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<div align="center">Re-humanizing the Middle East</div>

The concept of human rights is straightforward, something that children are taught in elementary school: everyone is equal. Everyone should be treated equally. According to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner, human rights are "universal and inalienable". However, the global execution of this principle has proved to be far from simple. Certain cultures, particularly the Middle Eastern community, consistently haven't been afforded basic human rights because of a morally-unfounded, universal bias. This deprivation of human rights is a multifaceted issue that appears in the legal, political, historical and moral pillars of society. This accepted negative view of the Middle East allows for a universal attitude of dehumanization and alienation towards that general population, which interferes with basic, legally guaranteed rights and moral privileges for global citizens.

The Middle East, situated between Asia and Africa, is one of the most unstable areas in the world. This expanse of land is home to 13 countries (Smith), most of which are perpetually spiraling into some economic or war-driven hole. Historically, the Middle East has been a highly coveted region. This is due to the plethora of natural resources. This outside interest in resources dates all the way back to 3100 BC. Ancient Mesopotamia, modern day Iraq, was revered for its fertile agricultural land (Mesopotamian Merchants and Traders). Now, attention has shifted to focus on the region's rich oil wells and natural gas supply. PBS reports that the Middle East is home to 32 percent of the world's natural gas (Global Connections: *The Middle East*). Therefore,

many countries seeking these resources have opinions, or agendas tucked into the corners of the Middle East. Throughout most of the Middle Eastern turmoil, the Syrian civil war in 2011, the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the emergence and current existence of ISIS etc, there has been one common catalyst: an outside political agenda.

Overtime, the Middle East has been exploited to benefit other countries. The English, French, and Ottoman empires all conquered large sections of the Middle East in order to expand their power. Many modern, Western countries, including the United States, have continued this exploitation trend for the purpose of obtaining oil and natural gas (Smith). The United States' culture often writes off the Middle East, as a problem, as a mess. However, what is forgotten is the cause of this situation: outside interest. This isn't to say the the Middle East would be a completely peaceful place if no one had ever interfered. However, certain world superpowers do carry some blame for the current destruction. The problems of the Middle East have been etched into American history and, therefore, the solutions should be impressed into the future.

This history of resource exportation has made the Middle East a battlefield for conflicting political agendas. Despite that, this minefield of differing opinions is home to actual citizens of the world. Behind every war on oil is a person- behind every energy rich landscape a home. Forgetting this is easy, but doing so dehumanizes an entire culture.

Looking at this problem from a purely legal standpoint, world-wide legislation leaves absolutely no room for neglect of human rights. According to the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 2,* all human beings are entitled to, and assured, the same rights regardless of nationality or place of birth. This document states that "no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under

any other limitation of sovereignty" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights). How is it then that the results of a study conducted by the Arab American Institute reported that, "55 percent of Arab American Muslims have experienced discrimination and 71 percent fear future discrimination" in the United States (Alsultany). With a document that has world- wide jurisdiction to protect human rights, this discriminations shouldn't exist. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, written in 1948, has had plenty of time to be reviewed by world leaders and then broadcast to citizens. Despite this, many countries and their citizens seem to still have trouble shaking the stigma that they have impressed upon the Middle Eastern community. Of course, perfect execution of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* would only be possible in a utopian society. However, even if one allows for room for error, the results of this study still overwhelm that margin. Over half of the Muslim-American population has experienced discrimination. That seems like more of a pattern rather than an error.

This discrimination is exemplified in the current world-wide prominent issue of immigration. The United States is historically a country of immigrants. No one arrived on American soil with their lives entirely in order, everyone was running from something: taxation, religious persecution, government, or general dehumanization. However, now it has become a place that accepts this marginalizing oppression that people were originally running from.

While immigration is ultimately portrayed as a polarized political issue, many people will agree that, morally, Middle Eastern people should be awarded their basic rights. However, this becomes challenging when it is called into practice. How can the United States maintain country security while also acknowledging The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the moral agreements that should exist between human beings. The United States has grown in population and increased infrastructure since the times of Ellis Island and similar immigration booms,

therefore, country security has been increased and immigration is monitored closely. While this has been a necessary security growth, regulations have begun to hinder the bedrock principles of the United States. The overarching question remains: how can we ensure the safety of the US while still maintaining some amount of morality. No countries seem to want Middle Eastern refugees. With 1.3 million in Europe (Connor), and 85,000 in the US, there is certainly an abundance of global-wide, homeless refugees. Yamen Ghazal, a refugee from Syria, say that, "I didn't want to go to Turkey or Lebanon, because the situations for refugees is terrible there. They don't want us there and the conditions are abusive" (Kangarlou). There is a fear of terrorists, negative effects on the economy and depletion of jobs and resources. The refugees are treated like burdens, burdens that no country feels like they should have to shoulder. Despite this, we can recall that many of the world's "superpowers" did, in fact, aid in creating the unlivable, war-torn region of the Middle East.

