

Committee: Youth Assembly

Issue: Press Censorship and political correctness

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Position: Head and Co-Head

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Dimitris Alexopoulos and I have the highest honor to serve as the Head of Youth Assembly Cabinet 2. I am a 10th grader at Champion School, Palini, Athens. I have participated in 8 conferences as a delegate. This will be my first time chairing and I am very excited. Now I will let the co-author of this study guide introduce himself.

My name is Alexandros Ballis and I also have the greatest honor to serve as the Co-Head of Cabinet 1 of the Youth Assembly in this year's DSTMUN. I am a 10th grader at the German School of Thessaloniki, and I've participated in 5 conferences so far, and this upcoming conference will be my second time chairing!

We are sure that most of you aren't familiar with the Rules of Procedure, so we will try to do our best to ensure that this conference will be an unforgettable experience and it will induct you in the interesting MUN world.

Of course, it's understandable to feel nervous at first, since some of you may not have had the opportunity to speak in public before, but we can assure you that it all goes away after the first speech. So, don't hesitate! The MUN community is a friendly one and everyone was once a beginner. So we would like to encourage you all to participate in some way.

This study guide will provide you some basic knowledge on the topic of: "Press censorship and political correctness" and explain the important aspects of the matter. However, be reminded that this study guide is anything but enough for your research. You should conduct further research in order to find your view on the topic. We're sure that you all will be able to participate because in the Youth Assembly you have to express your opinion, and you don't represent a country.

Prior to the conference, you are expected to write one opening speech and one action paper per topic!

If you have any questions concerning the topic or the Rules of Procedure don't hesitate to contact us on our emails: alexandros.ballis@yahoo.com, dalexopoulos@campion.edu.gr. They are always open for you!

Looking forward to a great conference,

Dimitris Alexopoulos and Alexandros Ballis

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The topic of press censorship and political correctness is not only interesting but also relevant, especially in our time where everyone can express their opinion on a global scale due to the proliferation of the internet and social media. Global internet access and social media usage is at its peak. Political correctness was a big talking point in the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, in this way solidifying it as a global and at the same time national issue.

There are a number of varying opinions on whether there should be political correctness concerning the media and on to what degree. Many have suggested that the mainstream media and social media platforms should censor content that is not politically correct. (E.g. YouTube). However, there is strong and passionate support on both sides. Especially in countries where freedom of speech is a fundamental right and is protected by their respective national Constitutions like in Greece or the US. The degree of political correctness that is expected to be used and is used varies country by country. This issue can become dangerous when you start talking about censorship.

An area of focus during the conference should be the extent to which free speech is acceptable. Many believe that free speech should not be limited in any way and people should be allowed to say anything even if it is blatantly hateful or discriminatory. Others outline specific limits of free speech, believing that anything that is considered to constitute hate speech ought to be penalized and even criminally punishable. The problem in this notion, lay in the different perspectives of what can be perceived as hateful, as it can be rather subjective and can change from person to person. To add to that, difficulties are amplified by the lack of clarity and preciseness in the definition of free speech. Political correctness ties in with this as it is a form of "protecting" people from hateful and offensive speech. Some are against it as they believe it shields people from the facts and truth and others believe it is crucial to a civilized functioning society.

Moving on to the topic of press censorship we see another case of conflicting viewpoints. There are many reasons why things are censored. Some move severe

than others. A common reason is protecting the youth or the general public from viewing material considered obscene or inappropriate (many times due to nudity, strong language and violence being present). Another one is maintaining political correctness. This is more of a slippery slope as it directly opposes the fundamentals of freedom of speech and expression. While both these reasons might be considered logical or reasonable censorship has been done for much more sinister reasons. Some of them include deceiving the public in order to hide something or to shift public opinion, disguising the true nature of things, suppressing political opposition. Throughout history there have been many examples of this happening. It is crucial that the media remains uncensored and independent to preserve freedom and for the ideas of everyone young or old, rich or poor to be heard.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Political correctness

Language that seems intended to give the least amount of offense, especially when describing groups identified by external markers such as race, gender, culture, or sexual orientation. The concept has been discussed, disputed, criticized, and satirized by commentators from across the political spectrum. The term has often been used derisively to ridicule the notion that altering language usage can change the public's perceptions and beliefs as well as influence outcomes¹

Politically correct

Conforming to a belief that language and practices which could offend political sensibilities (as in matters of sex or race) should be eliminated²

Censorship

The suppression or proscription of speech or writing that is deemed obscene, indecent, or unduly controversial³

¹ "political correctness | Definition, Origin, History, & Facts | Britannica.com." <https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-correctness>. Accessed 25 Jun. 2019.

