



GimBMUN 2026

Human Rights Council

Study Guide

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Gimnazija Bežigrad, Ljubljana

Human Rights Council – **Study Guide**

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Introduction to the chairs:

Dear delegates,

We would like to welcome you all to the Human Rights Council of GimBMUN 2026! We are excited to be your chairs and work with you, as well as guide you through the days of the conference, hearing your ideas, and provide you with valuable information and feedback. We hope that this study guide helps to lead you through the topic and serve as a foundation for successful research and preparation.

Chair Ms. Mia Đukić

Hello delegates, I am excited to get to know you all and work with you for the 3 days of GimBMUN. My name is Mia Đukić and I am a student of IBDP1 here in Gimnazija Bežigrad. I was born in Belgrade and am half Serbian half Croatian. I have been living in Ljubljana for almost 4 years now. I am into reading, learning about new stuff, socializing, learning languages, volunteering and organizing events. I am excited to be chairing together with my best friend after a long wait, due to GimBMUN taking a gap year in 2025.

I started with MUN at the beginning of my first year in high school and have gone to a couple of conferences around Europe, and I love it; I enjoy traveling, debating and meeting new people from diverse backgrounds. I am grateful for all opportunities I got as a result of actively participating in MUN. I hope to make this committee as inspiring and fun as my chairs in the past did for me. I wish you all the best of luck with your preparation and hope for an immersive debate.

Chair Ms. Alesia Sotnikova

Hello everyone! I am incredibly happy to finally see you all participate as delegates in our committee of Human Rights Council of GimBMUN 2026. My name is Alesia Sotnikova, I am 17 years old, and I am also a student of IBDP1 in Gimnazija Bežigrad, where we are organizing this wonderful conference. I am Russian, I was born and raised at the south, in a city of Krasnodar, and then I moved to Slovenia when I was 13. I have been living here, In Ljubljana, for almost 5 years now. I am fan of music as an art form and culture. I also like history, learning languages, reading, meeting new people, traveling and participating in MUN events. I am extremely excited to finally chair this committee with my dear friend Chair Ms. Mia since that has been our dream for quite a long time.

I started learning about MUN 3 years ago, and my passion for this activity has grown a lot since. I am happy I did not give up on it as MUN gave me lots of new opportunities. I hope that all of us will have the most pleasant experience throughout our conference in HRC, that our debate will be as productive as possible and that we will not forget about having fun as well! Good luck!

Introduction to HRC:

General:

Human Rights Council was established on the 15th March 2006, by the General Assembly by the adoption of the Resolution 60/251, and serves as intergovernmental body within the United Nations system. It is tasked with strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and making recommendations on them. The HRC has its assembly point in Geneva Switzerland. ^{1, 14, 18, 41, 42}

History of HRC:

United Nations Commission on Human Rights was established in 1946, and it served as subsidiary body of Economic and Social Council. It served to weave the international legal fabric that protects our fundamental rights and freedoms. The Commission on Human Rights faced criticism for its politicization and ineffective membership, and reform was awaited. In the 2005 report “In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All” by former Secretary General Kofi Annan, a comprehensive UN reform was outlined, establishment of HRC was just a part of this reform. The first session took place from 19th till 30th June 2006 officially replacing the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. In 2007, the Council adopted new mechanisms like the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the Advisory Committee, and the Complaint Procedure to enhance transparency and effectiveness. ^{1, 14, 18, 41, 42, 51}

Mechanism of HRC:

The council consists of 47 Member States elected directly and indirectly by a majority of the 193 states of the UN General Assembly. Elections take place annually renewing one third of the members. Members are limited to two mandates, with the duration of the individual mandate being 3 years. The Council has a bureau which consists of a president and four vice-presidents who represent each of the regional groups. Mechanisms of Human Rights Council include Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Special Procedures, Complaint Procedures, Advisory Committee, as well as Regular Sessions and Special Sessions.

