

EVAP Ep. 51 Shamala Kandiah

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SPEAKERS

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall, Shamala Kandiah Thompson, Speaker

 Speaker 00:00

 Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 00:12

Welcome to Expert Voices on Atrocity Prevention by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. I'm Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall, Deputy Executive Director at the Global Centre. This podcast features one-on-one conversations with practitioners from the fields of human rights, conflict prevention and atrocity prevention. These conversations will give us a glimpse of the personal and professional side of how practitioners approach human rights protection and atrocity prevention, allowing us to explore challenges, identify best practices and share lessons learned on how we can protect populations more effectively.

 Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 00:47

Today, I'm joined by Shamala Kandiah Thompson, Executive Director of Security Council Report, a non-governmental organization that provides research and analysis on the workings of the UN Security Council. Thank you for joining us today Shamala.

 Shamala Kandiah Thompson 01:01

Really pleased to be here Jaclyn.

J Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 01:04

Now the Global Centre knows you and your colleagues work very well. But for our listeners who might not be as familiar, can you give us an overview of the history of Security Council Report and your own personal work at the organization?

S Shamala Kandiah Thompson 01:18

Sure, I'd be happy to and it does feel a little bit strange to be on this side, because we do a podcast called Interactive Dialogues, and I love asking the questions, but I think this will be interesting. So the Security Council Report, we just celebrated our 20th anniversary, I think similar to what you guys have just had. We were set up around the same time, and I joined six months after the start of Security Council Report in May, 2006. Our first issue came out in November, 2005.

S Shamala Kandiah Thompson 01:53

And so amazingly, I've been there, you know, for 19 and a half years. It's the longest time I've ever been in anything, and I think part of that is coming in at the start, or almost at the start, there's a sense of being part of a startup, and it's exciting. You're developing something new, and Security Council Report at that time, what we were trying to do reporting on the Security Council was not something that was that common. Now you have a lot more organizations, media, where there's a lot more information about the Council, but it was a period where there wasn't that much information, and so, you know, we had to sort of build relationships that would allow us to get what we needed to do that reporting.

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Shamala Kandiah Thompson 02:44

The goal at that time, and still really, was to increase the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of the Security Council. And I think when we look at those three things, I think Security Council Report has been able to help improve the transparency and accountability. The effectiveness is still a question mark, and I feel that sometimes that's bigger than us. But, what we try and part of that is through elected members, which I'm happy to talk about because we've worked very closely with them over the last 20 years. Over the years, we started first with a monthly forecast that looked ahead at the programme of work of the Security Council, providing background and analysis of the issues that will be coming up in the month ahead. We then added longer research reports on specific topics, usually thematic areas, like children at armed conflict, or women peace and security, and in 2011 we started Wat's In Blue, which is sort of a daily reporting that goes out on our website, and that, I think, really changed the way we worked. Because now we had to kind of be in constant contact, it wasn't a monthly publication, with council members, and we were providing really up to date reporting of what was going to happen the day after. Around that same time, 2011/2012 we started working with incoming members with capacity building, and trying to help them prepare for the Council. So what we're able to provide sort of increased over time, as we also began to accumulate more knowledge of the Council and how it works, and what members have been able to do in it.

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Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 04:34

That's great. I mean, Security Council Report has been, for us, the gold standard of understanding Council dynamics, and obviously with atrocity situations, there is a lot of Council dynamics to follow over the past decade and a half. So, we definitely appreciate all of your publications. I think the research reports in particular, you have a way of, kind of, taking highly technical processes and laying them out in a way that's accessible, understandable, and you actually can figure out what's happening in the Council without getting lost in bureaucratic language, which is fantastic.

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Shamala Kandiah Thompson 05:18

I'm happy to hear that it's readable and accessible. We always worry that the products are perhaps only really useful to a small group of people. But that's one of the things we've discovered over the years, that there are people who find it helpful, who I think when SCR was started, in 2005, I understand that it was aimed, sort of at people in missions who might need to sort of quickly send cables back to capital. But also for providing information to the Council, because some of the member states that started it had been in the Council a few years before, and found there was a lack of certain types of information that would be useful in their decision-making. Our first Executive Director, Colin Keating, was in the Council during the Rwanda crisis, and that was, I think for him, it really shaped his thinking about what Security Council Report should be doing, because he felt that lack of information during a situation like that of atrocity crimes.

