

# UN-ALIGNED

OCTOBER 2019

EXCLUSIVE

THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
DEBATE



Issue 4 Vol.1  
Free of Charge

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# ALIGNED

The virtual & Alternative UN

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# UN-ALIGNED BELIEVES IN THE NEED OF A LINGUA FRANCA - **THE FREE LANGUAGE COURSES**

*By Ariana Yekrangi*

Communication is what enables individuals and societies to share their knowledge and feelings and enrich their potential. Language is an important feature of this exchange and individuals and nations should promote the learning of a lingua franca to facilitate international communications. So we decided to create an opportunity for UN-aligned members to learn and improve their English free of charge. We invite you to read Zhi's testimonial and what it's like being an UN-aligned language student.

# MY EXPERIENCE WITH UN-ALIGNED'S LANGUAGE COURSES

By Zhi Wang

I accidentally discovered UN-aligned through a post on Facebook and then joined the community as I found it quite interesting and inspiring. I also thought that reading articles of interest, such as those relating to climate change, could help me improve my English.



**I was amazed about the tutor's professionalism and wide range of knowledge.**

As I desperately need to improve my English, I later also registered onto the English course. My tutor, Adrian, reached out to me soon after, and unexpectedly, this course turned out to be totally free! But what amazed me the most, was the tutor's professionalism and wide range of knowledge.

Lessons are very well-managed and materials used, such as TED talk videos, poems, short novels, articles, are deliberately selected by my tutor with my preference taken into consideration. During our sessions, the tutor will break down the parts that I find difficult and then we will have a discussion over it. To enhance my understanding and writing skills, we also started doing summarizing and paraphrasing practices and like all other activities we are working on, it's been so helpful!

**Learning could sometimes be difficult**, especially given I don't know much about foreign literature and history, but Adrian has always been a great support, not just because of his professionalism, but also his patience, kindness, and generosity in time, which are surely highly appreciated. A thousand times, "thanks, Adrian!".

## Language Courses

### DO YOU WISH TO ENROL?

As an UN-aligned member you have full access to the courses that we offer. For more information simply visit: [un-aligned.org/language-courses](https://un-aligned.org/language-courses) If you are not a member yet, consider becoming one; it's free and it gives access to many different perks. Visit [un-aligned.org/register](https://un-aligned.org/register) to become a free member.

Courses are offered on a first come, first serve, basis as we may not always have enough volunteers to meet the demand.



# WHAT ARE THE UN'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY DEBATES?

By Ariana Yekrangi

## The UNGA and its debates

Also known as the world's parliament, the United Nations' General Assembly (UNGA), which consists of 193 sovereign states, annually hosts Heads of State and Government at a debate in which leaders express their national issues and problems in, often turgid and self-congratulatory, speeches. This is usually the only debate of the session in which Heads of State and Government regularly participate. Contrary to a real democratic institution however, the UNGA's votes are non-binding and member states often neglect or fully ignore legislations that goes against their personal interests. The general assembly is therefore not nearly as powerful as the Security Council that does pass binding resolutions. This council consists of five permanent members ( the UK,



USA, France, China and Russia), who hold an ultimate "veto" on every vote, and ten non-permanent members who are elected by the UNGA for two-year terms.



## Does anything ever get done at the general assembly?

Looking back at the history of these debates things seem to be more about posturing than developing working policies. However, on the sidelines of each debate, annual summit meetings are held that cover critical subjects such as: global inequality, poverty and climate change. This year, there was a climate action summit on the eve of the general debate, attended by the teen activist, Greta Thunberg.



## Who runs the general assembly?

Although it is the UN Secretary General who gets the limelight for most of the year, the event gives the President of the General Assembly, elected each year by the member states ahead of General Debate, a chance to shine. This year it was Nigeria's Tijjani Muhammad-Bande who chose "Galvanising multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion." as the theme of the 74th session of the UNGA.



TIJJANI MUHAMMAD-BANDE, PRESIDENT OF THE SEVENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY



# AN OVERVIEW OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL DEBATE - NO PROGRESS IN SIGHT

By Adriano Liberto

The 74th Session of the General Debate started on the 24th September and concluded at the end of the month. This year the highlight of the General Assembly, however, was not the Debate itself, but the Climate Summit that preceded it. The 16-year-old Greta Thunberg sent shock waves around the world with her impassioned speech, as did the youth all over the world with their widely reported demonstrations. Miss Thunberg did not mince her words:



**"We are in the beginning of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairytales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!"**

"This is all wrong. I shouldn't be standing here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to me for hope? How dare you! You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing".

Since then the young activist has been hailed by many, but she has also been vilified and mocked. It is not so much that those sneering are shooting the messenger, as a cynical attempt to mock the urgency of climate change in order to continue stretching those "fairytales" for the pecuniary profits of the present, at the expense of the disasters of the future. Well, not quite...

