

HSC

Historical Security Council



LASALLECUNMUN
2026

“Enforcing the Geneva Conventions
and Addressing Inhumane Treatment
in Prisoner-of-War Camps during
World War II (1942)”

BACKGROUND GUIDE





Dear delegates,

I warmly welcome you to the Historical Security Council. My name is Renata Rosaly Carolina Cobales Canul, and I have the honor of serving as your President for LASALLECUNMUN 2026. Alongside our Moderator, Leonardo Anglada Morgado, and our Conference Officer, Andrea Jiménez Pinilla, we have prepared this committee with great dedication.

My journey at the Model of the United Nations, which I began in 2021 at COLONMUN XIX and later continued at LASALLECUNMUN 2024, which was in this very same committee, strengthened my passion for the model and inspired me to keep growing, making it a true honor to preside over the HSC today. Having been delegates ourselves, we understand the challenges you may face. I encourage you to speak with confidence, as this is a space where your ideas matter and are heard. To briefly introduce myself, I am 17 years old and currently in my senior year of high school in the Humanities and Social Sciences department, an area I greatly enjoy. I intend to pursue my studies in Economics. Beyond that, I am passionate about art, having explored painting, drawing, sculpting, jewelry-making, and acting, while also being an active member of my school's cheerleading team, which helped me rediscover my love for dance. At the same time, I have a strong interest in science and currently participate in the Chemistry and Science Clubs, where I am working on a project focused on producing an alternative flour. In my free time, I enjoy music from various genres, particularly rock in its Latin, alternative, and pop-rock forms, as well as K-pop. With favorite artists such as TOMORROW X TOGETHER, BTS, ZEROBASEONE, Chappell Roan, and Caifanes, songs including Wonderwall by Oasis, Iris by the Goo Goo Dolls, Duele el amor by Aleks Syntek, Black Sheep by Metric, Tren al sur by Los Prisioneros, and Los Dioses Ocultos by Caifanes. I also enjoy series, cartoons, anime, and RomCom films from the 2000s, which I find especially endearing. Finally, I am a great enthusiast of fashion and makeup, particularly the Japanese street wear style known as Gyaruru. This subculture celebrates boldness, creativity, and authenticity, values that I deeply admire and seek to embody in every aspect of my life.

The Historical Security Council is uniquely suited for creative thinkers who ask themselves, "What if?" who value history and diverse perspectives. I look forward to seeing your ideas, leadership, and collaboration during our sessions. Together, let's make this experience meaningful and memorable. Should you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out. Welcome once again to the Historical Security Council.

Sincerely yours,

Renata Cobales Canul
Historical Security Council (HSC)
hsc@prepa.lasallecancun.edu.mx

COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

The Security Council (SC) has primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. It has 15 Members, and each Member has one vote. Under the Charter of the United Nations, all Member States are obligated to comply with Council decisions. The Historical Security Council (HSC) may function similarly to the Security Council, but addresses past conflicts. The Historical Security Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or an act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. In some cases, it can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorizing the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Topic: “Enforcing the Geneva Conventions and addressing inhumane treatment in prison-of-war camps during World War II (1942)”.

INTRODUCTION

During World War II, millions of soldiers and civilians were captured and detained in prisoner of war (POW) camps around the world. Many of these prisoners suffered extreme conditions, including forced labor, starvation, torture, and executions, in clear violation of international humanitarian law. The inhumane treatment of POWs became one of the darkest aspects of the conflict, exposing the urgent need for global agreements to protect human dignity even in times of war.

The Geneva Conventions, first established in the 19th century and later expanded after World War II, were designed to set clear rules for the humane treatment of wounded soldiers, shipwrecked members of armed forces, and prisoners of war. These conventions are based on principles of neutrality, humanity, and respect for fundamental rights, ensuring that even enemies are treated with dignity.

