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AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF SHARJAH
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Director's Welcome Letter

Dear delegates,

I am honored to welcome you to AUSMUN 2024, where you will play an essential role in shaping global discourse about world issues. This year's conference is set to be a platform for innovation, collaboration, and meaningful dialogue. Here we will explore global issues, analyze the complexities of the same, and propose solutions that satisfy the varying perspectives of countries in the international community.

It is important to remember that you think critically, engage in constructive debate, and seek to achieve common ground with your fellow delegates. At AUSMUN, we encourage you to approach this experience with an open mind and a commitment to finding a solution. This conference is not only a simulation but also an opportunity for you to develop skills that benefit your academic, professional, and personal lives. It is a chance to form connections with individuals who share a similar passion for global issues and diplomacy. I encourage you to make the most of this unique experience and to challenge your limits by thinking beyond the ordinary. Together, we will all contribute to the legacy of excellence that AUSMUN is known for.

I look forward to meeting you all and witnessing the remarkable contributions each of you will make to our conference.

Welcome to AUSMUN 2024, and let us embark on this enriching journey together.

Warm regards,

Sarvagya Sharma
Director of Research
AUSMUN 2024



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Moderators Welcome letter

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to AUSMUN 2024! It is with honor and the greatest pleasure that we welcome you all to the seventeenth annual American University of Sharjah Model United Nations Conference (AUSMUN) and specifically to our committee, The Arab League (AL). We are excited to meet you all, and we look forward to productive and memorable committee sessions. During this three-day conference, we will be discussing the following topics: “The Turkish Occupation of Northern Syria” and “Censorship and Internet Regulation in the Arab World”. We have put together this delegate guide to help you start your research, and we recommend that you begin digging deep into each topic. As your moderators, we are here to help you get the most out of this experience. Please do not hesitate to reach out regarding any inquiries. You can contact us via our email: arableagueausmun24@gmail.com. We wish you the best of luck with your preparations and we look forward to meeting you all!

Best Regards,
Mariam Almaazmi and Salma Daoud



Hello everyone! My name is Mariam Almaazmi, and I am a senior at the American University of Sharjah, majoring in Computer Science and minoring in Integrated Marketing Communications. I have always had a passion for MUN and have been participating in conferences for several years now. Apart from academics and extracurriculars, my hobbies include photography, video editing, and playing the piano! Since this is my last year at AUS, this will also be my last MUN conference, and so I am excited to embark on this bittersweet journey with all of you. I look forward to meeting you all soon, and will make sure to make this your best MUN experience yet!