This societal norm to inherently dehumanize people wasn't always an immediate preliminary reaction. Overtime the Western culture has slowly developed a calloused and a protective reaction towards the Middle Eastern culture. However, in the past 16 years, this cultural attitude has completely shifted from one of being rather indifferent about Arabic society, to one of being scared. September 11th 2001 changed the way people view strangers, view their neighbors, and view the Middle East. Following what was the most devastating act of terrorism in the United States, came a country-wide projection of fear and hate towards the Middle East. This wasn't without reason. To break down the logic behind the assignment of said blame: Al-Qadeda was behind these attacks. Al-Qadeda is a Muslim extremist group. The Middle East is primarily Muslim (Shapiro). Therefore, people found a place to channel their fear, sadness, and

anger- to the overarching region that encompassed Muslims and (presumably) al-Qadeda: The Middle East.

Karim Traboulsi, an author for *The New Arab* wrote about this cultural change in his article, *9/11 Hurt America, but it Destroyed the Middle East.* He writes about the response to the attacks, "The United States sacrificed many of its hard-won freedoms at the altar of security, and became the world's largest surveillance state." He writes about the fear that is now, and seems to be forever, associated with the Arab culture since 9/11. Letting go of an event that permanently wounded not only American pride but also security is something that isn't easily dismissed. The way America reacts to Muslim culture will always be tied back to the events that occurred 16 years ago. As we move to re-humanize the Middle East, this is something to bear in mind.

The perpetual turmoil in the Middle East doesn't directly affect US citizens on a day to day basis, but that doesn't mean political ignorance is acceptable. One of the main reasons Middle Easterners have been dehumanized in the United States is due to the lack of positive media exposure and physical exposure Americans have to that culture. We only see the negatives on a grand scheme. Because Middle Eastern immigration is so closely regulated, most people don't have a personal relationship with a Arabic immigrant and, therefore, can't challenge their negative exposure with something positive and human. The war on resources and that of immigration are more tightly connected than one would think. The solution to re-humanizing these people isn't to shut them out and continue to import their resources from a distance. It's to slowly and safely incorporate them into society.

While morality arguments are hard to debate, there are more concrete aspects of the problem, also exemplified through the immigration debate, that remain controversial. Recently, the actual process of obtaining a visa became much more complicated. Shortly after the election

of Donald Trump, an even more "extreme vetting" process was put into action. This executive order banned all people from the countries of Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Libya , Syria, Sudan and Somalia from entering the United States (Pipes). While this seemed like an extreme first act of power in the White House, Trump defends his actions with the following, "America has always been the land of the free and home of the brave. We will keep it free and keep it safe" (Liptak). However, there are holes in this ban that relate back to political agenda. Saudi Arabia, for example, is not affected by the travel ban, though they are considered just as "dangerous" as many other Middle Eastern countries. However, the United States does have a lucrative oil-importation relationship with Saudi Arabia. A travel ban would most likely infringe upon that. (Paraskova). By banning countries based on their lack of economic contribution the the United States, a humanitarian issue is brought up that circles back to morality. Though countries are, in essence, large-scale businesses they are also home to world citizens. It isn't right to make a serious immigration distinction based on economic contribution.

That being said, there is a reason the United States has adopted a more apprehensive political opinion towards the Middle East. Politics have always been driven by fear and money. As crude as it sounds, those are two extremely effective motivators. In a study reported on by CNN, it disclosed that, "There was a 650% increase in fatal terror attacks on people living in the world's biggest economies in 2015" This trend has continued into the present years with world wide terrorist attacks in Brussels Belgium, Paris France, Texas, Las Vegas and San Bernardino United States. While many Americans may question how exactly Donald Trump became president, the answer is quite clear. United States citizens as a whole were feeling unsafe. The following 2016 election demonstrated people's unease, with the election of a President who has very strong thoughts about vetting Middle Easterners. (Fox) Therefore, the fear and cautious

attitude towards the Middle East isn't something that is arbitrary to society. Many citizens, whether they admit it or not, are scared, which has caused the United States to dehumanize an entire group of people. Though much of this fear is warranted, it needs to be addressed in a way that isn't at the expense of a whole culture, American or Middle Eastern.