However, during World War II, many nations failed to uphold these principles. Prisoners faced brutal medical experiments, were denied food and medical attention, and were often executed or worked to death. The lack of accountability and enforcement mechanisms made it nearly impossible to protect victims or punish offenders.

Enforcing the Geneva Conventions means more than signing treaties; it requires ensuring that governments, military leaders, and soldiers follow the laws of war. It also demands that the international community take responsibility for monitoring and punishing violations. The horrors of POW camps during World War II remind us of the consequences when humanitarian law is ignored and highlight the ongoing importance of ensuring justice, accountability, and respect for human rights in every conflict.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

During World War II, the treatment of prisoners of war (POWs) became one of the most severe humanitarian crises of the conflict. Between 1939 and 1945, approximately 35 million soldiers were held in enemy captivity. The 1929 Geneva Convention had already established international rules meant to ensure humane treatment for POWs, covering food, medical care, correspondence, and protection from violence or coercion.

However, by 1942, many of these principles were being widely violated. The Axis and Allied powers showed different levels of compliance. While nations such as the United Kingdom and the United States generally adhered to the Convention, others, especially Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and the Soviet Union, disregarded its provisions. Prisoners in Axis camps were often subjected to forced labor, malnutrition, torture, medical experiments, and executions, particularly those from the Soviet Union, Poland, and China.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) attempted to inspect camps and deliver aid, but its access was frequently restricted or denied, especially by Japan and Germany. The inhumane conditions led to the deaths of an estimated five million prisoners before the war ended.

These violations later became central issues in the Nuremberg and Tokyo War Crimes Trials, where war leaders were prosecuted for crimes against humanity and for breaching the Geneva Conventions. In response to these atrocities, the 1949 Geneva Conventions were revised and strengthened to provide clearer and more enforceable protections for POWs and civilians in wartime.

CURRENT SITUATION

1942 represents one of the most severe humanitarian crises of World War II. Across Europe and Asia, millions of prisoners of war (POWs) are being detained under extreme and harsh conditions that violate the principles of the 1929 Geneva Convention. While the Convention established international rules to ensure humane treatment, these standards are being widely violated. Approximately 35 million soldiers have been held captive, and it is estimated that nearly five million have died as a result of forced labor, malnutrition, disease, or execution.

Nations such as the United Kingdom and the United States have generally respected the Geneva Convention, allowing inspections by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and maintaining acceptable conditions for prisoners of war. However, Axis powers such as Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and, to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union have systematically violated these principles. Reports of torture, starvation, and medical experiments in both Nazi and Japanese camps have become frequent, especially affecting prisoners from the Soviet Union, Poland, and China. The ICRC has attempted to intervene, but its access to camps is often

restricted or entirely denied, making it nearly impossible to provide accurate aid or report on conditions.

Although the United Nations, as we know, did not yet exist in 1942, the Historical Security Council analyzes this crisis through international humanitarian law and the role of the global community in enforcing it. The recommendations from international humanitarian organizations, particularly the ICRC, include demanding unrestricted access to all POW camps, condemning violations of the Geneva Convention, ensuring the proper treatment of prisoners, and collecting evidence of war crimes for future accountability. The HSC must also consider the need for neutral states to intervene diplomatically, provide humanitarian aid, and pressure all sides to comply with international standards.

In recent years, the worsening reports from various POW camps have alarmed neutral nations and the Allied powers. Propaganda and media coverage have exposed the inhumane treatment of prisoners, prompting international rage and calls for justice. Some governments have issued public condemnations, while others have begun documenting atrocities to use as evidence after the war. The ICRC continues to advocate for humanitarian access, yet its effectiveness remains limited by political restrictions and ongoing hostilities.

The consequences of continued violations are grave. In the short term, the ongoing mistreatment of prisoners will lead to further deaths, health crises, and possible retaliatory actions against captured soldiers from opposing sides. In the long term, these violations undermine the credibility of international law, erode trust among nations, and set a dangerous precedent that war can occur without respect for human rights. Failure to enforce the Geneva Conventions now could weaken post-war reconstruction efforts and delay justice for victims.