The Universal Periodic Review is a unique mechanism where all of UN member states undergo a review of their human rights records every 4-5 years. At Special Procedures, independent experts are appointed to monitor and report on specific human rights issues or situations in countries. Complaint Procedures include a submission of complaints by individuals and organizations about human rights violations. Complaints are reviewed by the Council, which may then take action. The Advisory Committee consists of 18 experts from different regions conducting studies and providing recommendations on human rights issues. At Regular Sessions, which are held thrice a year, various country-specific and international human rights issues are being discussed. Special Sessions can be called to address urgent issues or emergencies. ^{1, 14, 18, 41, 42, 51}

Last 5 years of HRC:

The Council has focused on emerging concerns, including digital technology and human rights, climate justice, the right to a clean environment, etc. These were often addressed through consensus resolutions. Special sessions were convened on various crises in the world, highlighting pressing violations and calling for international action.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism continued to evaluate member states' human rights records systematically, fostering accountability. The HRC underwent regular elections in October of 2024 for its 47-member body, where the UN General Assembly elected new members for the 2025-2027 term, as well as the Council engaged in various reforms. These reforms aim to ensure that member states uphold high human rights standards, which could enhance the Council's effectiveness in addressing issues like environmental protection and the right to water.^{1, 14, 18, 41, 42, 51}

Safeguarding the Right to Water in the Era of Water Privatization

Introduction:

Water is the most essential resource for life, yet the question of who should control, manage, and distribute it remains an enigma and a never-ending global debate. Over the past two centuries, water provision has shifted between public and private hands, with each approach promising greater efficiency, access, and quality. The movement toward water privatization has sparked significant controversy, with arguments both for and against, as well as contradicting outcomes among nations.^{15, 19}

History:

To name a few examples, the history of water privatization can be better understood by examining key developments in different countries. The United Kingdom has one of the richest histories on the topic of water privatization, expressed in a long timeline of events where people fought for their right to access water against monopolies and government control. In the early 19th century, specifically by the 1820s, water companies in England and Wales were privately owned. However, the Public Health Acts of 1848 and 1875 established local authorities' responsibility for water supply and sanitation, leading to the municipalization of water services. Later, the Water Act of 1945 encouraged the amalgamation of water companies and local boards, and river boards and authorities were created to manage water resources and pollution control. In 1974, the UK established ten Regional Water Authorities (RWAs) to oversee water supply, sewage and environmental management across river basins.^{16, 52}

A major shift occurred in 1989, when the UK water industry was again privatized by the Conservative government, transforming the RWAs into private regional monopolies. That was originally proposed in 1984, and after the Conservative party winning the 1987 elections, the plan was implemented successfully. This privatization was justified by claims of greater efficiency, increased investment capacity and the introduction of competition, although these claims were not strongly supported by evidence. The government enabled the process by writing off significant public debt and providing financial incentives to the newly formed private companies. 10 regional water authorities were established, as well as 3 new regulatory bodies:

- Drinking Water Inspectorate, which was responsible for monitoring water quality

- National Rivers Authority, which was responsible for monitoring pollution, flood risks and managing water resources
- Water Services Regulation Authority, which was responsible for price regime for water companies and for monitoring performance of said water companies, mentioned above ^{16, 52}

Despite privatization, these companies operated as protected regional monopolies without real competition. Many years later, UK has not reversed water privatization since 1989. Instead, the privatized model has evolved, with ongoing debates about its effectiveness, affordability and public accountability. Calls for change and stronger regulation remain prominent in public opinions. Compared to UK, Wales has partly moved into the direction of turning water ownership public, and Scotland retained public ownership of its water services, what has generally seen better environmental outcomes. ^{16, 52}

Another notable case of water privatization occurred in Bolivia, where water privatization led to huge protests, the eventual cancellation of the concession after tariff hikes and perceived monopolization of resources sparked public unrest. This event, named the Cochamba Water War became a global symbol of resistance to water privatization. ^{8, 52}

The rationale behind the privatization of water utilities generally rests on two hypotheses – Fiscal and Efficiency. The fiscal hypothesis suggests that privatization can relieve governments of the burden of infrastructure investments and help reduce fiscal pressures. The efficiency hypothesis implies that private entities can manage water utilities more efficiently than the public sector. However, the historical experience, especially in the UK, shows that privatization also brought challenges such as price increases and the need for strong regulatory oversight to protect public interests and ensure equitable access to water. ^{16, 52}

Globally, water privatization peaked in the 1990s. Over the past 30 years, the sector has faced significant challenges as societies continue to fight for access, affordability, and the recognition of water as a human right.

