LUSAKA OAKTREE SCHOOL MODEL UNITED NATIONS

LOTSMUN 2026

Architects of Accountability • *Redefining Power, Peace and Progress*

STUDY GUIDE

UN Security Council | Lower Secondary

Topic: Emergency Response: Protecting Civilians, Medical Personnel and Water Infrastructure in Active Conflict Zones

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Message from the Secretary General

Dear Delegates,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to LOTSMUN 2026.

This year, under the theme “Architects of Accountability: Redefining Power, Peace and Progress,” we invite you to consider not only how decisions are made but who is responsible for them, who is affected by them and how meaningful change can be achieved.

Model United Nations is more than an exercise in public speaking. It is an opportunity to understand complex international problems, challenge assumptions, negotiate with people who may disagree with you and transform competing ideas into meaningful solutions.

As you prepare for this committee, I encourage you to look beyond the information presented in this study guide. The purpose of this document is not to provide you with every answer, but to provide you with the foundation from which your own research, perspectives, and ideas can develop.

Come prepared to question, collaborate, negotiate and most importantly, represent your country's position with accuracy and diplomacy. Remember that accountability is not simply about holding power responsible; it is about understanding how power can be used to build peace, drive progress, and create meaningful change.

I look forward to seeing the ideas, debates, and solutions you bring into committee.

Malenji Arthur Jonah

Secretary General, LOTSMUN 2026

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1. The United Nations Security Council

1.1 What is the Security Council?

The Security Council is one of the six main parts (called "organs") of the United Nations. It was created in 1945 by the UN Charter, and its main job is to keep international peace and security.[1] When a conflict threatens peace, the Council is the body that meets, debates and can act.

The Council has **15 members**. Five are **permanent members** (often called the P5): China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. The other ten are **elected members**. The UN General Assembly elects five of them every year, and each serves for two years.[2]

1.2 What can the Council do?

The Security Council is special because it is the only UN body whose decisions **member states must carry out**.[3] That is very different from the General Assembly, whose resolutions are recommendations. The Council can:

- call on the sides in a conflict to stop fighting (a **ceasefire**) or to talk to each other;
- send investigators or set up UN missions, including peacekeeping missions;
- impose **sanctions**, such as freezing money or banning travel for particular people or groups;
- in the most serious cases, authorise the use of force to restore peace.

1.3 How does voting work?

Each member has one vote. To pass a resolution, **at least nine of the fifteen members must vote yes**. But there is a second rule: if any one of the five permanent members votes **no**, the resolution fails. This is called the **veto**. A permanent member that abstains (does not vote yes or no) does not block a resolution.[4]

> **What this means for you**
>
> A draft resolution must win **nine yes votes** and avoid **any veto**. That means good delegates build agreement with countries that disagree with them, especially the P5. A powerful idea that one permanent member will never accept will not become a resolution. Learn what each P5 country can and cannot accept.

[1] United Nations. Charter of the United Nations, Chapter V: The Security Council (Articles 23–32). 1945. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter

[2] Five non-permanent members elected to UN Security Council. WAM (Emirates News Agency), 3 June 2026. https://www.wam.ae/en/article/c0jfgtm-five-non-permanent-members-elected-security

[3] United Nations. Charter of the United Nations, Chapter V: The Security Council (Articles 23–32). (See earlier note or bibliography.)

[4] United Nations. Charter of the United Nations, Chapter V: The Security Council (Articles 23–32). (See earlier note or bibliography.)

2. Introduction to the Topic

War has rules. Even when countries or armed groups are fighting, some people and places must be kept safe. This topic looks at three of them: **civilians** (ordinary people who are not fighting), **medical personnel** (doctors, nurses, ambulance crews and the hospitals they work in), and **water infrastructure** (the pumps, pipes, treatment plants, wells and dams that give people clean water).

These three are linked. Look at what happens when one link breaks:

A water plant is damaged → **People drink unsafe water** → **Diseases such as cholera spread** → **Hospitals are overwhelmed or attacked** → **More civilians die**

That is why the Security Council looks at these three things together. Protecting only one is not enough.

2.1 The scale of the problem

The United Nations counts the harm caused by war each year. Its latest report to the Council, published in May 2026, covers 2025. In that year, the UN recorded **over 37,000 civilian deaths across 20 armed conflicts**. The year before, it recorded about 36,000 across 14 conflicts.[5]

37,000+	1,356	4 a day
civilian deaths recorded by the UN in 2025	attacks on health care recorded in 2025, in 18 countries	average attacks harming health care in 2025

Attacks on health care have risen sharply. The UN recorded 802 incidents in 2018, when it began monitoring, and 1,356 in 2025. Those 1,356 attacks caused 1,980 deaths.[6][7] Water systems are also being hit. In Sudan, attacks on power plants, water stations and dams caused long outages that affected more than 75% of households. In Ukraine, the UN recorded 429 attacks on energy infrastructure in 2025, which led to power cuts across the country in freezing weather.[8]

2.2 Why is this a Security Council issue?

Since 1999, the Council has treated the protection of civilians as part of its work for international peace and security.[9] Attacks on hospitals and water systems make wars longer and more deadly, and they push people to flee their homes, which can destabilise whole regions. The Council has passed several resolutions on this, but attacks continue. Your committee must decide **what more can realistically be done**.