² "Politically Correct | Definition of Politically Correct by Merriam-Webster." <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politically%20correct>. Accessed 25 Jun. 2019.

³ "Press censorship legal definition of Press censorship - Legal Dictionary." <https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Press+censorship>. Accessed 25 Jun. 2019

Media censorship

Supervision and control of the information and ideas that are circulated among the people within a society. It refers to the examination of books, periodicals, plays, films, television and radio programs, news reports, and other communication media for the purpose of altering or suppressing parts thought to be objectionable or offensive⁴

Hate speech

Public speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group based on something such as race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation (= the fact of being gay, etc.)⁵

Press

The gathering and publishing or broadcasting of news⁶

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Press formats across history

To understand press censorship, it is important to know how press was published, by who, in what formats and how it has evolved and changed across history. The news first started to be distributed by word of mouth and spread from person to person. Messengers were often used. Around the 18th century the news started being printed on newspapers. Journalists earning the name “the press” from the printing presses used to create newspapers. As technology developed and evolved so did, they ways of spreading the news.

The invention of the radio was one of the ways this happened. Once the radio became affordable it was used as a way to spread the news in the form of news programs and broadcast. Radio news started making an appearance in the early 1920s. The radio made it easy for people that could not read or did not want to put

⁴ "Defining Censorship."

<http://media.okstate.edu/faculty/jsenat/censorship/defining.htm>. Accessed 25 Jun. 2019

⁵ "HATE SPEECH | definition in the Cambridge English Dictionary."

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/hate-speech>. Accessed 25 Jun. 2019.

⁶ "Press | Definition of Press by Merriam-Webster." <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/press>. Accessed 30 Jun. 2019.

the time and effort into it to learn the news. It also made it possible for people in more remote rural areas to have access to the media.

As the television was invented it further expanded the way news could be spread. Television news programs started appearing around 1950 and quickly became one of the most used ways people got informed. It made for more informative news reports as audiovisual media (video) could be used often showing live (right as they are happening) events. It also allowed politicians to connect better with their target audiences and constituents.

Finally, we move on to current times of the internet and social media. The internet radically changed how people got informed. It allowed people from all over the world to instantly access a wealth of information from the comfort of their own homes. It also allowed individuals not affiliated or tied to big news agencies to share their opinions and even start their own news shows, online newspapers and blogs. This was also aided by the invention and proliferation of social media. The internet and social media can be considered an ideal content delivery platform by some. As it is easily accessible and instantaneous.⁷

Methods of censorship

Understanding the methods of censorship used is crucial to be able to solve the issue. In order for censorship to be stopped being able to recognize when it occurs and how it occurs. This is necessary to form effective solutions to the problem.

One of the oldest ways of censoring the media is destruction of print media. One of its most publicly known forms being book burning. It was an effective way of controlling what sort of ideologies and facts people are exposed to, especially before the advent of the internet which basically rendered this method obsolete. By controlling what content people are exposed too you can control how they think and which ideologies they support. This is the reason why book burning, and destruction of print media was used as a political weapon to sway the public's opinion on certain ideas. One of the most prevalent examples of this taking place is in WW2 Germany by the Nazi party. The Nazis burned thousands of books in order to eliminate "foreign influence". This was really done to prevent outside influences from changing the peoples' minds against the Nazis' horrific policies.

Another method of censorship is shutting down or even controlling the mainstream media outlets/agencies. Throughout history one of the ways of

⁷ "Media: How has media changed and developed ... - Lumen Learning."
<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/americangovernment/chapter/the-evolution-of-the-media/>. Accessed 30 Jun. 2019.

effectively censoring content that the government does not agree with is by shutting down media outlets. This can be done by military or police force, threats of prosecution, criminal prosecution and legal action and economic sanctions. An example of this is a case in Turkey where 15 media outlets were shut down due to opposing political views.⁸ Sometimes mainstream media is controlled economically where the state provides a large amount of the funding to the respective outlet. Such media outlets can be used to portray the image of a country and the ideas a government wants show.⁹

Lastly one of the most powerful methods of media censorship is by controlling people's access to the internet and censoring social media. This can be an immensely effective method of controlling the flow of information. In recent years the internet is the top choice for everyday people to get their news and research information. If access to the internet is limited to specific websites (some purposefully containing misinformation or political propaganda) it can become a powerful propaganda weapon. The same goes for social media. Lots of people use social media to voice their opinion. If their opinion is censored, then political opposition to the state's policies that might be detrimental to the public will be suppressed. This is why this method of censorship is so dangerous. Because it is easy to implement, can easily go unnoticed and most importantly it takes away the voice of the common person, the everyday man/ woman. We have already seen the damaging effect this has had in China, where political opposition is suppressed, and people are afraid to voice their views. This can be greatly attributed to the government's internet censorship machine The Great Firewall of China.¹⁰

These are a few of the methods governments and other parties censor the media. These are not all the methods and there are many variations. It is important to understand the basic characteristics of censorship in order to be able to detect it. It is recommended that you do your own research to make sure you understand the full extent of the issue.