Current situation:

Water is a fundamental element necessary to sustain life. In general, governments are responsible for the provision of safe and affordable water services to all, nonetheless many governments have opted to privatize this sector. Water privatization is an umbrella term which refers to public authorities delegating water provision to private actors and does not restrict the term to asset sales. The privatization of water services takes several distinct forms, each representing distinct levels of private sector involvement and responsibility and can range from a fully privatized water sector to private public partnership agreements. The choice of model often reflects specific local objectives, contexts, and political considerations that shape how water resources are managed. Full privatization, public-private partnerships, joint ventures, and public systems are the four main types of water service systems, arranged along a gradient of private sector involvement. ^{15, 19}

Full Privatization:

Full Privatization is the most private form of water privatisation and it is when the government of a country permanently transfers all ownership and control of all water and sanitation assets to a private company, in this case government has only the role of a regulator and overseer. Problems such as loss of public control and difficulty in reversing privatization once implemented are common with this form of privatisation, which can be observed in Chile and UK. ^{16, 31}

Public-private Partnership:

Public-private partnership (PPP) is the most common form of a privatized system and is characterized by public ownership of water with specific function such as operation, maintenance and in some cases, investment being delegated to private companies for a limited amount of time. PPPs vary by the degree of responsibility and risk borne by the private partner to the following sub-forms: ^{43, 48}

- **Management Contract**
Management Contract is a type of PPP which can last anywhere from 4 to 7 years. Private partners operate and manage the water system, but do not own it, they get paid fees which usually correlate with performance, this system is financed and carried out by the public sector. Management contract has the lowest risk for the private sector of all forms of private water. ^{43, 48}
- **Lease/Affermage**
Lease contract, also known as affermage, is a form of PPP where the private operator leases the water assets and manages operations, they pay out a lease fee to the public owner, in most cases the government, while they collect revenues, this investment is similarly to management contract financed by the public sector, however the duration of leasing is longer and typically ranges from 10 to 15 years and the private partner assumes more risks, such system is present in France and Francophone West Africa. ^{43, 48}
- **Mixed ownership company**
Mixed ownership is a type of PPP where a private investor acquires a minority share in a publicly owned water company, further the private company has 100% of the responsibilities in regard to management, while the public sector retains majority ownership and control. Such system can be seen in Spain and Mexico. While mixed ownership aims to balance public control and private efficiency, it has faced criticism over transparency, accountability, and sometimes irregularities in contract awards. ^{43, 48}
- **Concession**
Concession is a form of PPP in which the private operator manages the entire water system, including financing, investment, operations, and maintenance, most of commercial risk is assumed by the private partner, the private partner despite

not owning the assets has control over service delivery for the contract duration, which is the longest of all types of PPPs, ranging from 20 to 30 years, when the contract ends assets usually revert to public ownership unless renegotiated. This is the most common form of PPP globally.^{43, 48}

A variant of concession is the build-operate transfer (BOT) system, the focus of this system is on new infrastructure. The private company builds and operates a facility such as treatment plants that help with sanitation of water, for a fixed period of time which is the same as that of concessions. After the contract is expired all new infrastructure is transferred back to the government, in other words the government becomes the rightful owner of the new infrastructure. This form is funded through revenues which cover costs, debt repayment and profit during the operation.^{43, 48}

Joint Ventures:

Joint ventures (JV) refer to a formal partnership between the public sector such as a municipal water district or government agency and a private company, where both parties contribute capital, expertise, and/or assets, and share ownership, risks, and rewards according to their agreed stakes. The goal of this mode is to combine the opportunities to advancement, efficiency, investment, and technical expertise that private companies bring to the table while maintaining the public oversight and accountability. Examples of JV can be found in Philippines and China.²¹

Public system:

Public system owned water is the opposite of privatized water in other words it is when the government has full ownership of the water and no part of the responsibilities or tasks is delegated or outsourced to private companies.

Motives:

Most privatization initiatives are driven by the combination of the following motivations rather than any singular factor: Often times governments are motivated to opt for a private water system by operational efficiency and improve service quality, this is particularly present in areas or systems that are shaped by problems such as low bill collection rates, high water losses, and intermittent supply. Finances play a crucial role in motivating a government or a body in charge of the water sector of a country or municipality, to turn towards a privatized system. Such systems offer means to reduce public financial burdens or expand access to water services without increasing government debt. Further, political ideologies play a big part in decision making in general, so it does not come as a surprise when water privatization is also influenced by such ideologies. Market-oriented approaches generally support privatization, while socially oriented or progressive perspectives often express reservations or opposition to it.