## The disasters have already started...

This was made perfectly clear at the actual Debate as one small island developing state (SIDS) after the other listed the litany of disasters that they and their neighbours were facing, including the witnessing of their GDPs literally being blown away in the wind. SIDS were not the only nations affected and alarmed, however, as most speakers had something urgent to share about climate change, including what they were doing to combat it. Not all of the claims, of course, rang true.

Australia's coal-loving Scott Morrison, for instance, boldly declared that Australia was ahead of the game in the battle against climate change and he blamed his critics' ulterior motives for failing to present the correct narrative.



PRESS BRIEFING ON SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES



Fact checks on the details of the effective action and results he boasted about, however, show that his claims were misleading. According to most official forecasts, emissions in Australia are continuing to rise and are set to reach 540 million tons in 2020 (compared to 512 million in 2013). Indeed, his claim that the per capita rate of emissions has decreased is correct, but with an increasing population this does not contribute positively towards overall reduction targets.

## Brazil's message to the world was clear: back off!

Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro was even more surreal as he defended his destructive policy over the Amazon. He also claimed that the Amazon fires had left the forests “practically untouched” and blamed the malicious media for spreading lies. He also attacked NGOs for the same reason. This belligerence is not surprising, of course, and very much in character. He recently fired the director of Brazil's National Institute for Space Research, for instance, for having published a report that stated that, since January, forest fires in Brazil spiked by 84% compared to the same period last year.



PÉTER SZIJJÁRTÓ, HUNGARY'S MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## QUICK FACTS ABOUT THE AMOZON FIRES

- **Location:** Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Paragua
- **Total fires:** >40,000
- **Date:** January 2019 —ongoing
- **Burned area:** 906,000 hectares
- **Cause:** Slash-and-burn approach to deforest land for agriculture and effects of climate change due to unusually longer dry season and above average temperatures around worldwide during July and August

The forest fires that followed in the wake of Bolsonaro's election are not likely to have been a coincidence. Many observers claim they are a deliberate way of preparing vast areas for industry. His message to the world was clear: back off! the Amazon belongs to Brazil and is in no way: “a heritage of humankind” or the “lungs of the world”.



PÉTER SZIJJÁRTÓ, HUNGARY'S MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## "Immigration is not a human right"

In line with tradition, Brazil spoke first, and if anyone thought the language could not get any more nationalistic and right wing, they were in for a big surprise when it came to the speech delivered by the Hungarian Foreign Minister, Péter Szijjártó, which would have been more at home in Nazi Germany of the 1930s than in New York of the 21st century. Whilst most of the nations declared their allegiance to multilateralism as a means of facing the serious challenges ahead, Hungary put its middle finger up to it in a speech laced with venom and racism. Mr. Szijjártó was also scathing about the United Nations itself and announced that Hungary would tear up any UN directives regarding immigration.

## Dream on!

UN reform was another recurring theme, especially amongst African nations, who directly or indirectly demanded the type of reform agreed by the African Union and enshrined in the Ezulwini Consensus in 2005. Speaker after speaker made it clear that the UN was unrepresentative and undemocratic and needed to reform or face its demise. "It's the same old story!" Year after year the message is the same, but one can easily picture the smug faces of the big five as they say under their breath: "dream on!".



A UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

The Debate included some outstanding speeches, such as that delivered by the 94-year-old Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, who covered a range of issues with insight and wisdom. Amongst other topics, he spoke of UN reform, the absurdity of war as a means of resolving conflict and the unjust situation in Palestine. He also alluded to the weaponising of international finance and banking, as some other speakers had, and he called for more stringent international laws to govern the use of sanctions, the issuing of which is currently grossly abused by bullying powers.



The presentation given by the beleaguered Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Boris Johnson, focused on a single issue, namely cyber security. He spoke eloquently and his speech was peppered with humour and cultural references. However, despite its relevance and calibre, it lacked the gravitas and political insight one would expect for a permanent member of the Security Council. It was as though the UK was abdicating its responsibilities from the world stage.



As always, there was some mudslinging between sworn enemies, like Turkey and Cyprus, or Armenia and Azerbaijan. Even some those speeches, however, had powerful global messages, like Recep Erdogan's for instance.



There were also some refreshing speeches that covered issues that have traditionally been avoided at the Debates, like sexual orientation and abortion. The Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Xavier Bettel and Malta's Joseph Muscat were particularly helpful in widening the UN's limited focus on human rights.

## Conclusion:

Over the last few years it has been very easy to catch up on the speeches, transcripts and summaries of the General Debate by visiting the UN website... But not this year! The UN seems to have gone out of its way to make access difficult, or perhaps it is still trying to get its act together. This is disappointing. The UN should listen to President Bukele and move with the times, but instead, it seems as though it is bent on heading in the wrong direction. More important, however, is the question

regarding whether the UN will actually take all the concerns raised at the Debate and do something positive to deal with them. Judging from past experience, it probably will, when it comes to social and environmental issues, particularly those that it has already targeted in its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. As for world peace, which is its main mission, it will do what it always does: pay lip service or turn the other way.