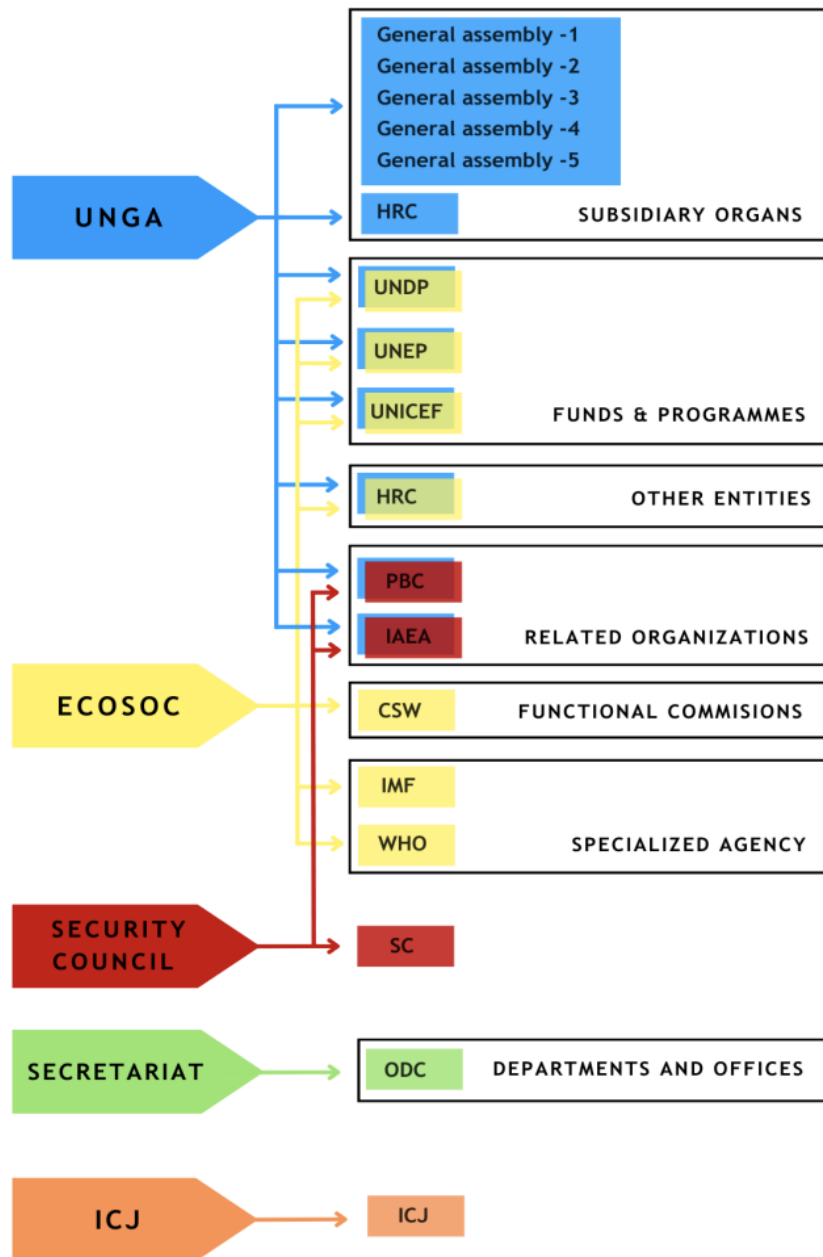
Hello everyone! My name is Salma Daoud and I am currently a law student at Sorbonne University, Abu Dhabi. My MUN journey started during high school; Over the past 4 years, it has played a significant role in developing my love for debate and public speaking skills, as well as providing me with unforgettable memories and life-lasting friendships. I can't wait to meet you all and look forward to ensuring that this MUN conference is as enjoyable and comfortable for everyone as can be!

Brief About the Committee

The Arab League, also known as “The League of Arab States”, is a regional organization founded to help Arab countries work together towards achieving unity. It was established in March 1945 and initially consisted of 6 member states; however, it currently consists of 22 members: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. (*League of Arab States (LAS) Partnership With Museum With No Frontiers (MWNF)*, n.d.) The constitution authorized a permanent General Secretariat and established the main headquarters in Cairo, Egypt.

Furthermore, they instituted a regular semi-annual meeting schedule or, in the event of extraordinary circumstances, a request from two members. (Masters, 2023) The Arab League was founded to preserve the independence of the Arabic countries in the face of fears that their land would be split between colonial powers like France and Britain. Moreover, it ensures the promotion of cooperation and better ties among its members, protects each nation's independence and sovereignty, and provides a forum for member states to discuss their concerns and interests. As well as to defend the independence and sovereignty of its member states, just like many other regional and international organizations that were founded in the 20th century, including the African League, European Union, and United Nations.

This diagram visually represents the UN system and corresponds to AUSMUN. It reflects the relationships between committees and clearly demonstrates the committee's position, significance, and powers as defined under the UN charter



Function of the Committee

According to Encyclopedia Britannica (2023), the league functions to “strengthen and coordinate the political, cultural, economic, and social programs of its members and to mediate disputes among them or between them and third parties”. Throughout the years, the Arab League has worked to include various issues in its agenda, such as hosting the first Arab Petroleum Congress in 1959, as well as establishing ALESCO (The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization) in 1964. The League’s voting procedure is such that each member has one vote on the League Council, with decisions being binding only on the states that have voted for them. The league makes its decisions on a majority basis, but members are not forced to comply with the chosen resolutions.

