

BACKGROUND GUIDES



WESMUN
2026

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Letter from the DIAS

Dear Distinguished Delegates,

It is our privilege and honor to welcome you all into the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) at WESMUN. You are entering a space designed not only for debate, but for thoughtful reflection on some of the most pressing and sensitive issues facing the international community today. The agendas before you challenge us to consider how states can protect their people while staying committed to the principles of human rights, accountability, and ethical governance.

The Dais for this committee is composed of a dedicated panel of chairs, Imani Karabu, Ayten Toeima, and Mohamed Matthana, all of whom are committed to ensuring a fair, engaging, and intellectually stimulating debate. We aim to create an inclusive environment in which all delegates, regardless of prior Model United Nations experience, feel confident to participate actively, voice their perspectives, and engage meaningfully with the agendas at hand. Whether delegates are attending their first conference or are seasoned participants, this committee is intended to serve as a platform for growth, critical thinking, and diplomatic skill-building, while encouraging delegates to challenge both themselves and one another through respectful and constructive dialogue.

The issues we will discuss in committee address the challenges that governments have experienced with respect to their ability to protect their citizens and at the same time uphold the ideals of human rights, accountability and ethical governance.

On the first agenda, we will talk about “the "fine line" that exists between national security and human rights with regards to counter-terrorism efforts” and those areas of the world where the government has approved a "sanctioned" region. As security threats have become more complex, international in nature and many, we have seen an increase in the number of counter terrorism efforts that have been implemented by various countries. Unfortunately, through the years, these counter-terrorism efforts have often led to violations of civil liberties, denial of due process and the denial of basic human rights for those citizens who are deemed to be "vulnerable populations". In this committee, we will evaluate how to achieve the necessary level of security without the erosion of fundamental rights, as defined by International Law, necessary for keeping global stability.

The second agenda will address “the issue of new technologies (specifically, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Government Surveillance).” While these new technologies have incredible potential for improving governance and efficiencies for public safety, they also pose a grave danger to Privacy & Freedom of Expression and equality if used inappropriately. Delegates are invited to think about how the international community can work together through oversight and regulations, to make sure that updated technology is used, for the benefit of humanity rather than against it.

In your role as delegates, you will be required to evaluate critically, work together diplomatically, and recommend solutions that are both realistic, ethical, and that look forward. This committee encourages respect in discussion, supports new and innovative ideas, and believes in the foundation of international laws and human rights principles. We look forward to your contributions and hope this committee proves to be both intellectually rewarding and impactful.

Best of luck, and welcome delegates!

Sincerely,

United Nations Human Rights Council Dias WESMUN'25

Introduction to committee

The United Nations Human Rights Council is the primary body responsible for promoting and protecting human rights worldwide, established on 15 March 2006, replacing the Commission on Human Rights, and ensuring that no one is deprived of basic human rights, which are non negotiable rights granted to all people, regardless of who they are, where they are from, or live. It's made up of 47 countries chosen by the UN General Assembly, each for a term of 3 years.

The UNHRC also carries out a Universal Period Review, under which it reviews how human rights are shown periodically on all 193 UN member states. Moreover, the UNHRC employs Special Rapporteurs and Commissions of Inquiry in following and making sure that human rights are protected and advanced.

The UNHRC assists states in crisis through Special Sessions, directed at urgent cases of serious human rights violations and high risks of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, includes cases from several countries like Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Myanmar, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, and Syria, since 2006.

Agenda 1:
Maintaining a balance
between national security and
human rights in
counterterrorism efforts and
sanctioned regions

Introduction to the Agenda

It is the duty of states to protect their citizens from terrorism. However, in pursuing this, many governments have adopted some measures which restrict people's rights, especially in vulnerable-populations and regions labelled as "high-risk". The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that these rights "may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations," and any limitations need to be especially necessary as well as proportionate. Some rights cannot be suspended (Articles 6, 7, 8 (paragraphs I and 2), 11, 15, 16, and 18 from the UDHR). Still, some governments try to get past these regulations using national security claims to justify their actions, such as, emergency regions, curfews, or checkpoints, raising serious concerns about the rule of law.