## AN ASSEMBLY THAT IS STUCK IN TIME

By Ariana Yekrangi

This year we took it upon ourselves to go through every speech of the United Nations General Assembly and brief you about the most important updates. In doing so, we got to hear some of the most bold and exciting statements from leaders around the world. We believe that the President of El Salvador's speech was courageous, effective and to the point and thus, deserves the prize of the best statement of the debate.

### President of El Salvador, Nayib Armando Bukele

At the stage of the UN General Assembly El Salvador's new leader started his statement by snapping a selfie that was worth a thousand words. He reasoned many more people will see his selfie than hear his speech at UN debate. "The way in which we speak has not changed for hundreds of years, but the world has. We are not irrelevant, but the format in which we do things is long obsolete." adding that El Salvador has decided to do things differently and the world should learn from it.

The president recounted that he had campaigned for his presidency through new media and his government communicates through it.

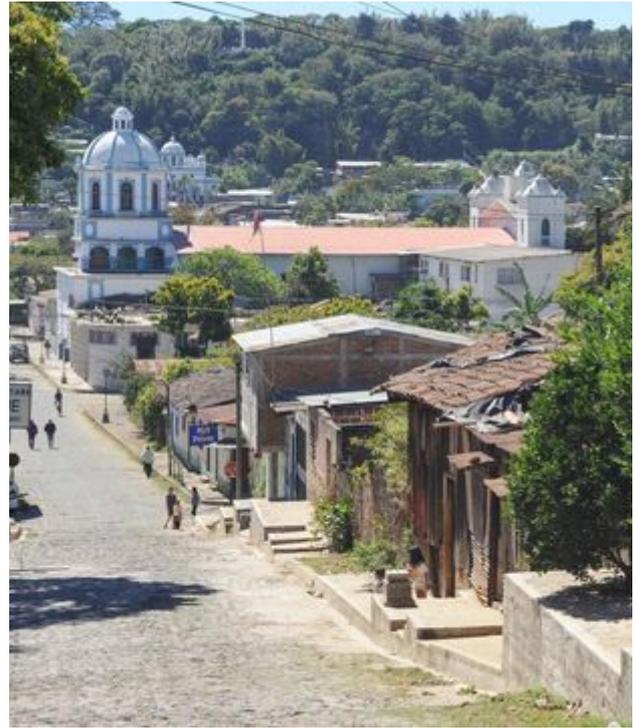
Describing a viral video that recently drew attention to the needs of a village in El Salvador, he said everyone can now have a voice through their smartphones.



WITH A SELFIE, EL SALVADOR'S LEADER URGES UN TO EMBRACE TECH

“Villagers can be transformed into citizens of the world and help bring about a new democratic revolution”. He called on the Assembly to make changes that would allow this to happen and better empower itself to deal with the overwhelming problems of the modern era. He ambitiously added: “why don’t we open a competition for people with genuine proposals? Why doesn’t the assembly meet via video and engage people around the world in its work?”

Mr. Bukele’s statement comes at a time where the UN is repeatedly being condemned for its ineffectiveness in dealing with global problems.



A VILLAGE IN EL SALVADOR

## El Salvador’s profile:



Known as the Land of Volcanoes, El Salvador was a former colony of Spain that declared its independence in 1821, although its struggle continued for the next several decades, which were marked by frequent revolutions. With a population of six million the country is considered as the smallest and the most densely populated country in Central America.

In the 1980s, El Salvador was ravaged by a bitter civil war stoked by gross inequality between the overwhelming majority of the population and a small and wealthy elite. Around 70,000 people died in the conflict.



ERP COMBATANTS IN PERQUÍN, 1990.

Today, El Salvador suffers from high rates of gang crime and a poor economy. Last week Mr. Bukele signed an agreement with US President, Trump, and though its details are still unclear, the deal would require foreign nationals who cross into El Salvador seeking asylum, to apply for it there first, rather than in the United States.

# UN-ALIGNED'S VIEW ON THE CLIMATE PROTESTS: THE DAYS OF SELF- SERVING GOVERNMENTS ARE OVER

By Ariana Yekrangi

**"We're at war with nature. If we win, we're lost" Hubert Reeves**

As the level of CO2 emissions reach their highest level in 10 million years, children and adults, from an estimated of 185 countries, unite across continents and time-zones to demonstrate against politicians' incompetence in dealing with this extraordinary challenge of our time. These protests come at a time when the Amazon forests are being burnt to ashes, a "biological annihilation" of wildlife is in sight and the consequences of melting ice in Greenland is about to give birth to a whole new group of internationally displaced people: climate refugees.