Topic I: Addressing the Turkish Occupation of Northern Syria

Summary & History

The Turkish occupation of northern Syria refers to Turkey's military operations and presence in several areas of northern Syria, such as the regions of Afrin, Jarabulus, and al-Bab. Though there was tension between the two before, these operations were initiated in 2016 and continued in subsequent years. (Washington Kurdish Institute, 2023) Having both historical and geopolitical roots, this occupation is a complex issue. To begin with, northern Syria is an area populated by Kurds. Following World War I, Kurdistan, their original country, was brutally broken up during centuries of political strife in the Middle East. The Kurdish population spread across the borders of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. (Explore the Kurdish Diaspora Map and History | the Kurdish Project, 2015)

The Kurds faced discrimination and were overlooked for many decades, however, the situation in Syria was worse than it was in any other region of Kurdistan. The early 1950s marked the start of the Arabization process, which divided the Kurdish territories into three distinct, minor divisions within the nation. The majority experienced a worsening of living conditions when the Ba'ath dictatorship denied them Syrian citizenship and even the ability to secure national IDs. After the Arabic Belt project was completed in 1976, the names of the Kurdish regions were changed to Arabic. Additionally, the official name of the nation had already been modified to the Syrian Arabic Republic in an effort to enforce an Arab identity. In March 2011, the Syrian Civil War emerged which was seen by the Kurds as an opportunity to increase their authority and influence within the country. Eventually, they built a successful administration in their cities and towns. In the fight against the Islamic State and other terrorist groups, they were the only group to work

with both American and Russian soldiers, which drew attention to their issue and raised the public's awareness of Kurds (Sherlock, 2021).

A primary reason causing the Turks to attack northern Syria is due to the rise of “Kurdish Militias”. Turkey has a sizeable Kurdish population; the Turkish government sees the YPG (Kurdish People's Protection Units) and PYD (Democratic Union Party) as a branch of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), which Turkey, the United States, and the European Union classify to be a terrorist organization. According to Crisis Group (2023), “One of the deadliest chapters in the conflict's almost four-decade history began in July 2015 between Turkish security forces and PKK militants.” Turkey was concerned that the empowerment of its own Kurdish people would result from the growing influence of Kurdish militants in Syria. In response to these worries, Turkey began conducting military operations in northern Syria, beginning in 2016 with Operation Euphrates Shield, which had the dual objective of confronting ISIS and the YPG. The position of Turkey was further solidified by subsequent operations like Operation Olive Branch in Afrin and Operation Peace Spring in northern Syria.

Discourse on the Issue

In northern Syria and northern Iraq, tensions between Turkish security forces and the People's Protection Units (YPG), the PKK's Syrian affiliate, increased, and the rate of violence in the conflict rapidly escalated. Since 2019, Turkey has become more reliant on its air force, especially armed drones, to combat the PKK and its affiliates.

Turkish territorial aspirations have been made known, especially in regions where there are substantial populations of Arabs or Turkmen. Due to such goals, Turkey has been involved militarily in northern Syria and occupied a number of its provinces: targeting the agriculture, water supplies, and electricity infrastructure, which are abundant in northern Syria. An effort to gain access to these resources may be observed in Turkey's occupation of the area. (Turkey Is Running Northern Syria Dry, 2023)

According to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet: “The human rights situation in parts of north, northwest, and northeast Syria under the control of Turkish forces and Turkish-affiliated armed groups is grim, with violence and criminality rife” (UNITED NATIONS, 2018) UNHCR has reported multiple human rights breaches such as kidnapping and disappearance of civilians, including women and children, whose whereabouts are still unknown. There has been an increase in documented homicides, kidnappings, unauthorized transfers of persons, land and property seizures, and forced evictions.