The Middle East is a region that has been pumped full of agendas, controversial opinions and countless hurdles. Some of these can be justified, some cannot. Regardless, immigration is a major component of the overarching issue regarding dehumanization of Middle Eastern cultures.

The process of immigration is something that will always lend itself to questions, protests, and extremest on both ends. By only restricting certain Middle Eastern countries with the travel ban, the United States government is, perhaps inadvertently, adding to the stigma surrounding Middle Eastern immigrants. However, certain measure do have to be taken to protect the United States, ignoring that fact would be ignorant. There is a middle ground between being overly empathetic and overly harsh. The solution lies somewhere in the middle of both extremes.

This stigma broadcast onto the Middle Eastern culture was engendered from a place of fear. Because of recent terrorist attacks, we have developed a culture of fear surrounding many of the issues in the immigration debate. To overcome that fear, one must not only understand the cause of it, but also be given the tools to safely navigate it. By taking a step away from immediate judgement and blame assignment, one can see a larger picture of cause effect and, someday, solution. Terrorist groups often grow out of the Middle East because of the lack of government and basic survival needs available to citizens. Though this area is rich in energy sources, it is lacking in available provincials and jobs. This is the perfect environment for a terrorist group, such as ISIS, to arise. Anyone who controls food and water can essentially

control the general public. Former president Obama was quoted saying, "It will take time to eradicate a cancer like Isis" (Islamic state crisis: Key quotes from Obama). ISIS has rooted itself into the Middle East, and set up a structure that is unavoidable at points. ISIS has, in essence, created a stable community that provides food, water, jobs and an escape from poverty. In the war-torn region, this type of job and food security is rare. Many human beings will go to extreme measures to preserve their family, and themselves. Therefore, when the choice is: join ISIS or watch your family starve, the world-wide moral aspect of decision making tends to become irrelevant. *Express new*s interviewed a captured ISIS soldier whose personal reasons for joining the terrorist group were in line with the above explanation. He says, "I have seven children, the youngest is two. They need to live. There was a lack of work and poverty so most people joined because of that" (Barnes) This man isn't alone in his thinking. Many people view joining ISIS as a way to obtain better life for their family. While this mind-set doesn't even begin to excuse actions, it does provide context.

As an outsider who isn't starving to death, it's easy to condemn people- condemn the entire region of the Middle East. These people are machines, antipathic monsters. I don't argue this, all accusations towards those who are currently allied with ISIS, may be true, but what was at the root of their decision? Does that even matter? Regardless, this compromised access of food, water and work, is a firm cycle that breeds of off peoples' instinct to survive. That is sick. Breaking such a cycle has to be done overtime, incorporating food, water and education into such a deprived, and dangerous area of the world. This is painful. So many Americans have been hurt by terrorist groups that were founded in the turmoil of said region. How can people forgive the events that occurred on September 11, 2001, or that of the more recent concert shooting, or the New York truck attack? They can't; these are all unforgivable acts. However, through

helping the Middle East, we will consequently help ourselves. If one is to completely ignore the moral "we're all citizens of the world" argument, that still leaves that of long-term social welfare. If people don't have a reason to rely on a terrorist group to provide food, then why would they.

One curious thing about blame, is that it is often misplaced. While ISIS was given the platform to come to fruition in the unstable Middle East, it continued (and continues) to grow far beyond the region's borders. ISIS is one of the first large-scale terrorists groups to effectively use the internet to recruit citizens world-wide and broadcast propaganda. An FBI official reported to congress that, "The widespread use of technology propagates the persistent terrorist message to attack U.S. interests whether in the homeland or abroad. Many foreign terrorist organizations use various digital communication platforms in an effort to reach individuals they believe may be susceptible and sympathetic to the message" (Grubbs) This has given ISIS a massive web of global followers who aren't from the Middle East. Terrorism isn't an issue that is localized to the Middle East, yet that region still receives all of the blame, fear, travel bans and safety precautions in response to it. With such a large world-network, there is room for speculation on who is actually responsible for certain terrorist attacks. In reality, the perpetrators could be actual Middle East citizens, or Western-world ISIS sympathizers. For example, the terrorist attack in the crowded train station of Brussels Belgium was executed by a Moroccan, ISIS sympathizer (Dearden). Not every terrorist is Middle Eastern and not every Middle Easterner is a terrorist. It's that difference that is necessary to distinguish, as it relieves some of the pressure on the non-terrorist, average Middle Eastern citizen. If blame if going to be assigned, it needs to at least be assigned fairly.