For these reasons, it should be prioritized to take immediate humanitarian action and long-term accountability. All warring parties must be urged to allow full access to the ICRC for inspections and aid deliveries. The Council should coordinate the collection of evidence to ensure future war crime trials can be conducted. Diplomatic and economic measures should be considered against leaders and governments that consistently refuse compliance. Humanitarian corridors and neutral-state mediation should be established to protect the most vulnerable detainees. The mistreatment of POWs is not an isolated issue but a widespread problem that demands immediate global attention. The Historical Security Council has the responsibility to act and protect the lives of prisoners, uphold the principles of the Geneva Conventions, and lay the foundation for international justice and accountability once the war ends.

COUNTRY BOX

Argentine Republic

Commonwealth of Australia

Dominion of Canada

Empire of Japan

Free French Forces

German Reich

Kingdom of Hungary

Kingdom of Italy

Kingdom of Romania

Kingdom of Sweden

Republic of China

Republic of Chile

Republic of Turkey

Spanish State

Swiss Confederation

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
(USSR)

United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland

United Mexican States

United States of America

United States of Brazil

GUIDE QUESTIONS

I. What is your country's stance on the enforcement of the Geneva Conventions during the current conflict (1942), and how does this align with your political or military interests?

II. How has your country treated prisoners of war, and what public or international criticisms have been directed toward your government regarding POW camps?

III. Has your country faced military, diplomatic, or humanitarian consequences due to violations or non-compliance with the Geneva Conventions?

VI. What actions has your country taken so far to regulate, improve, or justify the conditions in POW camps under its control or influence?

V. What solutions or mechanisms does your country propose for improving POW treatment and ensuring Geneva Convention compliance, while still protecting its strategic interests during wartime?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- I. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR]. (s.f.). Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (III). Recuperado el 23 de noviembre de 2025, de [<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/geneva-convention-relative-treatment-prisoners-of-war>]
- II. International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC]. (2020). Commentary on the Third Geneva Convention: Introduction. Base de datos del DIH del CICR. [<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciii-1949/introduction/commentary/202>]
- III. Baxter, R. R. (1953). The release of prisoners of war. *International Law Studies*, 49, 161–178. [<https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1923&context=ils>]
- IV. WGBH Educational Foundation. (s.f.). Japan, POWs and the Geneva Conventions. American Experience. Recuperado el 23 de noviembre de 2025, de [<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/bataan-japan-pows-and-geneva-conventions>]
- V. The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (s.f.). Geneva Conventions. Encyclopaedia Britannica. Recuperado el 23 de noviembre de 2025, de [<https://www.britannica.com/event/Geneva-Conventions>]
- VI. Truman Library Institute. (2025, junio 24). WWII 80: Prisoners of War. [<https://www.trumanlibraryinstitute.org/wwii-80-prisoners-of-war>]
- VII. Miller, F. (1947). *The Journal of Modern History*, 19(3), 209–222. [<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/244883>]
- VIII. Library of Congress. (s.f.). POWs in Germany. Veterans History Project. Recuperado el 23 de noviembre de 2025, de [<https://www.loc.gov/collections/veterans-history-project-collection/serving-our-voices/diverse-experiences-in-service/prisoners-of-war/pows-in-germany>]
- IX. National Museum of the U.S. Air Force. (2015, abril 24). AAF Prisoners of the Germans. [<https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/Museum-Exhibits/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/196674>]
- X. Quora. (s.f.). How were injured Allied POWS treated by the Germans in WW2? What standards of medical care did they receive?. Recuperado el 23 de noviembre de 2025, de [<https://www.quora.com/How-were-injured-Allied-POWS-treated-by-the-Germans-in-WW2-What-standards-of-medical-care-did-they-receive>]