In addition, According to Human Rights Watch: “between October 5, 2023, and October 10, 2023, Turkish Armed Forces drone strikes on Kurdish-held areas of northeast Syria damaged vital infrastructure and caused disruptions to millions of people's access to electricity and water.” (“Northeast Syria: Turkish Strikes Disrupt Water, Electricity,” 2023)

Past International Organization (IO) Actions & Latest Developments

With millions of Syrians fleeing to Turkey, the Syrian conflict has created a massive refugee crisis. The intention to control refugee flows and establish safe zones is one reason for Turkey's military presence in northern Syria, notably in regions like Afrin and Idlib. In addition, Turkey has expressed worry about extremist groups like ISIS being present in northern Syria. Turkey attempted to counter ISIS and other security risks along its border with Operation Euphrates Shield and Operation Olive Branch.

The UN Security Council has discussed the Turkish occupation of northern Syria on multiple occasions and has taken a leading role in efforts to end the Syrian crisis through political talks, cease-fire agreements, and humanitarian aid. The resolution passed nine years ago made this possible. However, on July 11, 2023, the UNSC failed to renew this resolution reauthorizing the Syria cross-border aid mechanism (Resolution 2672), which allowed the delivery of humanitarian aid into areas of Syria that were not under government control without the need for government approval. As a result, the mechanism was shut down. (The Demise of the Syria Cross-Border Aid Mechanism, n.d.)

Questions the Committee and Resolutions Should Address

1. What steps should be taken to address the problem of refugees displaced by this occupation?
2. To what extent are legitimate security concerns, such as the PKK terrorist organization, behind the Turkish occupation?
3. What must be accomplished in order to ensure the long-term stability of northern Syria?
4. What part should the United Nations or powerful nations, such as the USA, play in resolving this situation?
5. How can a balance be reached between international law and Turkey's security concerns?

Suggestions for Further Research

- History of Kurdistan
- Turkey's reasonings for intervening with Syrian Kurds
- Current political situation

Important links for Research

<https://dckurd.org/2023/08/14/turkish-presence-in-northern-syria/>

<https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/syrian-kurds-in-an-increasingly-precarious-position/>

<https://thekurdishproject.org/history-and-culture/kurdish-history/>

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/10/26/northeast-syria-turkish-strikes-disrupt-water-electricity>

Timeline of Major Events

July 24, 2015: Turkey Attacked the Islamic State, PKK; Turkey fought against the Islamic State and began bombing the group's positions in Syria.

May 9, 2017: U.S. Armed Syrian Kurds; President Donald Trump of the United States supported a plan to arm the YPG-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)

March 17, 2018: Turkish Troops Captured City Held by Syrian Kurds; Forces and allied Syrian rebels took "total control" of Afrin, a city in northern Syria that was previously held by YPG forces, following a months-long war that killed many civilians

March 23, 2019: Syrian Kurds Declared Victory Over Islamic State; The last populated area held by the Islamic State, near the Iraqi-Syrian border was taken control of by the SDF

October 6 – 23, 2019: Turkey Advanced Into Northern Syria; Turkish forces advanced into Syria, to drive Kurdish forces out of a buffer zone that stretches twenty miles into Syria.

August 14, 2020: War Crimes Against Syria's Kurds Reported; The research conducted by UN investigators indicated that war crimes were perpetrated in northern Syria by the Syrian National Army (SNA), which is supported by Turkey.

November 2022: Turkey Launched Operation Claw-Sword; Turkey launched an air campaign against Kurdish militants in Iraq and Syria in retaliation for the November 13 explosion in Istanbul.



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October 5, 2023 & October 10, 2023: Turkish strikes caused disruption in access to water and electricity; Turkish Armed Forces drone strikes on Kurdish-held areas of northeast Syria damaged vital infrastructure and caused disruptions to millions of people's access to electricity and water.

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<https://www.museumwnf.org/league-of-arab-states/?page=LAS-history.php>

Northeast Syria: Turkish strikes disrupt water, electricity. (2023, October 26). Human Rights Watch.
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/10/26/northeast-syria-turkish-strikes-disrupt-water-electricity>.

