

YUNMUN XXX

UNHRC

Topic 2: Human Rights Abuses Against People with Mental Illness

One of the fundamental and universal human rights is “a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25). The UNHRC understands that this right of health care includes freedom to control one’s health, as well as the ability to seek necessary medical care.¹ These rights encompass both physical health as well as mental health.

A troubling, and very prevalent phenomenon is the mistreatment and abuse faced by individuals suffering from mental illnesses. These human rights violations take many forms including lack of access to mental health care and treatment and discrimination. Individuals with mental health disabilities are “the most neglected, marginalized and vulnerable.”² People with mental disabilities are often not given the opportunity to live and work in their communities, and do not have accessible health care.

There are few, if any, countries that meet the humanitarian and health needs of individuals with mental disabilities. WHO’s investigation shows that close to a third of countries do not even have a designated budget to address the needs of individuals seeking mental health care.³ Far too often, individuals with mental illness are denied the opportunity to consent, and they are frequently coerced into treatment. Psychiatric institutions often become jails for the patients who are held there against their will. Many psychiatric institutions consistently violate their patients’ human rights and isolate them, restrain them, and keep them in unhygienic living environments with little access to their basic needs. Individuals with mental illnesses are often denied basic civic rights including the right to vote, and are not provided with equal opportunity to work.

A large contributing factor to these human rights violations are a lack of awareness and sensitivity, as well as directed stigma and discrimination.

For this topic, delegates should research and think about what the main human rights violations are against people with mental disabilities, and what can be done to remedy them. Most countries do not budget enough money for mental health resources; investigate the allocation of resources and

¹ Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

² Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Paul Hunt

³ Mental Health, Human Rights and Legislation: WHO’s Framework

if and how it should change. What should we demand countries do to solve these issues? How do we evaluate consent and protect against coercion? How can we tackle the gross human rights violations within psychiatric institutions?

Remember that you are representing the views of your country so make sure to research who your country's allies are, and your country's past record on this issue. Please also keep in mind that all papers will be checked by Turnitin and no plagiarism will be tolerated. Feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns to me via email at akelman1@mail.yu.edu.

Best,

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