Student Resource 5.1

Scenarios: Human Rights Violations

Student Name: Date:

Directions: Read each scenario. Then look at the list of articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights listed below and discuss with your group why you think the articles are being violated, and write down your ideas. Refer to Student Resource 5.2, Reference: Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as you work.

Mining for Gold in Mali

Mali is the third largest gold producer in Africa. Mali has artisanal mines, which are extremely dangerous and difficult to work in. Artisanal mines are small, often illegal, and operate with little or no machinery or safety procedures. Human Rights Watch estimates that 100,000–200,000 people work in Mali’s artisanal mines, including approximately 20,000 children.

The work includes digging mines with a pickax, lifting and carrying heavy bags of dirt that may contain gold, and then panning for gold using a process that involves hazardous chemicals that can poison the miners.

The average pay for adult workers is about US$1,500 per year. Children are often paid nothing other than a scavenged bag of dirt from the mine site. Children suffer from serious health issues related to hard labor.

* Article 23

Protests in Syria

In 2011, protests against longstanding and brutal governments erupted in countries around the Arab world. One of those countries was Syria, where the protests led to war.

A UN report in November 2011 stated that at that point children were detained and tortured because they had painted antigovernment graffiti on a wall. Unarmed protestors were shot and killed by government troops. Troops were told to disrupt protests and even to disrupt funeral processions for people who had been killed while protesting.

People were arrested and held without any explanation. Journalists and bloggers who tried to share information about the protests were arrested and held in jails. Detainees were tortured and force to sign confessions for crimes they did not commit. In addition to the clear physical dangers, many Syrians were suffering from mental health issues, such as depression, because of the violence in their country.

* Article 3
* Article 5
* Article 9
* Article 19
* Article 20
* Article 21

Child Marriage in Yemen

In Yemen, girls are forced to get married, sometimes when they are as young as eight years old. Information from the Yemeni government and the UN shows that approximately 14% of girls are married before the age of 15, and 52% are married before the age of 18. Boys are rarely forced into child marriages.

Once these girls are married, they also have little or no control over how many children they have or how often they have children. This can lead to health problems for both the mother and the child.

In addition, these child brides lose the opportunity for an education. In many cases, girls are removed from school as soon as they hit puberty, and they are married off soon after that.

In other cases, child brides face increased risks of domestic violence from their much older husbands or from their husband’s family members. Married women and girls often live with their husband’s family, and reports of domestic abuse or sexual violence are common.

* Article 16
* Article 25
* Article 26

Life in North Korea

North Korea is one of the most isolated and repressed countries in the world. Under the leadership of Kim Jong-il—and now his son, Kim Jong-un—the people are allowed little communication with the outside world. They are taught to look upon their leaders as almost godlike creatures who take care of them, but the truth is that the government has mishandled things and the people are starving.

The UN World Food Program (WFP) estimated in 2011 that close to 6 million people would face severe food shortages in North Korea, and a 2012 WFP report showed that 27.9% of children under age 5 were chronically malnourished and had stunted growth. The government tightly controls businesses, imports, and exports, and it has mismanaged the economy. Much of the country relies on its own agriculture, but bad harvests and flooding have diminished how much the people can grow for themselves. The government refuses to invest in supplies to help people survive. In fact, government programs that provide food to some people have been cut so drastically that the recipients barely get enough food to live.

People are forced to gather edible grasses from the side of the road and eat those to stay alive, and there are reports of children and elderly people dying because they cannot get enough to eat. The health care system is also in bad condition. Amnesty International reports include descriptions of people using unsterilized needles, and surgeries being done without anesthetic. When people are hospitalized, they must pay additional fees to get any medicine, and even more fees just to get food to eat. At the same time, the government continues to invest in military spending and other programs, including pursuing nuclear weapons and continuing to threaten South Korea.

* Article 22
* Article 25

Law in Russia

In 2013, Russia adopted a law that bans “homosexual propaganda” and the promotion of “nontraditional” sexual relations among minors. Activists say the laws have essentially legalized violence against gay people. There are reports of supporters of the law using the Internet to lure gay people to support groups and then publically humiliating or even attacking them. People in the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) community report needing to keep their relationships discreet or secret for fear of violence and humiliation.

Russia as a country is known to be hostile to LGBT activists, including consistently refusing them the right to hold parades or other demonstrations. This hostility can possibly lead to mental health issues for LGBT members of the community.

* Article 2
* Article 7
* Article 19