Topic II: Censorship and Internet Regulation in the Arab World

Summary & History

The history of censorship and Internet regulation in the Arab World is characterized by a constant struggle between authoritarian governments seeking to maintain control and citizens seeking to exercise their right to free expression. In fact, the issue is a complex and evolving story, marked by a range of factors including political, social, and cultural dynamics. The Arab World witnessed a relatively late but rapid adoption of the Internet in the 1990s and early 2000s (Alrawabdeh, 2009). Governments initially viewed the Internet as a tool for economic development and modernization. As the Internet became more popular and a platform for political expression, governments in the region began to recognize its potential as a threat to their authority. Consequently, censorship efforts started to increase, with governments blocking websites, monitoring online activities, and filtering content.

According to Brown et al. (2012), the Arab Spring uprisings of 2010-2012 marked a turning point for the Internet's role in organizing protests and disseminating information, thus accelerating censorship efforts, and leading to ongoing challenges for those advocating for a more open and free Internet in the region. In response, several Arab governments intensified their online censorship and surveillance efforts to control the narrative and suppress dissent. To illustrate, many Arab countries introduced or strengthened legal frameworks for regulating the Internet. These laws typically grant governments broad powers to monitor online activities, restrict content, and prosecute individuals critical of the state. Governments have employed technical measures to block websites and social media platforms, often in the name of protecting national security or preserving social values. These restrictions have targeted political opposition, LGBTQ+ content, and other "undesirable" information.

Moreover, Arab governments have invested heavily in surveillance technologies to monitor Internet activities and identify activists, journalists, and dissenting voices. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have become influential in the region. Radcliffe (2021) states that "79% of Arab nationals between the ages of 18-24 say they get their news from social media." As a result, governments have pressured these platforms to remove content, shut

down accounts, or share user data. Internet regulation and censorship practices vary from country to country in the Arab World. Governments around the world have employed various strategies to limit the free flow of information on the Internet. According to Human Rights Watch (n.d.), countries like Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates employ censorship measures using proxy servers, which act as intermediaries between users and the internet to filter and block specific content. In several nations, including Jordan, high taxes and telecommunications policies result in expensive internet access, making it unaffordable for many citizens. Moreover, Tunisia stands out in the region for having the most comprehensive internet-related legislation, primarily aimed at ensuring that online expression remains under strict government control, especially when it comes to critical speech.

As a result, international organizations and advocacy groups have worked to raise awareness about Internet censorship and surveillance in the Arab World, pressing for more online freedoms. However, these efforts often face resistance from governments that prioritize security and stability.

Discourse on the Issue

The Arab World's approach to censorship and Internet regulation reflects a complex interplay between the desire for control and the demands for free expression, making it a critical issue with implications for human rights, democracy, and regional cooperation. Because of this, the UN Charter is violated by the issue of censorship very frequently throughout all chapters. The Charter gives people the right to information (Article 21), freedom of expression (Article 19), and human rights and democracy (Preamble). Media censorship and control deny these rights to the citizens of Arab countries, which can have far-reaching consequences for both the region and the broader global community (United Nations, n.d.).

Censorship in Arab countries has significant political implications, as it enables governments to maintain power and suppress opposition for the sake of stability and security. On the other hand, the lack of accountability and political unrest that censorship can cause in Arab countries leads to citizens losing faith in their government and leaders for shunning opinions that are not similar to theirs. From a social perspective, censorship preserves cultural and religious values but stifles diversity of ideas and critical discussions on social issues.

According to the European Institute of the Mediterranean, Nawar (2003) states that if Arab governments continue to push harsh censorship policies, journalists will be unable to report a full story. Because of this, the content received by citizens can be considered biased and one-sided, thus repressing the intellectual thought process.

Past International Organization (IO) Actions & Latest Developments

Numerous international organizations have addressed the issue of media censorship. Amnesty International, Reporters Without Borders Advocacy, the World Bank, and UNESCO have all implemented digital literacy programs and initiatives to raise awareness and promote internet freedom. Additionally, the United Nations, through its sub-organizations like the Human Rights Council and UNESCO, has engaged in efforts to combat media censorship in the Arab world. UNESCO has actively supported media development in the Arab region, offering training for journalists, advocating for media ethics, and fostering independent media outlets. Notably, UNESCO organized an event titled "No Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists in the Arab Region" in November 2021, highlighting the violence faced by Lebanese journalists and discussing the issue of physical abuse and threats that often go unpunished. It was also revealed that Iraq had the second-highest number of journalists killed in 2020, following Mexico (UNESCO, 2021).