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Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 06:33

You mentioned the kind of support that you provide to incoming members, elected members, and to, obviously, Council members that that might need help or information on how to carry out their job. We're releasing this episode in January as five new members join the Council. What does this transition look like behind the scenes, and what kinds of activities do elected members engage in to ensure they are prepared for Council activities from day one in January?

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Shamala Kandiah Thompson 07:04

I think that the good thing is that we're seeing incoming Council elected members really wanting to be more prepared. There's an awareness of how useful it is to go in with an understanding of certain things, how to function in the Council, and a lot of that is being able to understand how the UN Charter is used, how the Provisional Rules of Procedure are applied in practice, and the working methods of the Council. All of which you know, when you say those words it sounds a bit dry and technical, but in the training we do, the capacity building we do, I think we are able to show how alive it is, how important it is to understand these things in order to achieve certain goals in the Council. And we see this every day in terms of how procedure is used, and why you need to understand it. For an incoming member, the first step is being elected and then putting together your team. If you have an uncontested election, some of them have started much earlier now and are able to have their teams in New York by, say, the beginning of the election year. I think that really helps, because then, the members of the team can start following issues in the Council. So, besides working methods, like in what we do in helping them prepare, it's also giving them some background on the geographic and thematic issues, the dynamics around it. And there are other opportunities, especially in the second half of the year, for incoming members to get certain types of briefings and training. So, they do come in with a lot more awareness of what to expect. I mean, I remember when we first started doing this, and maybe around 2013/14, we have members who were not really aware of the dynamics in the Council. Today, that it's fully out there, it's exposed in a way by everything that's being written. So they have a sense of what they're going into, which I think is helpful. This year, we've been able to work with all five incoming members. We just finished the last set of sort of capacity building sessions earlier this week, and it's also it's great for us, because we develop relationships with these members, and the work we do, part of that, is being able to sort of talk to all members of the council.

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Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 09:49

And how does the kind of yearly turnover impact the Council's work, and kind of the flow that they may have already gotten into up to December?

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Shamala Kandiah Thompson 09:59

The incoming members are able to observe the Council from October. They can't participate in the meetings, and that also does help their preparation, going back to sort of the question that you're asking. But I think as a result of that, the members who are staying also have more contact with incoming members. This is something that was changed a few years ago, around 2016, I think before that they would only be able to observe from the middle of November, which was a much shorter period of time. And what I think we've seen is, in the first couple of months, even though members are more prepared, there's a period of, I think, the new composition getting used to each other, and we watch to see, sort of what positions are going to be, as issues come in the programme of work of the Council, because some of those positions are not always completely clear ahead of that, and so they're tested really, if there's a negotiation or resolution. And every year that composition is different, so you know that there's some years where it's more difficult than others for the 10 elected members to come together and agree, and in other years, that may be more like minded. But in previous years, we've seen that when there's a certain kind of crisis, they've been able to rise above what might be different from foreign policy objectives even, and come together.

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Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 11:45

You know, one of the examples, I guess a very recent example, of that transition period being a little lengthy, in 2025 the allocation of Subsidiary Body Chairs and Vice-Chairs was delayed for nearly five months, which is, to my knowledge, the longest period without such assignments in over 50 years. How did this affect the Council's overall capacity to advance its agenda?