[5] Security Council Report. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Annual Open Debate (What's In Blue), May 2026, summarising the Secretary-General's report S/2026/390. https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2026/05/protection-of-civilians-in-armed-conflict-annual-open-debate-4.php

[6] Security Council Report. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Annual Open Debate (What's In Blue), Ma…. (See earlier note or bibliography.)

[7] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Five takeaways from the 2026 Protection of Civilians Week. https://www.unocha.org/news/five-takeaways-2026-protection-civilians-week

[8] Security Council Report. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Annual Open Debate (What's In Blue), Ma…. (See earlier note or bibliography.)

[9] United Nations Security Council. Resolution 1265 (1999), Protection of civilians in armed conflict. https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1265(1999)

2.3 What does “emergency response” mean?

In this topic, **emergency response** means the quick actions that save lives when civilians are in danger: getting medical care to the wounded, restoring safe water, delivering food and shelter, evacuating people safely, and repairing damaged systems as fast as possible. It also means stopping the attacks themselves.

> **Theme link: Architects of Accountability**
> Architects design structures that are meant to last. In this committee, you are the architects of a system of **prevention, protection, response and accountability**. If rules are broken, who is responsible, and how are they held to account? A strong resolution answers this question, not only “what should we say?”

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3. Key Definitions

These definitions are written in plain language and adapted from the ICRC and UN sources listed in the bibliography.[10][11] Learn them, because you will use them in speeches and clauses.

Term	Meaning
Armed conflict	A situation where states or organised armed groups fight each other. It can be between countries (international) or inside one country (non-international, such as a civil war).
International humanitarian law (IHL)	The set of rules that limit how wars are fought and protect people who are not fighting. It is also called the law of war or the law of armed conflict.
Civilian	A person who is not a member of an armed force or armed group. Civilians must never be the target of an attack.
Combatant	A member of an armed force who takes part in fighting. Combatants can be lawfully attacked, but must still follow the rules.
Civilian object	Any place or thing that is not a military objective, such as homes, schools, hospitals and water plants.
Military objective	Something that helps the enemy's military and whose destruction gives a clear military advantage. Only military objectives can be attacked.
Medical personnel	Doctors, nurses, ambulance crews and other health workers who care for the sick and wounded. They must be respected and protected.
Distinctive emblem	A protective sign (red cross, red crescent or red crystal) that marks medical staff, vehicles and buildings so fighters can recognise them.
Humanitarian access	The ability of aid workers to reach people in need safely and without being blocked.
Humanitarian pause	A short, agreed stop in fighting so that aid can be delivered or repairs made.
Water infrastructure	The systems that provide water and sanitation: wells, pumping stations, pipes, treatment plants, reservoirs and dams. It is often called **WASH** (water, sanitation and hygiene).
Objects indispensable to survival	Things civilians cannot live without, such as drinking water installations, food supplies, crops and irrigation works. IHL gives them special protection.[12]
Cholera	A dangerous disease spread by dirty water. It spreads fast when water systems break down.

[10] ICRC. How Does Law Protect in War? Online Casebook. https://casebook.icrc.org

[11] ICRC. IHL Databases: Treaties, States Parties and Commentaries (Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols). https://ihl-databases.icrc.org

[12] ICRC. Additional Protocol I (1977), Article 54: Protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population. https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977/article-54

Term	Meaning
Explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA)	Bombs, rockets and shells used in cities and towns. They are a leading cause of civilian death and damage to hospitals and water systems.[13]
War crime	A serious violation of the laws of war, for which individuals can be tried in court.
Impunity	When people who commit serious crimes are never punished.
Accountability	Making sure those responsible for violations are investigated, held responsible and, where appropriate, punished.
Sanctions	Measures such as travel bans or asset freezes used to pressure a state, group or person to change behaviour.

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[13] Security Council Report. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Annual Open Debate (What's In Blue), Ma…. (See earlier note or bibliography.)