The United States of America, in particular, has been consistently labeled ignorant by other citizens of the world. It's an absence of information that creates this stigma. However, as the 13th richest country in the world (Tasch) this ignorance isn't due to a lack of resources; it's due to a lack of drive. In more privileged countries, like the United States, people are given the luxury to ignore any problems that occur outside of their community. America provides its citizens with many inherent rights, that of life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, etc. It does not, however, entitle them to be ignorant to other countries struggles. That sense of entitlement is simply a behavior choice.

It is difficult to be sympathetic to a culture that is so vastly foreign as there is often a lack of immediate mutual understanding. However, assimilating that difference with something negative is a false equivalency. In her lecture *Losing our Humanity*, Marisa Benson breaks down the idea of ostracizing someone. She explains that when one sees a person or community lacking similarities to their own, it is easy to "other" them. This term "othering" essentially means to disassociate. With this disassociation, it becomes easier to place, often false, blame (Benson). People have an unnerving talent for justifying their actions, especially to themselves. This justification creates a conflict between what is the moral thing to do and what can later be justified to appear better. This is perhaps the sole most important thing to remember when analyzing the general American behavior towards the Middle East: every piece of blame, every accusation, can be justified. However, that doesn't make it right.

Many people associate the words "Middle- East" with "Terrorism". Admit it. Yes, lots of Americans are genuinely good and believe firmly in equality. They try to avoid immediate judgement. However, their initial, internal reaction is often just that. For many, the only news they've ever heard about the Middle East is directly related to terrorism and pain inflicted upon a

population. They think of all of the stories they've seen on the five o'clock news and the fuzzy,

menacing faces of the perpetrators. Finding the balance between maintaining that "American

Pride" and being just downright judgmental is actually more difficult than people let on. Not all

people are good. Some are extremists and some do fit stereotypes. Navigating the fine line

between cautious and calloused however, is something that, particularly the Western World,

needs to learn to prevent unnecessary dehumanization of world citizens who, legally and morally

deserve better.

This overarching title- The Situation in the Middle East-seems too difficult and too broad

of an issue to take action, as the roots of the problem come from large-scale government politics.

However, while American's aren't in direct control of our government's actions towards the

Middle Eastern culture or the surrounding immigration debate, we are in control of our

interactions with Middle Easterners trying to integrate into our culture. We are in control of our

ability to pick up a newspaper, or that to open a news app and stay informed. We have the ability

to make change on a social level. Through exercising this ability we can work towards living in a

well-integrated but also secure society.

Annotated Bibliography

Alsultany, Evelyn. "Muslims are facing a civil rights crisis in America, and it's the media's

fault" *The Washington Post,* November 2017.

      This article provided me with clear facts and analysis of a study that supports my main

      argument: people are being dehumanized. Alsultany is a professor at the University of

Michigan and is well experienced in her field of Arab and Muslim American Studies.

Therefore, I found her article well written, and well researched.

Barnes, Joe. "Captured ISIS fighters reveal secret and brutal recruitment tactics" *Express,*

November 2016.

This article provides a crucial interview that explains the motives behind joining ISIS. It

acted as a tangible example in my paper, giving my points context.

Benson, Melissa. "Losing Our Humanity" *Keene State College Teach In,* September, 2017.

This lecture sparked my idea for my ITW paper about human rights. It has played

perhaps the sole most important role in developing the moral arguments of my paper, as

well as my personal opinions.

Connor, Philip. "Number of Refugees to Europe Surges to Record 1.3 Million in 2015" *Pew*

Review Center, August 2, 2016.

This source provided me with solid facts about refugee population in Europe which I

used to strengthen my paper's academic voice.

Fox, Kara. "Terror attacks in developed world surge 650% in one year" *CNN,* November 2016.

This source provided me with concrete facts to add to the credibility of my paper. This

article is well written from a fairly fact-based point of view. CNN is a well known news

source that, while a bit biased, put together a fantastic article.

