afghanistans-population-need-urgent-humanitarian-assistance\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/stories/2-years-after-taliban-takeover-afghanistans-population-need-urgent-humanitarian-assistance_en)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/afghanistan/report-afghanistan/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan>

<sup>16</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-business-afghanistan-43d8f53b35e80ec18c130cd683e1a38f>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/12/afghanistan-survivors-of-gender-based-violence-abandoned-following-taliban-takeover-new-research/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12013942>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/20/afghanistans-taliban-publicly-executes-man-convicted-of-murder>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-explained/#:~:text=Today%2C%20more%20than%208%20million,being%20stretched%20to%20the%20limit.>

accessed. This is largely due to \$7 billion being held by the US Federal Reserve bank in New York.<sup>21</sup> The U.S. and the International Monetary Fund have frozen the country's assets and reserves and blocked the Taliban from accessing the country's reserves, as well as the IMF's assets, in addition to the sanctions already in place on the Taliban. Currently, half of this money has been placed in a Swiss based trust fund, and the other half is being sought after in lawsuits concerning the September 11th attack.<sup>22</sup> The U.S. supports a return on the money once it is sure that the money will be free from any political and terrorist interference. The UN requests this committee to come to a resolution that will support and reduce the humanitarian aid Afghanistan depends on in the long term for the welfare of the Afghani people, reinstate the protection of human rights, sustain livelihoods, and stabilize the nation.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.businessinsider.com/federal-reserve-bank-of-new-york-holds-billions-from-afghanistan-2021-8>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/review-found-afghan-central-bank-lacks-independence-taliban-us-watchdog-2023-08-08/>