## The next generation of “eco-warriors”

In the past weeks we have witnessed more political leadership on the streets than in most democratic institutions around our globe and this is only the beginning. While the demands that climate protestors have are many, the main message is clear: urgent action to cut emissions and stabilise the climate. Teenager and activist Greta Thunberg has been an inspiration to a new generation of “eco-warriors” who know that the topic of climate emergency directly correlates with their prospects and well-being.



UN-aligned believes that the exhortations and announcements of blunt policies on climate are barely enough to achieve real solutions. Our governments' commitments to mitigating the effects of the climate emergency need to be enforced. We encourage individuals to stop playing the blame game and “Protect, Restore and Fund” our earth, its nature and wildlife. Join your local movement and vote for people who defend nature.

## Do you really need a ten-year-old to show you how?

A 10-year-old climate activist, called Parker, recited a poem with a powerful message on climate change at the global climate strike in Brisbane, Australia:



CLIMATE  
ACTION  
NOW

“

*I'm standing here to make some changes, I'm going around now to see people's behaviour. I'm a climate fighter - to change the world. So listen now, boys and girls. People are dying, the world is frying. Trees fall down, the world is brown. The air is polluted, my voice will not be muted. We chop down trees to just make money, The government sits back and thinks it's all funny. You can't live off the money they make, You can't eat it or put it in a cake. The next generation - we're the ones they'll be hating. We have to act now, there's no point in faking. Soon all the rivers will be muddy and brown. The human race, it's falling down. The world is evolving, problems need solving. How will you go down in history? Eco-warrior? It's still a mystery. The glacier going, danger is flowing. I'm the climate fighter - to change the world. So listen now, boys and girls I know it seems hard to do your part, But we can save the world, it's time to start. Wake up people! The time is now. **Do you really need a ten-year-old to show you how?***

”



# THE CULTURE OF SUBTERFUGE - LEST WE FORGET

By Alex Liberto

Lies, half truths, deceit and hypocrisy are so embedded in our society that people have become immune to them, accept them and often believe that subterfuge is a way of life. Some, indeed, revel in fake news, willingly spreading fictitious slander in jest. Others use fabricated tales of deception for more malevolent objectives, knowing too well that the pseudo facts will filter down into our social fabric. Whatever the reasons, the real fact is that we are living in an era of “alternative facts”, to quote the paradoxical claim by U.S. Counselor to President Trump, Kellyanne Conway.

The problem with becoming numb to the culture of lies and subterfuge is the proliferation of numbness. Numbness is infectious and malignant. Its cancerous roots dig deep into the threads of society and spread exponentially. The step from the acceptance of lies to the acceptance of blatant corruption and murder is very small indeed.

We witnessed the litany of lies showered upon the British voters during the Brexit referendum in June 2016. Unscrupulous manipulators had slapped the £350 million NHS fact/lie on the side of a big red bus. They had also warned that Turkey was about to join the EU, triggering an invasion of Turkish citizens to the United Kingdom. The lies were taken as facts, and when the facts were eventually discredited, apathy set in.

There was no turmoil; no unrest. The anger and indignation trickled down to conversational platitudes. Life went on, lies were accepted and impunity was sanctioned.



BORIS JOHNSON AND HIS BREXIT BUS

Then came the brutal assassination of Labour MP and Remain capaigner, Jo Cox. The culture of hate, lies and impunity led to that attack. The right wing killer repeatedly shouted “Britain First” as he shot and stabbed the MP, just a week before the European Union referendum. What followed was the same script, but this time we were dealing with a heinous assassination. There was the sound and fury, a flurry regret, and then numbness. Brexit still rages on, but the memory of Jo Cox has fallen into the cauldron of apathy.