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Shamala Kandiah Thompson 12:12

It's a good point, it was very unusual, it was the longest that we know of as well. It's right at the end of May, 29th of May, that they finally decided, and it was really unusual, and Council Members had to decide how to address certain urgent tasks, that particularly Sanctions Committees had. Two years ago there had been a hold up, where the decision was made at the end of January, on who would chair the the Subsidiary Bodies. And after that, they had a Presidential Note on the Subsidiary Body Chairs, and that said that if a decision hadn't been made before the end of the year, the January Presidency would take over. But it was only the January Presidency, because at that point, nobody imagined it could go beyond that, because it would normally be decided before. And there's a presidential note that suggests that decision should be made on the first of October. That's never happened, they've done it twice in October, but never on the first. It has sometimes gone till December, but a couple of times it had gone into January. So they decided, okay, if that happens, we put in place something. So what they had to do is then decide, well, now we don't have guidance for how to deal with this, and it sort of the practice, or what they decided to do is that the presidency, if there was a need, would then take on the task of chairing a particular Substitute Body. And we saw this in a couple of instances where there needed to be a decision on delisting, for example. But I think it did make, it slowed down the work of the Substitute Bodies a great deal. It wasn't possible for them to meet, even those that were chairs the year before, and you think could have continued, but the decision is issued as the decision for the year, it's as though they're all new, although we know that a number were going to continue. And I think it also makes you sort of see how important the work of the Substitute Bodies can be, because if you're asking, for example, for the implementation of sanctions that you know could be connected to those who have committed atrocity crimes, they are going to sort of going, nothing's going to happen during this period, right? And what we then saw for the rest of the year, it was a catch up where the Substitute Bodies were trying to meet, but we haven't done a full assessment. But my sense is, there were things like on children and armed conflict, I know there were three or four reports that were ready to be discussed by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, and they were held up till after June. So that slows down the work of a working group that it is very busy, that's doing work, where the conclusions that come out of these reports do have an impact on the ground. So I think, overall, it was really not good to start that way. And I am a little bit concerned because that decision has not been made for 2026 in terms of the Chairs to Substitute Bodies. It's been held up again, I'm hoping it won't go for as long as we saw this year.

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Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 16:09

Definitely, hopefully won't go that long.

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Shamala Kandiah Thompson 16:12

It's unclear at this point. But I think members are beginning to be a bit worried. I mean, I have to say the incoming members were very good. And they made the decision for which bodies they wanted to Chair quite quickly. And, sometime in October, they had made that decision. But I think as you know, it then goes to the permanent members, and it's been with them since then.

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Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 16:40

You know, in the 20 years that Security Council Report has been operating, what major shifts have you observed in the way the Council operates and responds to crises, and how have these shifts impacted the Council's ability to act collectively?

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Shamala Kandiah Thompson 16:57

I sometimes see the 20 years that SCR has been around for in three sort of periods. Two thousand five to 2010, I feel the Council dynamics were not too bad. I mean, the the P5 could agree on certain things. It wasn't always easy on some things, but it felt like a period where they could get some things done. But the period from about 2011 to 2020 that's where we saw a big change with the situations in Libya, Syria coming in 2011/2012 onwards, and then Crimea in 2014. I think this was really the start of the type of difficult dynamics and tensions that we see between the US and Russia particularly. And of course, once we got to 2022/2023 with Ukraine in 2022 and then with Hamas Israel and the Gaza situation in 2023. Everything has become even more difficult, but it didn't start in these last few years. It was there earlier. And when you look at a situation like Syria, for example, as you know it was really difficult to get any sort of a strong decision after a while. One, I think, really important breakthrough, which elected members led on, was the carving out of the Syrian humanitarian track. And I think that there was an impact in that resolution, and in what it set up as a mechanism for the delivery of aid. But a lot of the time, you know, on the political situation, it was very difficult to do anything on Syria because of those dynamics. You knew that there would be a veto. And I think we see this today on Ukraine and Gaza and, I mean, there haven't even been many attempts at a resolution in Ukraine, because for a lot of members, it's quite clear that that he just isn't going to go through. And as you know, and I can talk a bit more about sort of the elected members and what they've tried to do on the Gaza resolutions as well.

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Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 19:37

Yeah, absolutely, you know, I think the Gaza resolutions are interesting because while the Council is often constrained by the veto, or even the threat of the veto, we've also seen the strength of a coordinated E10, especially on a few different Gaza resolutions, I think, in 2024. How do you view this level of cooperation, and what does it suggest about the E10s potential?