4. Case Studies

These cases show the problems in real life. Facts come from UN sources. Responsibility for some incidents is disputed, so this guide reports what the UN and other sources say without taking sides. **You must represent your assigned country's view.**

4.1 Syria: water and hospitals in Aleppo (2016)

In January 2016, the al-Khafseh water plant that supplies the city of Aleppo was shut down for 48 days. UNICEF described it as a deliberate shutdown. The plant draws water from the Euphrates River and was the only source of drinking water for the whole city, so more than two million people were affected, including about one million children.[14] Later in 2016, UNICEF said nearly two million people were again without water after air strikes damaged a pumping station and another was switched off in response. It warned that people would have to use contaminated water and could face waterborne diseases.[15]

Aleppo also saw attacks on health care. In late April 2016, an airstrike destroyed a hospital supported by MSF and the ICRC and killed one of the city's last remaining paediatricians. About a week later, the Council adopted Resolution 2286.[16] Responsibility for individual attacks was disputed by the parties involved.

> **Think like a delegate**
>
> Water was cut off by different sides at different times. How can the Council respond when several parties are involved and each blames the others?
>
> Resolution 2286 was passed quickly after a shocking event. Does the Council usually act faster after a headline than before one?

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4.2 Ukraine: the Kakhovka dam (2023)

On 6 June 2023, the Kakhovka dam on the Dnipro River in southern Ukraine was destroyed. The flooding covered more than 620 square kilometres, and the reservoir behind the dam had been the main source of drinking water for over 700,000 people.[17] The UN's humanitarian chief told the Security Council the same day that it was possibly the most significant damage to civilian infrastructure since the full-scale invasion began in February 2022.[18] The UN said it could not reach people in areas under Russian control, because access was denied.[19] Russia and Ukraine blamed each other for the destruction.

International law gives dams special protection (Additional Protocol I, Article 56), because a broken dam can flood towns and destroy water supplies for years.[20] The war has continued to harm civilians. In August

[14] UN News. Syria: water restored in Aleppo after a 48-day shutdown, UNICEF reports, 7 March 2016. https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/syria/2016/syria-160307-unnews01.htm

[15] BBC / Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict. Syria conflict: air strikes leave Aleppo without water, 2016. https://watchlist.org/news/syria-conflict-air-strikes-leave-aleppo-without-water/

[16] Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict. UN Security Council Adopts Resolution 2286 Condemning Attacks on…. (See earlier note or bibliography.)

[17] United Nations in Ukraine. Kakhovka Dam destruction, one year on, 6 June 2024. https://ukraine.un.org/en/node/270890

[18] UN Audiovisual Library. Martin Griffiths briefs the Security Council on the destruction of the Kakhovka dam…. (See earlier note or bibliography.)

[19] United Nations in Ukraine. Kakhovka Dam destruction, one year on, 6 June 2024. (See earlier note or bibliography.)

[20] ICRC. Additional Protocol I (1977), Article 56: Protection of works and installations containing dangerous…. (See earlier note or bibliography.)

2026, the UN human rights mission recorded at least 372 civilians killed and 2,349 injured in Ukraine in that month alone.[21]

> **Think like a delegate**
>
> The Council met within hours of the dam's destruction, but that did not stop damage to other water and power sites. What tools does the Council have beyond meetings and statements?
>
> How can the truth about who did what be established when investigators cannot visit the site?

4.3 Sudan: health care and water in a war (2023–2026)

War broke out in Sudan in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. By mid-2025, the World Health Organization had verified 156 attacks on health facilities, with 318 people killed and 273 injured. A cholera outbreak that began in July 2024 spread to 13 of Sudan's 18 states, infecting about 74,000 people and causing 1,826 deaths. WHO linked a surge of cases in Khartoum to unsafe water after attacks on major power plants and water sources.[22]

In October 2025, WHO reported that more than 460 patients and their companions were reportedly killed at the Saudi Maternity Hospital in El Fasher, and that six health workers had been abducted. The city had been cut off from humanitarian aid since February 2025.[23] The Secretary-General's 2026 report says that attacks on power plants, water stations and dams caused outages affecting more than 75% of households in Sudan.[24]

> **Think like a delegate**
>
> Here, water and health care fail together. Could a resolution protect both at the same time?
>
> Most parties to this conflict are not states in the usual sense. How does that change what the Council can demand, and how it can enforce it?

4.4 More cases to research

UN and humanitarian reports also describe damage to water systems and attacks on health care in other conflicts, including Yemen, Gaza, Burkina Faso and Lebanon.[25] Find recent UN reports on the situations most relevant to your country's interests. Use UN sources first, and check dates, because situations change quickly.

[21] UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (OHCHR). Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict monthly updates, 2026. https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en/reports/protection-of-civilians

[22] Security Council Report. Sudan: closed consultations (What's In Blue), June 2025. https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2025/06/sudan-closed-consultations-7.php

[23] World Health Organization (Eastern Mediterranean Region). WHO condemns killings of patients and civilians amid escalating violence in El Fasher, Sudan, 29 October 2025. https://www.emro.who.int/sdn/crisis

[24] Security Council Report. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Annual Open Debate (What's In Blue), Ma…. (See earlier note or bibliography.)