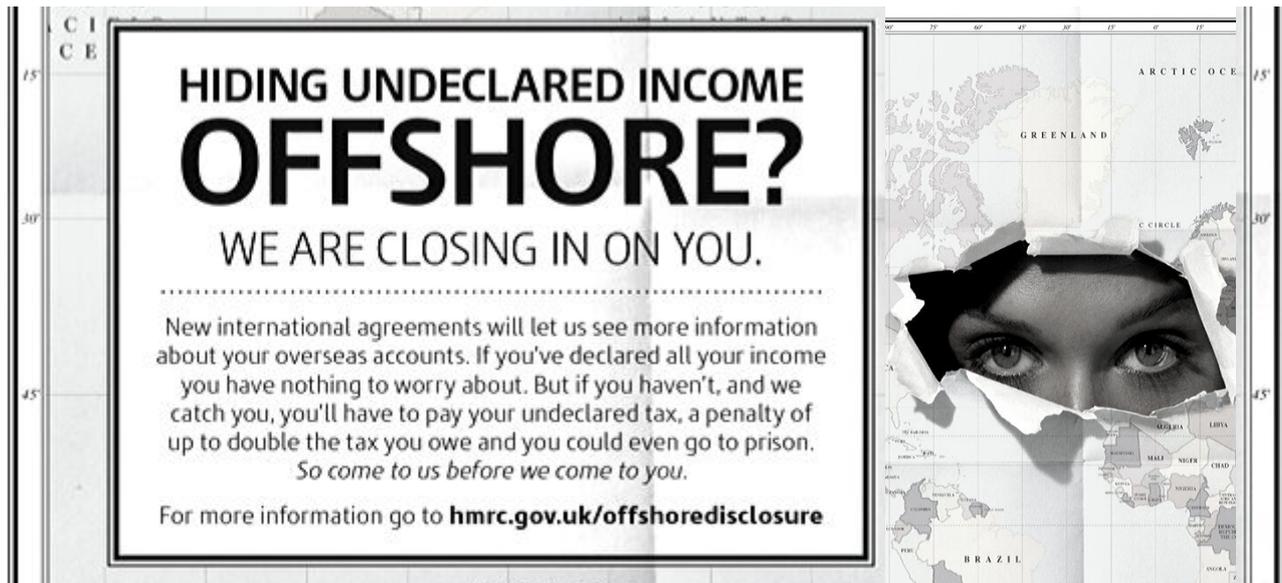
HELEN JOANNE COX WAS A BRITISH POLITICIAN WHO SERVED AS THE MP FOR BATLEY



DAPHNE CARUANA GALIZIA OUTSIDE THE LIBYAN EMBASSY IN VALLETTA

The addiction to a culture of deceit is a conspiracy of silence. When Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia was assassinated outside her family home in Bidnija, Malta on 16 October 2017, the ensuing narrative was similar; noise, fuss, and then the silence of indifference. The preamble to her death was a fierce denunciation of corruption and malfeasance in government. She had exposed the vast rooted network of corruption on the island by publishing the Panama Papers in 2016.

This was not a beginning, but the culmination of an offensive against corruption that had been going on for several years. Daphne was relentless and braved a sea of constant threats and attacks from criminal thugs. She was incessantly harassed and inundated by threatening phone calls and letters. Her pet dogs were brutally killed and arsonists attempted to burn her house down while she and her family slept inside. All this was common knowledge, but accepted as ‘part of life’. Paradoxically, considering the general apathy towards her predicament, her blog, Running Commentary, attracted over 400,000 views. Malta was, and still is, experiencing an economic boom and that economic stability was water from the river Lethe, water that quenched the thirst for wealth. It was easy to become numb to mendacity when the alternative was an inconvenient truth; a truth that could disrupt a state of economic well-being. Corruption was rife, but it was a way of life, a good life.



POSTER ISSUED BY THE BRITISH TAX AUTHORITIES TO COUNTER OFFSHORE TAX EVASION

After the publication of the damning Panama Papers in 2016, nothing happened. The publication exposed Maltese malfeasance at the highest levels, with names and proof. Daphne's son, Matthew Caruana Galizia, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist in his own right, referred to the lack of a backlash: "After publication of the Panama Papers, I expected prosecutions and resignations, but nothing happened. Instead they went on the offensive against my mother, me and other journalists. There was a heightened atmosphere of impunity." (Harriet Sherwood "Daphne Caruana Galizia's son: 'They killed my mother but they won't stop me'." The Guardian) Numbness is malignant. This is the culture of subterfuge.



Professor Alex Liberto was educated in Malta, London and Rome, where he has held senior positions within International Academic Institutions and Universities, and with the International media. Due to his recognised work as a writer and poet, he was honoured with the international award of 'IL Leone D'Oro' and was nominated the winner, of the 'Premio Salvator Rosa'. He has been awarded the title of 'Accademico Corrispondente' by the 'Accademia del Mediterraneo', presided by Principe Alliata di Montereale, and the 'Certificate of Appreciation' by the City of Los Angeles, in recognition of his commitment to the International Student Exchange program between Los Angeles and Rome.



# THINGS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT THE HONG KONG UNREST

By Zhi Wang

Hong Kong has been drawing worldwide attention and has been occupying the headlines of all major media outlets that are the main source of information on Hong Kong for most people across the globe.

## How did this protest happen in the first place?

It all started from a murder back in February, 2018. A pregnant female from Hong Kong was killed by her Hongkonger boyfriend while traveling in Taiwan. However, the murderer was sentenced to only 29 months in jail for having stolen her belongings and for money laundering. He wasn't convicted for the killing.

Why? Because the criminal was from Hong Kong, and the crime was committed in Taiwan. According to Hong Kong's principle of territorial jurisdiction, the Hong Kong court has no right to convict anyone for a murder committed in Taiwan. Therefore, the Hong Kong police could not convict this young man, and since Hong Kong does not have an extradition treaty with Taiwan yet, the police were not in a position to send the killer to Taiwan for trial, either.