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Shamala Kandiah Thompson 20:06

I'm happy to talk about this group because, I think, again, looking at that period, in the last 15 years or so, the E10 came together as a group, partly because of how difficult things were. And I mentioned just now that the idea of the resolution in 2013 on the humanitarian track in Syria, and that came from Australia and Luxembourg, and Jordan joined them as a trio, that led on this issue. And elected members ever since, for the 10 years that you had this mechanism, they were the either lead or co-lead. And I think to me, that was sort of where other elected members sort of realized we can do things. It broke like a glass ceiling of sitting and waiting for the permanent members to sort of produce something, because they were usually the leads or the pens on almost all the geographic situations, country specific situations on the Council's agenda. So having elected members do that opened up these possibilities and I think it is one of the, in terms of the dynamics, it sort of has shifted in a way where the elected members have seen that as the E10, as 10 together, they can influence, they can put pressure on the permanent members, particularly when they're divided. There's the possibility of acting as a bridge, of coming together and saying, if you don't do this, we will, we can do a draft of a resolution and put it out. We saw members do that on Yemen in 2018, a group of sort of cross regional group did that. And I think within that the A3, the African members, and sometimes the A3+, right now we have the A3+ Guyana as a Caribbean member who is seen as a plus among the A3 grouping. I think they've become increasingly influential and have asserted themselves on particular issues. So these developments have taken place in the context of an increasingly divided Council where other members have risen up and said all right, if things are not happening, we need to try and do certain things too because we're here as a full member of the Council.

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Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 22:50

In acute crises, the Council is often seen as a singular entity that has failed, particularly during these stalemates or after vetoes. And you know, we've seen how the E10 is often a way of coming up with creative solutions and overcoming those failures. And so we know that individual member states, or the E10 as a group, frequently work relentlessly to achieve outcomes that positively impact populations on the ground. With that in mind, do you think framing inaction purely as a Council failure oversimplifies Council dynamics? And do you have any good examples of states sort of persisting to advance a resolution or an action on a crisis until an effective agreement was reached?

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Shamala Kandiah Thompson 23:39

That is an interesting question. It's true. I mean, I think from the outside, everybody does see the Council as having failed in a big way, right. Particularly on two of the biggest crisis, or three I would say, Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan. The idea is that they haven't been able to take strong action, but there's a lot of activity sort of beneath that surface. And so Gaza, I think is one example where, as we just talked about a little bit, that the E10 members came together, and first you had two elected members in 2023 November and December, who put forward resolutions. So you first had Malta, and they had a resolution that called for urgent humanitarian pauses in November, 2023. In December, 2023 UAE had a resolution on the delivery of humanitarian aid. Both really important issues that needed to be addressed because

of the impact of what was happening already to the civilian population there. The December resolution also requested an appointment of a Senior Humanitarian Reconstruction coordinator, which did happen. And then in 2024, as you said, there was an E10 resolution in March, what we've called sometimes the Ramadan resolution, because they asked for a pause during the month of Ramadan in March 2024, and it was the first time you had language on a ceasefire in a resolution. And what was also really important was that this was an E10 resolution, not any particular E10 member, but the E10 saying, this is ours, no one was claiming authorship. And that was a big development, I think, for the group to be able to produce something that they could call their own. And since then, so that was adopted, that was significant, the US abstained on that. And then you had E10 resolutions in November of 24 and then in June and September this year, which failed due to a US veto, so it wasn't adopted. But I think that it's still important, they were still important those resolutions, because they showed to the world that there were 14 members who were trying to take action to address the situation, who cared about it. And I had someone who was on the Council yesterday, that's something where she said that it particularly that last one in September, even though, you know it wasn't adopted, it moved the needle a little bit. And that some of the things that we've seen now, the developments in Gaza, some of that, she thinks, was still connected. So I think there's sometimes, not always, I mean, you don't put a resolution out to be vetoed, I think the E10 tried really hard not to have that happen, they worked really hard to try to persuade the US to abstain. So I think it's a sign of what elected members can do when they come together, even on one of the most difficult situations. There's a question about the impact on the ground, and that is a difficult one, because what the council can do doesn't always translate to certain things being implemented, and that's something that needs to be followed up. But another issue, thinking about sort of what elected members have done, I think, on hunger and conflict, I thought that was interesting, because in 2018 a group of elected members brought this issue to the council, it was Cote d'Ivoire, Kuwait, Netherlands, Sweden. The Netherlands had had a briefing a few months before, and then they brought this resolution. And when I look back, you know that resolution has now allowed Council members who are interested in you know this issue to take it forward, to ask for regular briefings. And you have, I think they're called coordinators on hunger and conflict, usually, like two elected members have been in this position. We've had Nigeria and Ireland, for example in the past, Switzerland and Guyana, Guyana and Denmark now. We saw Sierra Leone, for example, they had a high level open debate on hunger and conflict during their presidency just last month in November, there have been briefings on the risk of famine in northern Gaza, on Sudan over the last two years. And I think it's allowed members to bring this issue into the country specific lens as well, because this is a big problem, and it's the use of starvation as a tool of war, right? But there's also been a Presidential Statement on conflict and food insecurity, which was in August 2023 and white notes that OCHA has produced, which has also allowed for discussion. So it's sort of elected members continuing to work on an issue over the years that a group of them brought in.