Human rights concerns:

The problem with the system occurs when it undermines the basic human rights to water and sanitation, in light of the water crisis, which affects more than 2,2 billion people currently,

privatization of a sector that is essential for human survival is a controversial decision, with many concerns on the grounds of human rights: ^{15, 19, 25, 28}

a. Affordability of services

Private companies aim to earn a profit from the services they provide and are therefore more likely to raise tariffs and service costs. Tariff increases with the goal of achieving full-cost recovery are not only present in private investors, but however these investors are also characterised by a profit mindset making tariff increases more likely to happen. Affordability problems tend to arise particularly in cases where the private company keeps significant responsibilities, including obligations to invest in and upgrade infrastructure. In these situations, companies are more inclined to raise prices to ensure profitability. ²⁵

This poses a serious challenge, especially in poorer countries or neighborhoods, where the inability to pay for water services can result in a complete loss of access to water. For example, in Latin America, a private company raising tariffs to be able to return and gain on their investment would create inability or issues in affording water for one in five households. While in Sub-Saharan Africa, 70% of households would struggle to pay water bills if prices were increased. With private companies seeking to profit from water services and with global inflation driving up costs-price hikes are likely. This would directly increase the number of people who lack access to water, which is recognized as a basic human right. ^{25, 33}

b. Inadequate provision of services to all

Tying back to the previous point on profit mindset of private entities and power of said entities to control water and sanitation services, results in rising risk of monopolization as private providers seek to secure exclusive control to ensure the profitability of their service especially with when mixed with the nature of contracting water, where a single provider is contracted for a long amount of time, which reduces the competition. Consequently, monopolization of this sector lead to tariffs that disproportionately affect vulnerable and low-income populations, deepening social inequalities. In some regions, privatization has led to the marginalization of smaller or poorer municipalities. ^{25, 33}

c. Poor quality and safety of the water and sanitation provided

The problem in regard to safety and quality of water in privat systems arises mainly because private operators often prioritize cost-cutting and profit over maintenance and service quality. In many cases water safety and services deteriorated after privatisation. Negligence of proper disinfection and treatment, resulting in failures to meet safety standards such as those for *E. coli* and harmful chemicals like Trihalomethanes violating the human right to safe, clean, and accessible water, which is fundamental to health and dignity. Further, valuing profit over quality may lead to maintenance backlogs, use of inferior materials, delayed repairs, and workforce reductions, all of which degrade water quality and safety. Later repairs of the systems

that were neglected may result in additional fees which could cause many not to be able to afford further services and stay without water.²⁵

d. Lack of equality in provision and discrimination against users

UN research has shown that private providers often prioritise bigger cities and neglect low- income communities, rural areas and slum dwellers, forcing them to rely on unsafe or costly alternatives. Discrimination against users does not stop at picking who to provide with water, as now the responsibility of collecting water falls on to women, which is not only dangerous, but it also directly contributes to reducing economic opportunities. Similarly, ill or disabled people within these communities often are faced with their conditions worsening as they are forced to settle for unsafe water. Discrimination based on disability, age, or health status is strictly prohibited by the UN enforced human right to water, it is within a state's responsibility to ensure that water is accessible and affordable for all. The UN Special Rapporteurs are calling for measures such as:

- Subsidized or free minimum water allocations for those on fixed or low incomes.
- Physical adaptations to water infrastructure.
- Prohibitions on disconnections affecting vulnerable users.²⁵

e. Lack of sustainability

Trying to cut costs when building new infrastructure and neglecting long-term operational and maintenance (O&M) needs, leading to infrastructure deterioration, increased service failures, and ultimately forcing costly rebuilds instead of repairs. Additionally, political pressures to keep water prices artificially low can result in insufficient funds for upkeep as well as create a cycle of build-neglect-rebuild which not only wastes resources but also compromises reliable, sustainable water provision for communities. Sometimes private companies do not see the need to invest into infrastructure when they are contracted for a short time which can cause issues for after their contract.²⁵

f. Power imbalances

Power imbalances in privatized water systems arise because private companies often hold more power than public regulators or local governments, leading to regulatory challenges and reduced public accountability. This leads to private companies leaning toward operating with less transparency, often securing secret contracts that limit public oversight and make it difficult to control abuses or overcharging. As a consequence of the power imbalance governments struggle to reduce the damage brought on by the private contractor once the contract expires as well as struggle to enforce performance standards.²⁵

g. Other cases

Next to the previously mentioned main concerns, other human rights risks include but are not limited to: risk of corruption, insufficient accountability, limitations in

regulation, considering the feature of natural monopoly of the services, and the asymmetry of power and in the access to information, neglect of sanitation service provision and the risk of profit being put over the moral duty and ensuring that human rights are followed through.²⁵