After the devastating events that occurred during 9/11/2001, the United States enacted the Patriot Act, massively increasing surveillance and detention powers, such as the Guantanamo Bay which is the site of extrajudicial detention which is a massive human rights violation; and India's conflicted region of Jammu & Kashmir was governed under the Public Safety Act, allowing extended detention. Over time, these temporary measures became part of legal norms, distorting them to cover broad definitions of terrorism. In each case, the "fine line" between national security and human rights has been blurred, sometimes leaving said powers in place well after the crisis is over.

- Sri Lanka was criticized by HR groups for its vague Prevention of Terrorism Act. So, in 2023 they drafted a new counter-terror bill, which was considered "deeply regrettable" as it kept broad language and did not end detention without trial. The experts stated that Sri Lanka's emergency powers had historically enabled torture and decades-long imprisonment of suspects, often to crush political opposition.

- In recent years, Russian authorities have used the guise of national security to crack down on civil society. UN experts reported in 2025 that the government was "instrumentalizing national security and public safety legislation" to target lawyers, journalists, and activists. Hundreds of NGOs, including international human rights groups, have been labeled

"undesirable" under broad anti-extremism laws, criminalizing criticism against the government or cooperation with foreign bodies, which makes it harder for citizens to get legal aid.

- These examples show that in times of crisis, countries employ disproportionate measures, which can even remain long after it is over. So we need better application of human rights to protect innocent people and minorities.

Key Terms

National Security: Security and safety of state citizens, institutions, infrastructure, and interests against threats such as terrorist activities, espionage, and external aggression. Taken as in how peaceful and civilized it is.

Human Rights : Universal rights of all human beings, similar to those enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments: freedom of expression, privacy, equality before the law, due process.

Counter-Terrorism: Administrative, military, legal and intelligence efforts to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism. These might include surveillance, biometric data gathering and preventive detention.

Proportionality & Necessity: Legal and moral obligations that any encroachment on rights for security purposes must be proportionate to a legitimate aim (e.g. saving life)

Countries/Regions that are under International Sanctions: A country or territory that is currently under international sanctions (a form of punishment) for violations of or laws against terrorism and conflict will lose most of the benefits of international trade, and can have their financial transactions frozen, the ability to travel will be limited, and access to certain technologies will be restricted.

Due Process of Law: The process through which an individual must be treated fairly and given due process of law. The due process includes the right to a fair trial, the right to have a lawyer represent him/her during trial, and the right to protection from arbitrary detention by the government. The government must respect all rights owed to an individual.

Arbitrary Detention: The detention of individuals in violation of their rights, including their right to Due Process. This issue has received considerable criticism in relation to counter-terrorism.

Key Issues

Balancing security: Balancing security needs with human rights in conflict zones: Protecting national security and adhering to international obligations of human rights is a basic problem in the prevention of terrorism to date. Over 90% of terrorist incidents, along with 98% of terrorist-related killings in 2023, have been seen in conflict-affected regions, where there is no monitoring. In these regions, terrorist attacks also have a higher tendency of being aimed, which has been made clear by a study in the Global Terrorism Index.

Violations in counterterrorism operations: The Human Rights Council has repeatedly pointed out that counter-terrorism operations must be conducted in line with international humanitarian law and human rights law in all circumstances, and that all states can be held responsible for violations that occur during such operations. One of the major challenges is the large number of administrative anti-terrorist steps, such as asset freezes, travel bans, and terrorist listing and custodial vigilance. In a couple of areas, severe human rights abuse during anti-terrorist operations are still documented. Civil rights violations, random killings, disappearances, and torture have been seen during these immoral attacks.

Key Issues

Gender and vulnerable groups: Counter-terrorism actions and sanctions can have a large impact on women, children, refugees, and internally displaced people since these people are more vulnerable in areas where there are conflict and sanctions. Policy actions can damage family life in various ways, for instance, by detaining family members, restraining travel freedom, or even causing displacement, and depriving children of their parents and living a normal childhood. It can also affect the ability to offer care to the affected children or even ensure household stability.