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Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 29:47

I'm so glad you brought this up, because we've noticed that in recent years, states have used a variety of thematic discussions and the conflict and hunger line of work is a great example of it, where they're using thematic discussions to still address priorities on country situations and, particularly situations, that there is a bit of disagreement on, and they're sort of looking for avenues and entry points to make progress. To what extent is this a growing trend, versus something with extensive historical precedent on the Council?

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Shamala Kandiah Thompson 30:28

I mean, one that comes to mind is that Gaza resolution that Malta brought to the Council, with the support of the other elected members. Because they used, sort of the children in armed conflict thematic issue, which they were the chair of the Working Group of at the time, as the entry point. And I think that allowed for more acceptance of the resolution. But it's an interesting question, because in the past, we used to say thematic issues by themselves, may not produce the sort of impact on the ground that you want to see. Children and armed conflict, as I mentioned, is unusual because there are specific reports on different situations and conclusions that come out of that, that I think have a more direct impact. But some of the others tend to be more, you have the debate in the council, but the impact has to be done through a country specific lens, where you get language and resolutions that have those thematic issues, say women, peace and security, or things around protection of civilians, and placing it in those resolutions or in a sanctions mandate, that might be sort of how you'll be able to get more impact. The problem is some thematic issues have become more difficult, and like in hunger and conflict, there is sensitivity about certain situations maybe coming up in the debate, but it's hard to stop members from saying something, I guess if it's a more general debate.

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Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 32:25

You know, as the Council has become more divided and in many ways, has felt less effective, they're passing fewer resolutions some years, we're seeing a shrinking peacekeeping footprint, among other tensions. The focus of the conversation around the Security Council has felt very much only looking at the impact of inaction, so I want to flip it around and give you an opportunity to talk about what tools or Council working methods member states have been using effectively to push for preventive action, even when politics are difficult.

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Shamala Kandiah Thompson 33:10

The activity in the Council is interesting. I was looking at the numbers, because we do something looking back at the year for our January forecast, and the sense is from the outside, again, that the council doesn't take action on things, but it does. It has continued to adopt resolutions, but there are fewer than there were some years ago, there's been a decline. And I think last year, there were 46 adopted, and this year, depending on how many they end up adopting in December, I think we could be at around 42, which would be the lowest number