Not to be mistaken some cases have also reported potential for privatisation to result in improved regulatory compliance and reduction of certain violations, however these benefits come at an additional cost which may not be affordable for the public.^{23, 25}

Can water privatization be positive:

Water privatized sectors can also have a positive effect primarily through increased efficiency, investment, and improved management of water resources. Further while power imbalances and monopolies exist within private provision, private companies, motivated by profit, often deliver water services more efficiently than government agencies, which can reduce costs and improve service quality. Private companies are also more open to invest capital in infrastructure as well as more advanced technology. Privatization is backed by the World Bank Group, who view water as an economic good that should be paid for by all users, including the poor, to ensure efficiency and sustainability. Its 1992 policy argues that public water providers waste substantial amounts of water through leaks and theft, and that private sector participation can bring efficiency gains, improved service, and faster investment expansion. Further, they advocate for implementing of private systems in developing and third world countries, claiming that developing countries can attract foreign investment both directly, through the sale of assets to foreign investors, and indirectly, by creating a more favorable economic environment that encourages further private investment, who in turn will bring water infrastructure, which the government itself cannot afford to the developing countries raising the living standard and increasing the follow through rate of human rights in those countries. It also advises countries to develop regulatory frameworks that balance investor and consumer interests while recognizing poor people's needs.^{23, 30, 36, 53}

Examples of successful infiltration of a private system would include England and Wales, where since privatization in 1989, there has been significant investment—nearly £160 billion over 30 years—resulting in improved water quality, reduced leakage, and cleaner rivers.¹⁶

Despite all this NGOs and UN experts warn that private, for-profit water providers may compromise human rights standards, and civil society coalitions worldwide call for public control and accountability to ensure equitable water access, therefore urges approaching the matter of privatisation with caution.

Past actions of the UN and the Human rights councils:

The United Nations and the Human Rights Council have addressed water privatization mainly through the human rights framework, emphasizing the fundamental right to safe, affordable, and accessible water and sanitation. Although the UK's water privatization, which began in 1989, predates much of the UN's recent human rights work on water, the UK's

experience is frequently referenced in global debates about privatization's risks and outcomes.³²

The UN formally recognized the human right to water and sanitation in 2010, establishing that states must ensure equitable access for all without discrimination. UN Special Rapporteurs on this right have highlighted concerns that privatization often leads to higher tariffs, reduced affordability, and exclusion of vulnerable populations. This reflects issues seen in the UK, where privatized regional monopolies have raised prices and created barriers for poorer communities.³²

Beyond affordability, the UN stresses that privatization can undermine water quality and sustainability, as profit-driven companies may underinvest in infrastructure and environmental protection—problems documented in the UK. The UN also points to power imbalances where private companies can limit public oversight, transparency, and accountability, impeding effective regulation.^{17, 20, 32}

Human Rights Council reports recommend strong regulatory frameworks, subsidized water for low-income users, prohibitions on disconnections for vulnerable groups, and inclusive governance to uphold rights. While the UN does not oppose private sector involvement outright, it requires that privatization be compatible with human rights principles, prioritizing universal access and sustainability.^{17, 20}

Past papers and resolutions:

1. **UN General Assembly Resolution 64/292 (2010):** formally recognized the human right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as essential for life. It set minimum standards for access, affordability, and quality of water services.
2. **UN Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/15/9 (2010):** adopted shortly after the General Assembly resolution, this reaffirmed the human right to water and sanitation.
3. **Report by Catarina de Albuquerque, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to water and sanitation (2009–2014):** Her reports outlined states' human rights obligations related to safe drinking water and sanitation, which helped clarify what governments' obligations.
4. **UN Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/16/2 (2011):** This resolution emphasized the duty of states to ensure that water services, whether public or private, are affordable and accessible.
5. **UN General Assembly Report A/75/208 (2020):** This report addressed human rights concerns in the privatization of water and sanitation services globally, including risks linked to affordability, quality, equality and accountability.¹¹
6. **UN Human Rights Council Report A/HRC/57/48 (2024):** The latest comprehensive report reaffirmed human rights standards related to water and sanitation, emphasized

risks of privatization without adequate protections and called for mechanisms to ensure affordability and sustainability of water services.¹⁰