The Hong Kong public was outraged by the result and many signed a petition against it. It was under these conditions that the Extradition Law Amendment Bill was proposed, in order to deal with the Taiwan murder case and at the same time, plug the existing loopholes. This explains why the Chinese mainland and Macau were included in the amendment bill. As Elsie Leung Oi-sie, the former secretary for justice said in an interview, "At present, there are no rendition agreements between Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland and other parts of China. This makes it impossible for the rendition of fugitive offenders within one country."

Nevertheless, the bill was opposed by some Hong Kong citizens because the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong have different social systems under China's "One Country, Two Systems" Policy.

They are concerned that their civil rights, like freedom of speech, would be affected. However, the amended bill had stipulated that:

- For criminals to be eligible for extradition to mainland China, they must be found guilty of one of the 37 internationally recognized crimes with a sentence of 7 years or more.
- All extradition cases must be vetted by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) court and the chief executive of Hong Kong.
- The bill clearly stipulates that there are “eight un-transfers”. Cases where extradition is not permitted include: political crimes, situations relating to journalism, freedom of speech, academic publications, and the risk of the individual facing the death penalty.



CHIEF EXECUTIVE CARRIE LAM AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE

For criminals to be eligible for extradition to mainland China, they must be found guilty of one of the 37 internationally recognized crimes with a sentence of 7 years or more... All extradition cases must be vetted by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) court and the chief executive of Hong Kong. The bill clearly stipulates that there are “eight un-transfers”. Cases where extradition is not permitted include: political crimes, situations relating to journalism, freedom of speech, academic publications, and the risk of the individual facing the death penalty.

### **There are number of flaws in the way the western media reported the story**

- In many reports, the number of protestors was exaggerated. Actually, only a very small proportion of Hong Kong citizens want to separate from China.
- Some people have actually admitted having been paid for protesting, some have received up to 4332HKD (€500) per time.
- There are also many large-scale anti-riot rallies backing the Hong Kong police and Hong Kong’s official relationship with mainland China although this was hardly covered by the western media.
- The Hong Kong police found large amounts of explosives and weapons in one of the anti-government protester’s house.

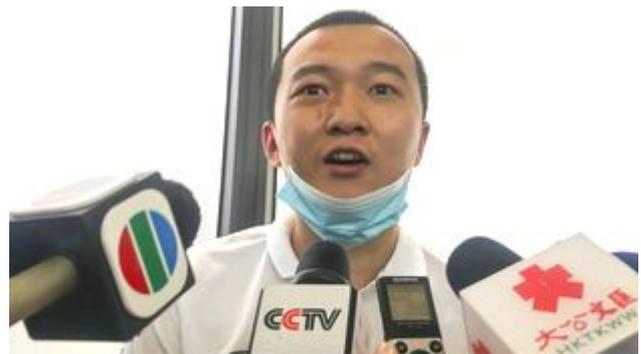
- There is evidence of foreign involvement. For instance, On Aug 6th, a day before another large well-organized riot took place, Julie Eadeh, who works at the US Consulate General in Hong Kong, was caught on camera meeting with Separatist leaders Martin Lee and Anson Chan.
- Many reports were completely biased or distorted as is evident from some of the video coverage which is generally not included in western media reports.



THE OFFICER IN KWAI CHUNG POINTS HIS GUN, LOADED WITH BEANBAG ROUNDS

Another male, named Fu Guohao, was targeted by western media with the headline going “Riot police clash with anti-government protesters at Hong Kong airport”, despite the fact that he is actually a Global Times Reporter and he was beaten by protesters just for having expressed his support for police.

For instance, it was reported that a policeman was aiming his weapon at protesters, without further explanation that one of his eyes had been badly injured by a protester’s laser pointer, and he held his gun for self-defense only, but never fired.



FU GUOHAO TALKS TO THE MEDIA AFTER BEING DISCHARGED FROM PRINCESS MARGARET HOSPITAL

- The Hong Kong police are facing increasing pressure and risks. Apart from physical attacks, information of over 1,600 police officers and their families were maliciously leaked by rioters, including ID numbers, home addresses, pictures and the school names of their children. Affected ones got harassed in many different ways, including receiving death threats, damage to their houses and school bullying targeting their children.
- The major western social media are playing double standards. Many accounts got blocked by Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, because of having expressed a different point of view on Hong Kong’s situation. An American video blogger who lives and works in China, found many of his subscribers mysteriously vanished and he also got demonetized by YouTube, just for having harshly criticized western media for their biased reports.



## Other interesting points:

- A report by MintPress News, a US news website, revealed that some groups involved in recent rioting in Hong Kong received significant funding from the American organization called NED. This organization receives annual funding from the US Congress through the Department of State and, according to WikiLeaks, it was also involved in the “Occupy Central” movement in 2014.
- Protesters claim that they are “fighting for freedom”, however, the flags they have been waving around are not the flags of HKSAR, instead that they are flags of the UK and the US. Ironically, as the British scholar Martin Jacques pointed out in an interview: “Britain ran Hong Kong for 155 years. There was never a semblance of democracy.” In fact, it was not until Hong Kong was returned to China that the people were introduced to democracy.

