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RESEARCH REPORT

COMMITTEE: HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

ISSUE: OIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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INTRODUCTION:

The Human Rights Council which replaced the Council for Human Rights in 2006, addresses issues surrounding conflicts that could threaten human rights and addresses rights-related topics in specific countries. The UNHRC is composed of 47 members elected every year for a three year period by the General Assembly. There are 13 countries per continent. This council works closely with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Oil has, in recent decades, become an increasingly crucial and rare resource. It is used as a source of energy, to power the vast majority of the +1 billion cars in the world, for example. It is also used to manufacture goods such as fabrics, plastic and asphalt among others. However this resource is in limited supply and its constant and rapid exploitation means that its rarity will soon become a problem. As a result oil is at the root of many world conflicts today. Terrorist groups and countries aim to control this resource, often putting the population's life and rights at risk. This is why the Human Rights Council takes a special interest in the effect of oil on human rights particularly in sensitive areas.

KEY TERMS

OIL REFINERY: An oil refinery or petroleum refinery is an industrial process plant where crude oil is processed and refined into more useful products such as petroleum naphtha, gasoline, diesel fuel, heating oil, kerosene and liquefied petroleum gas.

FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS: Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status. Universal human rights are often expressed and guaranteed by law, in the forms of treaties, customary international law, general principles and other sources of international law. International human rights law lays down obligations of Governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or group. (definition by the OHCHR)

SELF DETERMINATION: The process by which a country determines its own statehood and forms its own government.

EXPROPRIATION: The act of taking of privately owned property by a government to be used for the benefit of the public. In the United States, the government has the right to take property through eminent domain.

TIME LINE OF EVENTS

- ◆ 1890: The Royal Dutch Petroleum Co. was founded
- ◆ 1863: First antipollution bill preventing the running of tar and distillery
- ◆ 1902: The Texas Fuel Co. was founded. It soon changed its name to the Texas Co. and
- ◆ 1972: General Motors invented the first hybrid car
- ◆ 1907: Royal Dutch combines its oil operations with Shell Transport & Trading Co. to
- ◆ 1935: Jan 14, the oil pipeline from Iraq to the Mediterranean went into use
- ◆ 1945: UN is created
- ◆ 1953: Mar, The US CIA's Tehran station reported that an Iranian general had approached the US embassy for support in an army-led coup. Allen Dulles, director of the CIA, approved \$1 million to be used to help bring about the fall of Prime Minister Mossadegh. Pres. Eisenhower gave the CIA the permission to overthrow the elected government of PM Mohammad Mossadegh. Mossadegh had nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Co.
- ◆ 1973: Oil crisis due to OAPEC's oil embargo in reaction to the Arab Israeli conflict
- ◆ 1979: known as the second oil shock or crisis because of the decrease in oil production following the Iranian revolution
- ◆ 1990: Oil crisis due to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait but this only lasted 9 months which is small compared to the previous shocks
- ◆ 2006: UNHRC replaces the CHR
- ◆ 2014: ISIS takes over Iraq's largest oil refinery

MAJOR ACTORS

The ten richest oil countries according to Forbes: Qatar, Kuwait, The United Arab Emirates, Turkmenistan, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Canada, Brunei, Iraq.

All of them are involved in international oil trade and exchanges, and are committed to one or more trade organisations and alliances around the world.

These organisations have several aims, which vary depending on the member states and the economic context. Being part of an organisation is a way of gaining both attention and influence, and is therefore an opportunity to increase profits, as well as increasing their political and diplomatic impact on the leading countries of the globalised world.



OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development): It first appeared in 1957, under the Treaty of Rome, but was officially established in 1961. There were 20 founding members, but the organisation grew and now counts 34 members.

Officially, its main mission is to improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world, by collecting data, analysing it, and discussing their findings with the governments. This helps them to develop their economy, increase their growth, and encourage innovation. The OECD also created agencies such as the IEA.

IEA (International Energy Agency): It was created in response to the 1973 oil crisis and was originally designed to prevent another major disruption in oil supply, by co-ordinating the oil stocks. Nowadays however, it also promotes energy security, environmental protection and economic development.

There are 29 member countries that are all OECD members who import oil. They must abide by the IEA's policies, and their oil companies must abide by strict laws.

The IEA also works with emerging countries such as the BRICs, Indonesia, Mexico, Thailand, and the Middle East countries, which are major actors in the oil industry.

OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries): The OPEC was founded in September 1960 by five countries: Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. They were later joined by other oil exporting countries such as Qatar and Nigeria. Nowadays, the organisation has 12 members.

The aim of the OPEC is to coordinate its members' oil policies in order to control the market. The stability of prices depends on these countries, which has considerably increased their economic and political influence as well as their capacity to put pressure on others.

IPIECA (originally the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association, now the global oil and gas industry association for environmental and social issues): It was established in 1974, following the creation of the UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme). IPIECA is a communication hub and centre of shared knowledge; it represents the oil and gas industries on key global environmental and social issues. Its members account for over half of world oil production: it includes 37 companies (comprising all 6 Supermajors and 7 national oil companies), and 16 associations, forming a network which represents over 400 oil and gas companies. IPIECA aims to promote sustainable development, discussion and cooperation with governments.

Oil companies: Oil companies are extremely powerful and influential as well, and they use their money to lobby governments and international organisations.

Here are the 25 biggest oil companies in the world according to Forbes:

1. Saudi Ar-amco	2. Gazprom (Russia)	3. National Iranian Oil Co.	4. ExxonMobil (USA)	5. PetroChina
6. BP (UK)	7. Royal Dutch Shell	8. Pemex (Mexico)	9. Chevron	10. Kuwait Petroleum Corp.
11. Abu Dhabi National Oil Co.	12. Sonatrach (Algeria)	13. Total (France)	14. Petrobras (Brazil)	15. Rosneft (Russia)
16. Iraqi Oil Ministry	17. Qatar Petroleum	18. Lukoil (Russia)	19. Eni (Italy)	20. Statoil (Norway)
21. ConocoPhillips (USA)	22. Petroleos de Venezuela	23. Sinopec (China)	24. Nigerian National Petroleum	25. Petronas (Malaysia)

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Self-determination as well as access to health and to water are all basic human rights that are too often denied to populations in corrupt states. If profit is the first concern of a government, then society suffers.

Expropriation of property is used a lot today, in Peru for example. Better laws and jurisdiction about property and ownership of lands should be adopted in all the nations for the sake of the populations. Also, sanitary norms and regulations should be imposed on oil companies and industries to avoid further pollution of the environment and health problems affecting people living near polluted areas.

Agreements with oil companies, organisations and partisans of sustainability, as well as NGOs could also help governments to solve these issues.

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