[25] Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts. Protection of Civilians Week: Water Under Attack, conc…. (See earlier note or bibliography.)

5. Major Actors

5.1 The permanent five (P5)

Every resolution needs the P5 not to vote no. Their general approaches are summarised below. These are broad patterns only. **Always check a country's recent statements and votes before you rely on them.**

Country	General approach to this topic
United States	Strongly supports the rules of war and accountability in its statements. It has also faced criticism itself: in 2016 it expressed regret in the Council over its 2015 air strike on an MSF hospital in Afghanistan, and said personnel had been disciplined.[26]
United Kingdom and France	Generally push for stronger accountability and humanitarian access. France has led an initiative to limit use of the veto in cases of mass atrocities.
Russia	Stresses state sovereignty and non-interference and the primary responsibility of governments. It is a party to the war in Ukraine, so it is directly involved in the case study in Section 6.2.
China	Stresses sovereignty, development and consent of the state concerned. It held the Council presidency in May 2026 and convened the annual open debate on protecting civilians.[27]

All five voted **yes** on Resolutions 2286, 2417 and 2573, so agreement on this topic is possible. The disagreements tend to come over **how** to enforce the rules and **who** should be named as responsible.[28][29][30]

5.2 Elected members and groups of states

- **African members.** Several elected members (Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia) have direct experience of conflict and humanitarian crisis, and often stress prevention, funding and regional solutions.
- **Group of Friends of the Protection of Civilians.** A group of states that pushes the Council to keep this topic on its agenda. It has called on the Council to include protection of water infrastructure in its work and in the mandates of UN missions.[31]
- **Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts.** A group of states and institutions that works to protect water during conflict. It addressed the Council in May 2026.[32]

[26] United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. Security Council Adopts Resolution 2286 (2016), Strong…. (See earlier note or bibliography.)

[27] Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts. Joint statement at the UN Security Council Open Debate…. (See earlier note or bibliography.)

[28] United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. Security Council Adopts Resolution 2286 (2016), Strong…. (See earlier note or bibliography.)

[29] United Nations Digital Library. Resolution 2417 (2018), adopted by the Security Council at its 8267th meeti…. (See earlier note or bibliography.)

[30] United Nations Digital Library. Resolution 2573 (2021), Protection of objects indispensable to the survival…. (See earlier note or bibliography.)

[31] Norway at the UN. Security Council statement: Water and Protection of Civilians (2023), Group of Friends of…. (See earlier note or bibliography.)

[32] Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts. Joint statement at the UN Security Council Open Debate…. (See earlier note or bibliography.)

6. Preparing for Committee

6.1 Questions a strong resolution answers

1. **What problem does it solve?** Health care, water, civilians, or the link between them?
2. **Who has to act?** Name the parties: states, armed groups, the Secretary-General, UN agencies.
3. **Is it within the Council's powers?** Use verbs the Council can really use.
4. **How will it be paid for and carried out?** Ideas without money or a plan stay ideas.
5. **How will it be checked?** Add reporting, and a date for the Council to review progress.
6. **How does it deliver accountability?** This is the theme of the conference. Show it.
7. **Can it pass?** Nine yes votes, and no veto.

6.2 Guiding questions for your research

1. What is your country's policy on protecting civilians, and how did it vote on Resolutions 2286, 2417 and 2573?
2. Has your country been directly affected by conflict, or does it provide aid, troops or funding?
3. What is your country's view on the veto, sanctions and the ICC?
4. Which case studies matter most to your country, and why?
5. What can your country realistically offer: money, expertise, diplomacy?
6. Which countries share your goals, and which will you need to persuade?
7. Where would your country compromise, and where would it never give way?

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6.3 Position papers

Follow the position paper instructions sent by the Secretariat. A position paper usually has three parts: **topic background** (what the issue is), **country policy** (what your country believes and does, with evidence such as votes and statements) and **proposed solutions** (specific actions, written in the language of the Council). Write in formal third person, for example "The Republic of X believes…".

6.4 Where to research

- **UN News** and **OCHA** for current facts and figures.
- **Security Council Report** (What's In Blue) for how the Council debates and votes.
- **UN Digital Library** to read the full text of resolutions and voting records.
- **ICRC** and **WHO** for the law, health data and field reports.
- Your country's official statements at the UN, and its foreign ministry website.

Final advice

Read the facts, then read the other side's facts. Be accurate, be polite, and be prepared to listen. The best delegates change the outcome of a debate not by being loudest, but by being the best prepared.

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