Impacts of sanctions: In sanctioned countries, a balance between meeting threats to peace and security and respecting human rights has been even more challenging. Nevertheless, sanctions of this nature always have huge humanitarian impacts, particularly for the vulnerable groups. Any limitation that affects the financial sector, trade, and other services will make it more difficult for citizens to access their human rights in terms of food, healthcare, medication, and humanitarian assistance.

Key Issues

Policy and Governance Issues: In order to mitigate the economical and social impacts caused by AI, there is a need for effective governmental interventions and strategies at the global level so as to be capable of facing the challenges and risks posed by AI. This is because AI has developed at a much faster pace than the regulatory system in most countries, which has reduced the need for joint actions in relation to the transition of the workforce and ethical management.

Widening inequality between countries: Due to the unequal access of technology, skills, infrastructure, and governance capacity, AI has the ability of worsening inequality between countries, by reversing decades worth of progress in closing development gaps, where countries with strong digital readiness, AI investments, and well developed regulatory frameworks are set to capture and benefit from the majority of AI's economic gains, while poorer countries and vulnerable groups with inadequate infrastructure, lower educational capacity, and technology barriers fall further and further behind.

Major Parties

United States: The US greatly impacted modern counter-terrorism policies, particularly following the attacks of 9/11. Through legislations such as the PATRIOT Act and others, the US greatly increased detentions and the power held by law enforcement in the name of “National Security”. Practices like mass data collection and targeted killings which the US employs continue to be criticized by human rights organizations for violating due process and many other laws.

India: India has been in many recent discussions about human rights due to its heavy use of counter-terrorism laws as a response to national security threats. Laws such as the PSA, have increased the power of law enforcement allowing increased surveillance and “preventive detention”. Indian authorities stand by these actions to combat terrorism, while UNHCR experts repeatedly raise concerns regarding them.

Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka has lots of counter terrorism experience linked to long civil conflict. Because of their continued use of the PTA, they became a frequent point in discussions on how emergency laws can persist, even after conflict has ended. The law enables the government to give out long and usually disproportionate sentences, to prevent the resurgence of extremist violence. However, some UNHR bodies have warned that the Act lacks sufficient safeguards and has enabled arbitrary detention, harming many innocent people.

France: France is a major party because of their powerful counter-terrorism structure which was developed in response to repeated attacks on its land. Some measures include increased law enforcement capabilities and an extended state of emergency. While they limit freedom of speech, the balance between security and individual rights continues to change. Still, their approach shows how challenging it is to implement capable security measures that are balanced as well.

UK: The UK is one of the few countries which were able to establish a well-balanced legal framework that is both advanced and does not interfere with individual rights, it is among the most developed in the world. They did this by combining surveillance, investigatory powers, and interception of communications with due process such as RIPA. This combination of regulation of investigatory powers and engagement with UN human rights standards, show the UK's effort to integrate security measures while upholding international expectations.

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

UN Security Council Resolutions: Since the 9/11 tragedies, the United Nations Security Council has taken binding measures (such as Resolution 1373 (2001)) that have required member states to criminalize terrorist financing and enhance law enforcement collaboration. But the use of such resolutions has increasingly proliferated surveillance and biometric technologies with limited strong human rights protection, arousing worries of abuses.

International Expert Dialogues on AI & Human Rights: The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) and other UN bodies have convened experts to examine how AI and other technologies can be used in counter-terrorism while respecting the rule of law and human rights. These discussions include risks of misusing AI for mass surveillance or biased profiling, as well as opportunities for safer threat detection.

Civil Society Reports & Advocacy: Rights groups have also documented patterns when counter-terrorism measures, especially involving extensive digital surveillance and biometrics, have outstripped freedoms, like privacy or freedom of speech and due process. Taking these reports together, they typically advocate for strict data protection systems, transparent oversight, and restrictions on intrusive technologies.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer:

In conflict regions, what types of protection are necessary for humanitarian organizations and for the protection of human rights?

What principles should guide counterterrorism measures to ensure full compliance with international human rights laws, including the CAT and ICCPR?

How can governments efficiently prevent torture, extrajudicial prosecutions, and other human rights violations during counterterrorism operations while addressing legal security weaknesses faced by combating counterterrorism?

How can the resolution ensure that it includes due process guarantees, judicial oversight, and accessible review mechanisms for counterterrorism tools, like terrorist lists, asset freezes, travel bans, and preventative detention?