⁸ "Turkey shuts 15 media outlets and arrests opposition editor | World" 30 Oct. 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/30/turkey-shuts-media-outlets-terrorist-links-civil-servants-press-freedom>. Accessed 30 Jun. 2019.

⁹ "Russia Uses State Television to Sway Opinion at Home and Abroad" 30 May. 2014, <https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/russia-uses-state-television-to-sway-opinion-at-home-and-abroad-a-971971.html>. Accessed 30 Jun. 2019.

¹⁰ "The Great Firewall of China - The Washington Post." 5 Nov. 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/the-great-firewall-of-china/2018/11/05/5dc0f85a-e16d-11e8-ba30-a7ded04d8fac_story.html. Accessed 1 Jul. 2019.

Arguments for and against political correctness

There are arguments on both sides of the spectrum on whether political correctness is good and if we should use it. Some believe we should use it all the time, some think we should only use it in specific situations and some support that we should never use political correctness. It is important to understand both sides of the argument to form an informed opinion on the matter and be able to effectively solve the problem.

Some of the arguments for political correctness are is that avoiding offensive language and avoiding controversy can help us all connect better especially with marginalized communities. Some also support that when we are more politically correct, we are more respectful towards each other. Further on being politically correct avoids offending sensitive groups of people that may be easily offended. Supporters of political correctness believe that these groups should be shielded from things that may offend them (thus using politically correct speech).¹²

There are also strong arguments against the use of political correctness. One of the major ones is that it limits freedom of speech. Some people believe that freedom of speech is limited when political correctness is used. That sensitive issues cannot be discussed under the guise of avoiding causing offense and harm to another person. It is also said that political correctness makes arguments less effective and direct, having to mask the true nature of a statement in order to avoid offence. Lastly some support that it is creating a generation of young adults that are too sensitive and too easily offended.¹³

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Saudi Arabia

Since Mohammad has been appointed as Crown Prince in Saudi Arabia the abuses against journalists has been increased. The number of journalists and bloggers in Saudi prisons has doubled since Bin Salman became crown prince. The

¹² "Why I choose to be politically correct - The Chronicle - Duke Chronicle." 16 Jan. 2019, <https://www.dukechronicle.com/article/2019/01/duke-university-why-i-choose-to-be-politically-correct>. Accessed 1 Jul. 2019.

¹³ "What Is Political Correctness? Definition, Pros, and Cons - ThoughtCo." 25 May. 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-political-correctness-4178215>. Accessed 1 Jul. 2019.

reason for their detention and the place where they are being held are usually kept secret at the time of their arrest. Many journalists have "disappeared" in this way only to reappear some time later in a Saudi prison. The Saudi government has nowadays under control, not only the traditional media, but also the social media.

China

Chinese government achieved to control the news and information and also surveillance of its citizens. China's state and privately-owned media are now under the control of the political party in power. More than 60 bloggers and journalists are imprisoned. Citizens in China may be imprisoned if they comment on the news, if they send messages or even if they share content in social media.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

Since 2012 all the citizens of North Korea are being kept in a state of ignorance. The regime has achieved almost complete control of the files transmitted and communications over the national internet. The only permitted source of official news is the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). Although Agency France - Presse is cooperating with KCNA and providing some further external news to the citizens, the regime continues to control the available information and news sources, which means that there is no privacy on the internet.

Norway

The freedom of the media has started in 1814 and it was protected by Article 100 of the Norwegian constitution. Nowadays, the media are free, and the journalists are not subject to censorship or political pressure. Additionally, violence against journalists and media censorship is a very rare phenomenon. Since 2013 Norway is the first country in the World Press Freedom Index.

Russian Federation

Since 2011 the Russian Federation has adopted draconian laws, which have grown the pressure on independent media. Most of the independent media have been either under the regimes control or they have been throttled down of existence. TV channels are propagandizing the viewers and more journalists are now in prisons than at every other time (fall of the Soviet Union etc.). Kremlin managed to have access to the Telegram, an instant messaging service, something which has shown that there isn't any privacy on the internet. Murders and attacks against journalists are still going unpunished.

United States of America (USA)

The first amendment to the US Constitution is protecting Freedom in the press. Although, since 2017 press freedom has continued to decrease. According to the World Press Freedom Index by Reporters without Borders the US ranks behind most other Western nations, but ahead of most Asian, African and South American countries. A study in the US has proved that 80% of Americans believe that political correctness is a problem, and it shouldn't be used.