Most people believe that there are also other issues that contributed to this unrest. For instance, some students were instilled with anti-Beijing opinions in their free-style “Liberal Studies”. And unfortunately, many are frustrated by the staggeringly high housing price and some of them don’t see a future...

## My impressions on the attitude of major western media

The western media appears to condone extreme behavior: paralyzing the international airport, throwing petrol bombs and weapons at police officers and government buildings, setting fire and vandalizing public property, harassing citizens who expressed support for the Hong Kong police and/or Beijing... Whilst most people living in Hong Kong are condemning the protesters for ruining the city, many western journalists, however, describe them as “pro-democracy” and the police are presented in a bad light.

CNN used a misleading headline when covering the violent protest on Aug 25, which reads as “Police use petrol bombs and water cannons against Hong Kong protesters”. Rather, it was the other way around, as it was the protesters that threw petrol bombs at police, and the police used water cannons to direct water at barricades only, not protesters. Later, they apologized to the Hong Kong police, admitting that it was “erroneous” and subsequently “replaced” it. But the damage had already been done. But how did such a mistake even occur? When it comes to China, many western reporters, intentionally or unconsciously, seem to carry some sense of bias and prejudice.



HONG KONG ANTI-EXTRADITION BILL PROTEST



PANSY HO CHIU-KING

As Pansy Ho Chiu-king, chairwoman of the Hong Kong Federation of Women, said in a speech at the 42nd session of the UN Human Rights Council: I felt puzzled why western media never reported on the fear caused by the riots among the ordinary people living in Hong Kong.

Reporters should not only report what they want to believe, otherwise they are just misleading their audiences, and that's never what "news" is meant to be about.



# LABELLING SUICIDE WHILE MISSING THE POINT

*By Adrian Liberto*

## **Every Forty Seconds**

The 10th September was World Mental Health Day. In this context the WHO published a flyer to raise awareness on suicide and how to help prevent it. The WHO highlights the fact that every forty seconds a life is lost to suicide. This is tragic and all the more so because so much more could be done to help, both on an individual and on a social basis. It is reassuring that the WHO is taking this problem seriously, but I object to suicide being so often linked with mental health.

## **Let's face it: it's life that's crazy... but it works**

True, mental health may be a factor, just as it influences all our decisions, but the assumption that suicide is a mental health problem is a lie and perhaps one of the main reasons people do not wish to talk about it. Life is absurd and often it is torture, not because of mental weakness, but owing to the insurmountable hurdles it places before us. I remember a story my father once told me about his time in Libya during the war. The soldiers would often cruelly entertain themselves by encircling

a scorpion with a ring of fire that it could not escape from. The highlight was seeing the trapped scorpion sting itself to death. No mental health problems there, just an easier way out. Sometimes it feels crazy to carry on. It is survival that is often the insanity. But it is an insanity that works; an insanity that defies entropy and ushers in light and creation; love, even. Survival is an act of faith. There is nothing sane about it other than the bizarre evidence that it can work and that is worth fighting for.

## Ten reasons to fight on...

Here are ten reasons why suicide it's not a good idea. The reasons are of course not exhaustive:

- You may be killing a future self who may not want to be terminated. You are his or her guardian. Fight the moment and pass on the baton of your personal growth.
- That future self may have an important role to play, even if it is just saving a butterfly from drowning, or someone who will prove to be a great benefactor to humanity... or you, yourself, may become that benefactor.
- You are a winner. Part of you outraced millions of spermatozoa racing to fertilise the egg. You owe it to all those potential lives to make the most of your own. As the Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa states: "To be born a human being is rarer than a star that shines by day."
- Whatever it is that life is about, problems are there as challenges that help us learn. Perhaps death will merely postpone those lessons and you may have to meet the same challenges with all the preceding crap until you get there again.
- Many suicides go wrong; even well planned ones. You may find yourself with the same problems, plus the added inconvenience of being severely disabled or having to deal with some stupid reactions from those closest to you.
- "This too will pass!" Sometimes we just need to weather the storm, because however frightening the situation may be, it may pass. If not, it is always more worthy to "take arms against" those "slings and arrows" than "oppose" them by ending your own self, which is really not opposing them at all, but taking their side!
- Sometimes, a chemical imbalance or a trivial matter may cause disproportionate reactions. Important decisions should not be taken at our lowest ebb.
- The urge to end it all is sometimes a reflection of what lies without, not what lies within you. See it a nudge to change direction. There usually are many alternatives and we just have to break away from the conditioning that makes us believe that we are bound to the hopelessness of our environment.
- Bigoted social and religious pressures often force us to be what we are not. This can be hell. Don't take that hell with you. Stick your middle finger up to it instead and don't let bigotry crush you.
- Your death could have unhappy consequences: sadness, despair, more suicides...