since the end of the Cold War. And that is partly because of the difficult dynamics. We've seen the same, where sort of meetings, interestingly, certain types of meetings, public meetings, the Open Meetings, have actually gone down. Because I think there's been a little bit less discussion on Gaza and Ukraine interestingly, which there were often sort of competing meetings with competing narratives being held on the two. But the use of different formats is something that I think members are beginning to get more creative with and one of the things we've seen is sort of more use of the informal interactive dialogue, which allows the Council to come together in an informal, close format, with usually high level officials and not usually civil society, but that's possible. **They are reformal meetings**, it was used a lot a few years ago. That has come down. But I think in a way, that format, if it's used in the right way, can be very effective. It can also be used not quite in the right way for, again, for competing narratives. And going to the question about the tools of the council, the working methods of the Council. What we have seen is that there are ways to discuss issues. It's been difficult for the Council to do horizon scanning. Over the years, we've seen attempts at that between 2010 and 2012 they were being regularly briefed in consultations by the then Head of the Department of Political Affairs, but there's a lot of sensitivity about being discussed, even in a more closed setting, by members. They don't like being discussed by the Council, because then there's a sense that they're going to become part of the Council's formal agenda and that is often seen in a negative way. But over the years, members have tried to bring it back in some form, whether it's a situational awareness briefing in the Secretariat outside the Council. We saw New Zealand do that in 2015 and in different sort of forms, I think that's continued off and on. The most recent, I would say, is the elected members, the E10, having their own version of situational awareness or horizon scanning briefings when they meet as E10, which they do regularly. It hasn't happened very often, but different members have tried to do that during some of the meetings that they have. And I hope that's something that members continue to do, because I think it is very useful to be able to get a sense of what might be turning into a situation of atrocity crimes, but being able to spot that ahead of time in order to act before it's sort of too late. And we've seen that a lot of elected members come in with an interest in conflict prevention. And this is something to think about in terms of how you actually execute this interest they have in it, and how you can sort of continue to have the right kind of information coming in. One way is also to look at using the Any Other Business agenda item, which is in consultations on the agenda. Every meeting has other matters, or any other business, and it's been a way to have a quiet discussion about something that's not on the Council's agenda. And this is especially so when there's opposition to something being discussed publicly, that under any other business you try and get agreement, but you can't actually be opposed in the same way as a public meeting. So, we've seen Myanmar discuss in this format in the past, because there was at least one member who did not want it being discussed publicly. That is often discussed in the private meeting format now, which is closed but formal. We've seen Ethiopia Tigray come in and being discussed that way. Situations on the agenda like Sudan and Syria as things have deteriorated at different times, especially on the humanitarian side, they've been discussed under AOB. The other format I mentioned earlier, the Arria-formula format, as you know, it's an informal format that is particularly useful if you want to bring in civil society voices, and particularly hearing voices from the ground, from those who are working in these situations. And we've seen in the past, for example, so there are two types of formats as well. There is, that you could, mostly they have it as an open Arria-formula, which is webcast. But the original format was a closed format. I mean, I don't think there was any webcasting when it was created in 1992. But that closed format can be particularly useful because it allows for sort of a certain type of more private discussion. We saw that, for example, the Syria Commission of Inquiry reports in 2015, they were being done as an Arria-formula. And I remember a closed one in November 2015 which had a very strong impact at a time where people were beginning to feel like, you know that the sad thing is, with a crisis in the council, there's a point where

members feel like, we can't do very much and they become a bit numb, and sometimes you need something to shock them. And I think that that report did that. We've seen it used, for example, by the Netherlands in 2018 when they were President, right to have the High Commissioner for Human Rights brief, and that meeting was opposed, and there was a vote to not have him brief. And they quickly moved from trying to do it as a public briefing to an Arria-formula that same day. So, knowing your formats can be really useful to figure out how you can get that information to members who need to hear what's happening somewhere. And Kenya in 2022 used the closed Arria-formula format for briefing on hate speech, which those who were briefing were organizations such as meta, Google, and they didn't want to do that publicly, but this was a format that they could speak to Council members in a sort of informal, closed way. We've seen it on briefings, the closed Arria-formula where Afghanistan women civil society briefers were, I think first Norway organized it in 2022 and then Switzerland 2023, and these were actually held, not even in UN premises, it was held at their Permanent Missions. So there's some interesting possibilities there. So I think understanding the working methods, how you can use these different formats can help, at least getting the information in. The public formats are also important though, to be able to see the positions, to hear what's happening. So it's trying to find that balance between the two, where sometimes there's certain things that cannot be said publicly by the briefers, but Council members can make their statements and sort of put out their positions and make clear sort of what needs to be done. And then, so getting more information through the informal formats can be very helpful.

J Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 42:17

You mentioned, you know how sometimes the Council members can, can feel numb and need to be a little shocked, and that the the COI was impactful for that. I know that the council just recently returned from a visit to Syria. What is the impact of taking the Council out of kind of the chambers in New York, and putting them in a place where they can see firsthand what they're making decisions on.

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Shamala Kandiah Thompson 42:50

I think it's really important that they are able to do that a bit more. Before covid, they had three to five visiting Missions in the in the few years before covid. I mean, it varied a lot, but they had increased it, and then you had covid, and it's really gone down to one or two and sometimes none in the last five years. And so having that visit, I think, was really important, they'd had one to Addis, which is a regular every two years they go up for the meeting with the AU PSC. But this one, I think, the impact is in seeing what's happening on the ground and talking to those there. SCR has been fortunate enough to accompany the Council since 2012 on almost all its visits. We weren't able to do this one because logistically it was difficult, but for example, I went on one day, went to Bangladesh and Myanmar in 2018, and you could see when we went to the camps in Bangladesh, the Rohingya camps, there are about a million Rohingya in those camps, and even Council members who had seen these camps in the past, in other places in the world, it was astounding because of the numbers, the size and the impact, I think was felt. I think what's important is the timing as well. So, for example, going to Lebanon now is important because we now have a situation where UNIFIL, the last resolution that was adopted, has asked for UNIFIL to basically start drawing down after the end of 2026. And so you have this one year, and a number of members, although that resolution was adopted, had concerns about whether the situation was ready for UNIFIL to leave. I think that maybe going before that adoption would have been even better, because then you would have a sense of what should be in that resolution. But it's still important now, because they are going to have to make that decision, or they're going to have to sort of be comfortable with the idea of it drawing down after the end of next year, and what they've seen might sort of inform how they feel about that. So I feel that there are issues around sort of agreeing on visiting missions now. It's the consensus decision now, agreeing where to go has been not that easy, so I think that's one of the reasons there haven't been so many. But I hope that having this visit, and in Syria it was really important to build trust and develop some of those relationships with that change in the government in December, and that is a huge change for the Council and if it's sort of done right, this could be one of its success stories, which it sort of needs at this point I think.

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Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 46:05

I think on the idea of a success story. One final, sort of closing thought and question for you is given the current challenges, where do you see the greatest opportunities for strengthening the Council's role in protecting populations from atrocities?

S

Shamala Kandiah Thompson 46:26

It's a difficult time in the Council. We've seen this year particularly sort of changing positions, sort of shifting dynamics, and push back on language that was possible before on IHL, on international law, human rights, gender and all of that can weaken sort of the outcomes that the Council of that what they're able to do. But I think, ultimately, I still believe that the elected members can play a role that in working together, as we've seen, that they can make that difference. It is not always easy, because they will come in with different positions and they would have to find a way to bring attention to situations where atrocity crimes are taking place, or where there's a potential. But we've seen that it's possible and I think being able to maybe push for more horizon scanning, conflict prevention. One thing that they had this year, Pakistan did a resolution, basically on Chapter VI on the peaceful resolution of conflict. And there's a Report from the Secretary General that's due by July next year, and a discussion of that Report. So I feel like members who have an interest in trying to highlight conflict prevention, it is that resolution is something they could try to use ahead of the July discussion. And there's also the Peace Operations Review. You mentioned that the changes there, the changes because of UN80, the liquidity crisis, and I think members have an opportunity to shape the future of peace operations. The shape is unclear at the moment, but I think if they start to think about what really works and what doesn't and we have four members coming in, or who will be in the Council, who have had peace operations in their countries. Somalia is already in, DRC, Colombia and Liberia, who recently had a peace operations, and they have an experience of what has worked for them that they will probably bring into the Council. And maybe as a last point, I think one of the most important things the Council will do next year is the selection process or for the next Secretary General, they select, the General Assembly appoints, but all the members next year will be part of that process. And I think who is chosen it's going to make a big difference to the UN and what kind of UN we will have in the future. So I think it's an important decision.

J

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 49:28

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