Amnesty International

Amnesty international is a non-governmental organization, based in London. It is focused on protecting human rights. Amnesty international is criticizing all countries violating the human rights of journalists, and the ones that intrude the freedom of speech. Amnesty International has revealed the Turkish prison for journalists and discovered harassment of journalists in a lot of countries such as Myanmar, France etc.

Reporters without Borders (RWB)

RWB is a non-governmental organization based in Paris. RWBs main goal is to protect freedom of speech, freedom of information and freedom of the press. They are providing financial, psychological and material assistance to all journalists who are working in danger areas. At the same time, they are focused on new media and censorship and especially censorship in the internet. Each January the World Press Freedom Index is published by the RWB. It includes statistics and reports about freedom enjoyed by the media in up to 170 countries.

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

This non-governmental organization was created 38 years ago in New York. The main goal of this organization is to promote freedom of the press and protect journalists' rights. A lot of journalists are calling this organization "Journalism's Red Cross". It publishes Attacks on the press, an annual survey about freedom of the press.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
339 BC	Greek philosopher, Socrates, stated that the Greek state is trying to censor his philosophical teachings and was

	sentenced to death. This is the oldest example of press censorship.
1973	The term “political correctness” appeared in a U.S Supreme judgment of a political lawsuit.
1934	The New York Times reported that Nazi Germany was granting reporting permits “only to pure ‘Aryans’ whose opinions are politically correct.
1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed
1970	The American New Left began using the term “politically correct”.
1975	The modern use of the term “political correctness” in the United Kingdom began.
1996	Umberto Eco stated that political correctness is being developed as a new form of fundamentalism.
2004	The Australian Labor leader Mark Latham described conservative calls for “civility” in politics as “the new political correctness”.
2016	The Republican candidate of the United States presidential elections, Donald Trump, used political correctness as a common target in his rhetoric.
2018	Resolution 33/2 was signed by the Human Rights Council.

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Report A/HRC/39/23

A/HRC/39/23 is a report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on available mechanisms concerned with ensuring the safety of journalists. It also providing some solutions in order to limit attacks against journalists and protect them from any torture.

United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 19 of United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights is recognizing freedom of opinion and freedom of expression. Namely, everyone should have the right to express his thoughts without getting imprisoned or tortured. This article is also protecting freedom of information, as it states, that everyone should have access to information and ideas through any media everywhere around the world.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Although a lot of countries have implemented freedom of speech and freedom of information laws in their constitutions, in some other countries journalists can't express their opinion. Some countries, such as but not limited to DPRK and China, don't provide their citizens information from the internet and access to social media. A lot of non-governmental organizations have tried to protect journalists and negotiate with countries, in order to publish laws, which are going to recognize freedom of speech and opinion as well as freedom of information. Most of the time, the negotiations are in deadlock. This means, that freedom of the media, information and speech aren't being granted in every single country. The Human Rights Council and the United Nations have also published some treaties, which are recognizing freedom of media, but they haven't been implemented by all countries. Lastly, a lot of governments have used political correctness in order to treat equally all of their citizens and help them integrate smoothly in the society. Political correctness is also a way to "attract voters", and some politicians have used it in that way. A research has shown, that 80% of Americans believe that political correctness is a problem in their country. However, political correctness reduced social inequality, which is something very positive for a country.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

When conducting your action paper, you should keep in mind that the Youth Assembly proposes solutions to Non-governmental organizations and young people. That means, that your solutions should be proposals that young people are able to do. You should mention governmental organizations or UN bodies only exceptionally, since then your action paper won't be realistic.

You should ensure that the public has access to a pluralistic number of sources to get informed, in order to avoid fake news etc. Also, the government ownership of media should be discouraged, and the freedom of speech should be

recognized by all governments. Furthermore, you should examine the deeper causes of the rise of media censorship and the consequences of such phenomena. Should media censorship be legal? Are governments allowed to censor the media? That's some questions you can answer and add in your action paper.

In addition, you should examine the political correctness, and how governments can use it, in order to prevent racial hatred and xenophobia. Political correctness may be used in public speeches etc., in order for the citizens to be familiarized with other nationalities. Also, in countries such as U.S.A, political correctness should be necessary, wherefore a lot of people with different nationalities live there.

Additionally, we should think about the role, the NGOs play, in facilitating Press Freedom and also, what can members states do at a national level to support journalistic integrity and safety. Nowadays, there are a lot of NGOs, aiming at the protection of Press Freedom. At last, we must take into consideration the influence, that the international community should have on domestic laws concerning media censorship and political correctness. Should NGOs have influence on domestic laws? Are international laws concerning media censorship and press freedom going to be beneficial for each nation?

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