Journalists have frequently faced arrest and imprisonment in Arab nations under the pretext of endangering "national security." In Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa report (2022), it was revealed that Arab authorities frequently misuse terrorism-related laws to stifle journalists and citizens who express dissenting opinions, participate in peaceful demonstrations, or engage in human rights advocacy and political activism. For instance, in Jordan, three journalists were detained and accused of "disseminating false information" due to their reporting on leaked documents that exposed the financial activities of corporations, politicians, and the monarch. Similarly, in Morocco, human rights advocate Saida Alami received a two-year jail sentence for her social media posts condemning the suppression of journalists and activists. Since this issue is particularly prevalent in Arab countries, other nations can only provide recommendations through international organizations. Nevertheless, addressing this problem ultimately depends on the choices made by the countries themselves regarding policy adjustments.

The Arab League shares a core mandate with the United Nations, centered on promoting peace, security, and stability. Both organizations strive to prevent conflicts, resolve disputes, and foster unity among member nations. They also collaborate to enhance economic opportunities, advocate for human rights, and facilitate political inclusion. These joint efforts aim to fulfill their mandate and create a more secure global environment (United Nations, n.d.).

Questions the Committee and Resolutions Should Address

How can the Arab League manage the younger generation's growing demand for political and social freedom online while still maintaining government authority?

What mechanisms and strategies should be in place for effective crisis management in case the situation worsens, while still maintaining the well-being of citizens?

How does the issue or crisis affect the broader Arab region, and what regional cooperation is required to address it effectively?

What strategies can be developed to improve public access to information, government transparency, and open data in the region, so that citizens have access to reliable information?

How can the Arab League establish guidelines for content regulation that balance freedom of expression with cultural and societal values?

Suggestions for Further Research

The impact of social media on Arab youth

The ethical dilemma of journalism in the Arab World

The influence of international governments on Arab media

Hacking and VPN usage in media-censored Arab countries

Changes in culture and society in the Arab World after the arrival of the Internet

Important Links for Research

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000266023>

<https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/government-policy-internet-must-be-rights-based-and-user-centred>

<https://dc.medill.northwestern.edu/blog/2022/02/02/censorship-suppression-the-norm-in-some-arab-world-nations-experts-say/#sthash.B7khlBTZ.dpbs>

Timeline of Major Events

1990s – Early 2000s: Arab countries began adopting the Internet as a tool for economic development and modernization. Censorship was still not an issue here as authorities were more concerned about monitoring traditional media outlets.

Mid-2000s: Online platforms became spaces for political dissent, criticism of governments, and discussions on sensitive topics. Censorship starts to increase, and governments apply surveillance initiatives in response to online activism.

2010 – 2011: The Arab Spring marked a turning point, with social media and the Internet playing a crucial role in organizing protests and disseminating information. Governments in the Arab World intensified online censorship and surveillance efforts to control the narrative and suppress dissent.

2010: The countries of the League introduced or strengthened legal frameworks for regulating the Internet, granting governments broad powers to monitor online activities, restrict content, and prosecute individuals critical of the state.

2012: Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube became influential in the region, and governments pressured these platforms to remove content, shut down accounts, or share user data.

Current: International organizations, human rights groups, and advocacy organizations worked to raise awareness about Internet censorship and surveillance in the Arab World, pressing for more online freedoms. The tension between governments' desire to control the Internet and citizens' demands for freedom of expression continues to shape the digital landscape in the Arab World.

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https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/no-impunity-crimes-against-journalists-arab-region?TSPD_101_R0=080713870fab200028e3c3a7be12bd869752042453cd742c1412ede09824b3e578bac8dee28d3b7a08db69a62b1430005d7ec0dbdefe1a4ee4b3a6911c9ab030441bc916d28e5d615ccb48367d3ba1145050342204aaad240b03efd26906cba5

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