How should the warrant administration be designed and executed to minimize human harm and protect civilians' human rights, including access to food, healthcare, medicine, and humanitarian aid, while addressing security concerns?

What measures can be made and adopted to protect innocent women, children, refugees, and displaced people from the disproportionate effects of counterterrorism operations and consequences, including family separation and deprivation of essential services and a normal life?

What part should international bodies, like the UNHRC and OHCHR, play in covering counterterrorism practices and holding countries responsible for human rights violations?

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Agenda 2:
Overseeing emerging
technologies to stop the
misuse of AI and
Government Surveillance.

Introduction to the Agenda

Governments worldwide are starting to implement new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and surveillance technologies to enhance public safety. Such technologies can assist in crime prevention and border control, but at the same time, these technologies pose serious risks to human rights. Weak regulations can allow surveillance technologies to be used negatively, this directly affects the people's right to privacy and freedom of expression. Such technologies should not be left unchecked, so more legislation is needed to ensure that this does not happen.

During the War on Terror the US relied heavily on new surveillance technologies and AI in Afghanistan to monitor the people and analyze their actions to deem if they were a threat or not. Large scale data collection, biometric registration, and algorithmic analysis were used to identify suspected militants and map out their social networks. After the US withdrew many of their biometric technologies were left behind and came into the control of the Taliban, Human Rights Watch research suggests "that they may have already used the data in some cases." This shows the long-term risks to privacy that could be posed by such technologies.

- Singapore uses massive AI assisted surveillance networks in public spaces, including cameras linked to real-time analytics for law enforcement. While these systems arguably improve public safety, "Surveillance may create a chilling effect on the online expression of ordinary citizens, who may self-censor for fear of being constantly tracked."
- South Korea monitors in public transport and urban areas to improve safety, this leave potential for privacy violations and data retention issues, emphasizing the clear need for rules on proportionality and necessity in AI surveillance applications.
- These cases demonstrate that AI driven surveillance use is increasing worldwide and requires new and adapted legislation to ensure privacy and security for everyone.

Key Terms

Artificial Intelligence (AI) : A suite of technologies that mimics human intelligence, applied to everything from predictive analytics to autonomous government and business decision-making.

Government Surveillance: Systematic gathering, monitoring and analysis of information including communication and personal data by state actors that could be legitimate on grounds of national security but can clash with privacy rights.

Human Rights Impact Assessment (HRIA): Structured approach to systematically explore the risks of AI and digital systems on human rights, guaranteeing that policy supports dignity, autonomy and equality.

Algorithmic bias: occurs when artificial intelligence systems generate systematic and discriminatory biases. This is a result of using biased data, deficiencies in system design, or insufficient oversight, which can have a disproportionate impact on communities that have historically faced marginalization.

Mass Surveillance: The indiscriminate collection of information from entire populations instead of targeting people based on reasonable suspicion and therefore creating serious privacy and civil liberty concerns.

Key Issues

Lack of privacy protection and regulation: AI and advanced surveillance technologies are examples of swiftly evolving technologies; however, numerous countries lack proper limitations and laws governing the usage of these systems. Governments and companies can monitor individuals and access their personal data and information, as well as use AI systems without limitations, if there are inadequate restrictions placed upon their operation. The individual right to control their own information is weakened in many sectors where there are wide information breaches that take place without their consent and awareness through cameras and phones, so people cannot easily defend their rights and fight for greater safeguards regarding the issue.

Lack of public education: The lack of education regarding AI and surveillance systems could lead both the population and government to lack a clear understanding of how these AI technologies harvest, process, and use personal data. This means that people aren't aware of their own digital rights and human rights regarding technology usage, and how to act when data is leaked or breached to untrusted people and sources, and the hacking of their own personal devices.

Bias and discrimination using AI: The use of AI may produce misleading outcomes when it's trained using prejudiced or insufficient information. Facial recognition tools and predictive policing tools are clear examples of this issue, where people from minorities, refugees, and vulnerable communities are frequently misidentified, and could escalate leading to the wrong arrest of innocent people and the denial of necessary and basic rights.