Dearden, Lizzie. "Brussels explosion: Prosecutors say major terror attack at station averted after

bomb packed with nails fails" *Independent,* June 2017.

This source gave me a specific example of a recent terrorist attack. Additionally, it helped

to build my argument that not all ISIS sympathizers are from the Middle East.

Grubbs, Alex. "Islamic State Most Adept Terrorist Group at Online Recruiting, Says FBI" *CNS News,* July 2016.

> This source opened up the new idea of internet terrorism. It was a well put together analysis of an FBI repots to congress that addressed the effects of ISIS in the age of the internet.

"Global Connections: The Middle East*" PBS,* 2002.

> Though a bit dated, this source has concrete background information on Middle Eastern natural resources. This source was perhaps the most useful source in my whole paper, as it directed me to other relevant sources that could aid in building my arguments. Additionally PBS is a reputable source that conveys fairly unbiased information in a comprehensible way.

"Islamic state crisis: Key quotes from Obama". *BBC,* September 2014.

> This sources provided me with a quote about ISIS from a voice of authority- Obama.

Traboulsi, Karim. "9/11 hurt America, but it destroyed the Middle East" *The New Arab,* September 2015.

> This source provided a unique look into the average Middle Easterners perspective on 9/11 and its affects on both Arab and American culture.

Krogstad, Jens Manuel. "Key facts about refugees to the U.S.." *Pew Research Center,* January 2017. This source gave me a specific fact about the refugee population in the United States.

Liptak, Kevin. "Trump defends executive order concerning extreme vetting." *CNN*, 2017.

> This article gives insight to two sides of the story on immigration: Trump's point of view, and that of extreme liberals. CNN is a reputable, credible and well-known news source

that presented a well argued article full of debatability and credible sources. In my paper,

I used this source primarily for its plethora of political quotes.

"Mesopotamian Merchants and Traders." *History on the net,* 2015.

This article was a very informative and historical source for my paper. It added facts to

my background information about the historical geography of the Middle East and the

regions relationship to resources.

Paraskova, Tsvetana. "Saudi oil exports to the US tumble to a 7-year low" *Business Insider,* July

2017.

This source provide an excellent view point for the economic side of the oil relations

between the United States and Saudi Arabia. Business Insider is an economic- centered

source, which was perfect for demonstrating the lucrative oil importation to the US.

Pipes, Daniel. "Smoking Out Islamists via Extreme Vetting." *Middle East Quarterly*, Spring

2017.

Pipes held a very liberal point of view on the issue of immigration. However, he backs up

his claims with facts and quotes from our current president. Pipes, though most certainly

speaking from the heart, built a credible and easy to read argument that was informative

and gave directions toward further research. I also used this source for quotes as well as

to gain insight to a specific political point of view.

Planas, Roque. "16 Reasons Why Opening Our Borders Makes More Sense Than Militarizing

Them". *Huffington Post,* September 2014.

This source, while definitely biased, acted as a perfect example in my paper for an

extremely liberal point of view. It talks about reason to open the boarders from a mainly

moral and not so political point of view. However, it is an opinion that a significant amount of people hold and, therefore, this source was of value.

Smith, Leonord. "Drawing Borders in the Middle East after the Great War: Political Geography and 'Subject Peoples'." *First World War Studies*, Mar. 2016.

This article, written from a mainly political point of view, is a good source for explanation of political backgrounds and agendas. It dives into the history of the creation of the Middle East and, consequently, the present-day turmoil. This article focuses much on the outside influences that created the geographical country lay out of the Middle East. I used this source to write a lot of my background paragraph.

Shapiro, Jacob. "The Middle East Since 9/11"*Geopolitical Futures,* September 2016.

This article gave me a concise history of the terrorist group that led 9/11. It proved context to my section on that in my paper.

Shugerman, Emily. "Donald Trump announces new immigration policy favouring financially stable English speakers."*np*, August 2017.

Shugerman explores a more moral point of view, in relation to the issue of immigration. This article touches on the extreme biases rooted not only in America, but also in the mind of our current president. It further breaks down immigration based on a cultural level, exposing the biases that lie from one culture to the next. I used this source as more of a general catalyst to spark ideas. While I didn't directly quote or summarize anything, it was a notable source in sparking my thoughts.

Tasch, Barbara. "The 23 richest countries in the world" *Business Insider,* July 2015.

This source was essentially a list that gave me a reference point for America's wealth.