**In the UK and Ireland, Samaritans can be contacted on 116 123 or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie). In the US, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-8255. In Australia, the crisis support service Lifeline is 13 11 14. Other international helplines can be found at [www.befrienders.org](http://www.befrienders.org)**

# FANCY A SHORT QUIZ?

A COPY TO THE ANSWERS OF THIS QUIZ ARE AVAILABLE AT THE END OF THE MAGAZINE.

*For suggestions and feedback please write to us at [contact@un-aligned.org](mailto:contact@un-aligned.org)*

**01** In 2006, The International Astronomical Union (IAU) declassified Pluto from the list of planets because it did not meet the new criteria. Can you name the three conditions it introduced to categorise a planet?

**02** Pluto was demoted to a dwarf planet because it did not meet the third IAU criterion, but before that, it was easy enough to remember the planets' order around the sun by recalling the sentence: *My very educated mother just sent us nine pickles.*

Can you name the planets in order?

**03** Who designed the following buildings in London:

- The Shard
- The London Olympics Aquatic Centre
- St. Paul's Cathedral
- The Marble Arch

**04** True or false:

- Richard Wagner was married the daughter of Franz Liszt
- Dorothea Tanning was married to Max Ernst
- Peggy Guggenheim was married to Max Ernst
- John Lennon and Yoko Ono were never married

**05** Name the capital of:

- Taiwan
- Zambia
- Uruguay
- Mauritius
- Nepal

**06** What do the following acronyms stand for:

- SIDS
- ASEAN
- ICC

**07** Which French President died on 26 September 2019?

**08** What is the official language of the USA?

**09** What are these fictional characters famous for?

- James Tiberius Kirk
- Phileas Fogg
- Scheherazade

**10** What is the name of the 16-year-old Swedish environmental activist who recently reprimanded world leaders at the UN Climate Summit for their inaction on climate change?



The world is changing rapidly; and so will our perception and fabric of life. Idealism is often used as a term of contempt, but creative people understand the power of imagination. We need to visualise and formulate a better world in order to make it a reality. This is the essence of UN-aligned.

UN-aligned was created with the goal of uniting our globe by a federal world order, which is based on the core principles of a shared humanity and a shared planet. It was this aim that united Adriano Liberto and Ariana Yekrangi to create this beacon of change. Join our global movement today and be the change you want to see. Our membership is completely free of charge.

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- Contribute to our newsletter
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for more information



## Quiz Answer Sheet

1. In 2006, The International Astronomical Union (IAU) declassified Pluto from the list of planets because it did not meet the new criteria. Can you name the three conditions it introduced to categorise a planet? [ 1. It has to orbit around its sun. 2. It has to have sufficient mass to assume a rounded shape (hydrostatic equilibrium). 3. It must have “cleared the neighbourhood” around its orbit].
2. Pluto was demoted to a dwarf planet because it did not meet the third IAU criterion, but before that, it was easy enough to remember the planets’ order around the sun by recalling the sentence: My very educated mother just sent us nine pickles. Can you name the planets in order?? [Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune & Pluto].
3. Who designed the following buildings in London:
  4. The Shard [Renzo Piano].
  5. The London Olympics Aquatic Centre [Zaha Hadid].
  6. St. Paul’s Cathedral [Sir Christopher Wren].
  7. The Marble Arch [John Nash].
8. True or false:
  9. Richard Wagner was married the daughter of Franz Liszt [True].
  10. Dorothea Tanning was married to Max Ernst [True].
  11. Peggy Guggenheim was married to Max Ernst [True].
  12. John Lennon and Yoko Ono were never married [False].
13. Name the capital of:
  14. Taiwan [Taipei].
  15. Zambia [Lusaka].
  16. Uruguay [Montevideo].
  17. Mauritius [Port Louis].
  18. Nepal [Kathmandu].
19. What do the following acronyms stand for:
  20. SIDS [1. Small island developing states; 2. Sudden infant death syndrome].
  21. ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations].
  22. ICC [1. International Criminal Court; 2. International Cricket Council].
23. Which French President died on 26 September 2019? [Jacques Chirac].
24. What is the official language of the USA? [It does not have a federal official language].
25. What are these fictional characters famous for?
  26. James Tiberius Kirk [Captain of the starship USS Enterprise].
  27. Phileas Fogg [Adventurer and protagonist of the Jules Verne novel ‘Around the World in 80 Days’].
  28. Scheherazade [Heroine of ‘One Thousand and One Nights’].
29. What is the name of the 16-year-old Swedish environmental activist who recently reprimanded world leaders at the UN Climate Summit for their inaction on climate change? [Greta Thunberg].

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# UN- ALIGNED NED

## **THE VIRTUAL & ALTERNATIVE UN**

**UN-aligned was created with the goal of uniting our globe by a federal world order, which is based on core principles of a shared humanity and a shared planet. It was this aim that united Adriano Liberto and Ariana Yekrangi to create this beacon of change in 2016.**