Block positions:

Bolivia

Bolivia is widely recognized for its strong opposition to water privatisation, particularly following the events known as the "Cochabamba Water War" in 1999–2000. "Cochabamba Water War" where the government granted a 40-year concession to the private consortium Aguas del Tunari, thus resulting in drastic raises of water rates, in some cases even quadrupling the rate, causing massive protests and out breaks against the private water system. In the year 2000 the system was overturned and since Bolivia has been a consistent advocate against water privatization.⁸

Chile

Chile's approach to water management is characterized by a high degree of privatization dating back to the Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990). This model stuck with the country even after the transition to democracy. In 1988 the General Water and Sanitation Law was passed which allowed granting regional concessions to public, private, or mixed companies, later in 1990 SISS, a regulatory agency, was assembled to monitor water provision. Use of private systems in Chile is associated with water scarcity issues, where water resources are allocated to industries like agriculture, energy, and mining, potentially leaving communities with limited access.⁷

China

China's approach to water privatization has been cautious and gradual. Since the 1990's the nation has allowed both domestic and foreign private capital to participate in the water sector, primarily through PPPs and BOT contracts, an example of such contract is Shenzhen, where a 30-year concession was awarded in 2003 to a joint venture with the French firm Veolia, which helped improve water supply and wastewater treatment significantly.³⁹

Ethiopia

Ethiopia maintains a predominantly public and community-based approach to water management, with no significant moves toward water privatization. The country is actively investing in expanding and strengthening public water infrastructure, especially in rural and underserved areas, as part of its broader development goals. However, the country is still struggling with many of its citizens not having access to water.¹³

France

France has begun its journey with water privatization during mid-19th century when cities began signing concession contracts with private companies for water supply. By the early 2000s, about 75% of water services and 50% of sanitation services were managed by private firms, primarily Veolia and Suez. Later on the country tried to delegated operation and maintenance to private companies, with municipalities setting tariffs, however in 2010

starting of the wave of returning back to water management to public control under Eau de Paris.⁴⁵

Germany

Germany's experience with water privatization is characterized by a cautious and mixed approach, with a strong tradition of public ownership and municipal control. In 1852 in Berlin, the first privatized water system was implemented by a British company, however dissatisfaction with private management led the city to buy back the utility. In recent decades, the country contracted their water to PPPs, however that was met with dissatisfaction. Today in Germany most of water utilities stay in hands of the government as a public system, with the acceptance of some private participation but under strong regulatory scrutiny.²⁶

Israel

Israel's water sector is characterized by a unique blend of state control, limited privatization, and geopolitical complexities. Since 1982, Israel's national water company Mekorot, has controlled most water infrastructure, including in the occupied West Bank. The country's water management focuses on maximizing efficiency and supply through centralized control rather than broad privatization. However, some limited privatization and private sector involvement have occurred in infrastructure projects.^{37, 49}

Italy

During the 2000s, successive governments attempted to push privatization, including compulsory competitive tendering and encouraging private sector participation, but these efforts met with strong opposition from trade unions, NGOs, and civic groups. In 2011 a referendum was conducted that showed that 95% of citizens reject private systems. Since then, Italy has seen a shift toward remunicipalization and public participation in water services.¹²

Lebanon

Lebanon's experience with water privatization is limited and marked by mixed results amid broader challenges in the water sector. In 2003, Tripoli became the first and only city in Lebanon to sign a management contract with a private company Ondéo-Liban. The contract aimed to improve operation, maintenance, billing, and infrastructure expansion, which it was able to successfully execute, they managed to increasing billing efficiency from 30% to 60%, reducing water rationing, and improving water quality and customer service. The management contract ended in 2007 without renewal. The sector remains dominated by public entities struggling with governance and infrastructure challenges, while informal private suppliers fill critical gaps in service delivery.⁵⁰

Netherlands

The Netherlands explicitly prohibits private ownership of water utilities by law, maintaining public control through democratic water boards. It is considered a global example of strong

public governance in water management, resisting privatization despite pressures and EU influence.⁴⁴

Russian Federation

Russia has faced financial challenges in water infrastructure and is exploring limited privatization or public-private partnerships to attract investment while maintaining government control. Public opinion remains wary due to concerns over transparency and affordability.²⁷