Key Issues

Lack of transparency in surveillance systems: Government surveillance tools are also growing at a fast pace without any examination or authorization, leading to the suppression of freedom of speech, as governments can easily target journalists, activists, and political opponents. In most nations, there's still a concern in relation to responsibility and transparency. Also, it's difficult for associations that are tasked with monitoring to confirm if technology is used and applied lawfully due to the lack of transparency and openness by inventors and governments regarding how these AI systems are made, how they function, and what data they collect.

Human rights violations regarding rapid growth of technology: The imbalance between invention and the protection of human rights is essential, as technology evolves at a faster rate and cannot keep pace with the law. In addition to this, humans are exposed to cybersecurity issues if there's poor data security, such as data leaks, hacking, and abuse of personal and sensitive data, so people cannot easily defend their rights and fight for greater safeguards, since there's little understanding of AI technology and other forms of surveillance tools.

Major Parties

Afghanistan: Afghanistan is relevant because once the US withdrew from there, they left behind powerful biometric and surveillance systems. While initially deployed for “counter-terrorism” and monitoring, they are now in the hands of the Taliban, which suddenly raised concerns about privacy and lack of oversight, this shows that the technology itself is dangerous and in need of stricter regulations regardless of who controls it.

New Zealand: New Zealand has explored AI assisted monitoring in law enforcement, including predictive policing. These technologies are intended to improve efficiency, but they are not 100% accurate, which could be dangerous, for example, predictive policing reinforces racial discrimination, creating feedback loops, and since they are just algorithms, they cannot hold accountability.

Canada: Some technologies deployed by Canada are data analytics in border management and in policing. Experts emphasize the importance of balance between powerful technologies and privacy. The relevance of Canada lies in showing the challenges faced by more technologically advanced states in aligning surveillance systems with UDHR and other international laws.

UAE: The United Arab Emirates is one of the few good examples of AI implementation which show how a state can both implement AI surveillance and balance it with human rights. The UAE signed an agreement with the United Nations Development Programme, to make sure that their use of AI doesn't violate international regulations. This shows their commitment to the safety of the people as well as the development of powerful and important technologies.

North Korea: North Korea is a special case, due to having little regulations regarding surveillance, they freely monitor all their citizen's behaviors, communications, and any online activity if at all. These systems are used to restrict freedom of expression and movement. Therefore, they are one of the most prominent examples of bad implementation of surveillance technologies.

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence

In 2024, the Council of Europe adopted the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence, Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law, which sets out international standards for the use of AI, such as transparency and accountability and addressing the risks associated with AI, including discrimination, and other threats to Fundamental Rights.

UN and Other Intergovernmental Efforts to Govern AI

Many UN agencies, including the Security Council, have recognized the Positive Potential of AI and the Risks of Invasion on Personal Privacy and Discrimination if AI is Not Regulated or Governed. In their recommendations, the UN has called for Collaboration between Nations, Civil Society Members, and Technology Companies to Increase Digital Literacy and Establish Standardized Regulatory Frameworks.

African Union Civil Society Initiatives for Regulation of AI

In Kenya, organizations such as the Katiba Institute are implementing Strategic Plans for Strategic Litigation to address the Lack of Governance for AI Technology and the Increasing Surveillance of People with technology. They are Advocating for Stronger Data Protection and Human Rights Frameworks to Regulate AI Use.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer:

What are the requirements that need to be done to ensure hacking and breaching of data are avoided and reduced?

How frequently should countries test their technology systems and ensure that they promote human rights well?

What factors are to be considered in the making of AI and surveillance technology to fully comply with international human rights laws with respect to the rights to privacy and expression?

What measures should be taken to address the misuse of AI and how it can affect refugees, minorities, and vulnerable communities?

In what ways can countries guarantee transparency in the use of government surveillance technologies, legal frameworks, controls, and monitoring agencies that would be independent?

What measures can AI companies take to prevent their technologies from violating human rights?

What are the measures needed to improve international collaboration to assist and help developing countries in regulating emerging technologies and enhancing digital knowledge?

What is the function of international bodies, such as the UNHRC and OHCHR, in judging state practices as well as in making governments accountable for the abuses and misuse of AI and surveillance technologies?

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