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is actively pursuing water sector privatization as part of its Vision 2030 strategy, aiming to increase private sector participation in desalination and wastewater treatment to improve efficiency, economic development, and infrastructure investment.²⁴

Slovenia

Slovenia constitutionally guarantees access to drinking water as a basic human right and prohibits its commercialization. The state manages water resources publicly, emphasizing water as a public good rather than a market commodity.³

Syrian Arab Republic

In Syria, the right to water is severely compromised due to conflict and political control over water resources. Reports indicate that water shortages are used as a weapon, violating basic human rights and humanitarian needs.⁶

Turkey

Turkey encourages private investment in water-related sectors such as hydropower through legal frameworks that facilitate private licenses and guaranteed purchase agreements, reflecting a pragmatic approach to involving private actors while maintaining government oversight.²²

Ukraine

Ukraine is reforming its water sector with new laws enabling corporatization and concessions, allowing private shareholding but not full privatization. The government seeks to balance decentralization, regulation, and local authority cooperation to improve water services while cautiously involving private actors.⁹

United Kingdom

The UK privatized its water industry in 1989, creating private regional monopolies. While privatization brought investment and efficiency gains, it also led to price increases and public dissatisfaction. The UK continues with privatized water services under strong regulatory oversight, with ongoing debates about renationalization.^{16, 32, 38}

United States

The US water sector is largely publicly owned but includes a significant private sector presence, especially in service contracts and infrastructure management. The approach varies widely by locality, with ongoing discussions about balancing efficiency, affordability, and public accountability in water provision. ⁴

Conclusion:

Overall, the history and global experience of water privatization reveals a complex interconnection between public interest, economy and human rights. The United Kingdom stands out for its long and eventful journey, moving from early private ownership to municipal control in the 19th and 20th centuries, and then back to privatization in 1989. Globally, similar patterns have emerged. In Argentina and Bolivia, large-scale privatization initiatives ultimately failed due to following public protests, and economic crises reinforcing the risks associated with prioritizing profit over universal access. The rationale for privatization often canters on fiscal relief and efficiency, but real outcomes show that these benefits are not guaranteed and may come at the cost of equity and human rights. Water is an essential resource, and its management, whether public or private, must prioritize accessibility, affordability, safety and non-discrimination. ^{30, 36}

Key words:

Amalgamation - Refers to the act of merging two or more things, in this context it refers to merging of two private companies or a private company and government working together.

Regional Water Authorities (RWAs) - Refers to the ten regional water authorities in England and Wales that were privatized in 1989.

Fiscal - Refers to government finances

Public system - Refers to a situation in which the government has full ownership of the water and no part of the responsibilities or tasks is delegated or outsourced to private companies.

Full privatization - Refers to a situation in which the government of a country permanently transfers all ownership and control of all water and sanitation assets to a private company.

Public-Private partnership - Refers to public ownership of water with specific function such as operation, maintenance and investment being delegated to private companies for a limited amount of time.

Joint Ventures - Refers to a formal partnership between the public sector and a private company

Intermittent supply – Refers to drinking water distributed through pipes which operate 24 hours a day.

Full investment recovery – Refers to when an investor gets back all the money they invested into a project from the said project.

Additional reading:

- HELLER, LÉO. “FORCIBLY DISPLACED PERSONS THE HUMAN RIGHTS TO WATER AND SANITATION OF a/HRC/39/55.” *UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS TO WATER AND SANITATION*, www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Water/10anniversary/Forcibly_displaced_persons_report_EN.pdf.
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- *Google Books*. www.google.si/books/edition/Private_Sector_Participation_in_Water_Su/UfXRxCQjRMkC?hl=en&gbpv=1.

Guiding questions:

1. What is your country's stance on privatization? What does your country claim are the benefits of the system they support? Which water system is implemented in your country?
2. Could water privatization be a positive change? How does privatizing water systems allow for building of water infrastructure in developing countries?
3. What are the main concerns in regards to human rights and water privatization? How can those concerns be addressed?
4. What are the criteria that determines if the basic human right to water is met, and to what degree is this respected in the private sector?
5. How should governments conduct human rights impact assessments before deciding to privatize water services?

Possible Solutions:

- Ensure that revenue from water services is reinvested to maintain and improve them.
- Involve communities actively in decision-making about water services.
- Hold companies accountable under international laws for their water operations abroad.
- Create international or promote creation of national regulations regarding the powers and obligations of a private company.

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