

HMDC Presents... DISEC: Quick Guide

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Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC): Drone Surveillance and Privacy

WHAT WE ARE DEBATING

Almost every drone carries a camera, so almost every drone can watch people. Governments use drones to guard borders, find missing people and watch protests. Our job is to decide where the line sits between safe security work and harmful spying, and which shared rules between countries can hold that line.

WHAT OUR CHAIRS WILL FOCUS ON

Our December session is about privacy, surveillance and intelligence, which means how drones watch people and gather information. Armed drones belong to the October session, so they are background only. Our chairs will ask us to build shared rules for the "responsible use of drones" that keep the world secure.

FIVE NUMBERS TO REMEMBER

1. **102 countries:** At least 102 countries had military drones in 2020. (UN Human Rights Council, August 15, 2020)
2. **1,000 police departments:** More than 1,000 police departments in the United States use drones. (UN Human Rights Council, March 1, 2023)
3. **20 grams:** One spy drone weighs less than 20 grams and flies almost silently. (UN Human Rights Council, March 1, 2023)
4. **75 of 176 countries:** Out of 176 countries studied, at least 75 use smart computer programs to watch people. (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 17, 2019)
5. **40 percent:** More than 40 percent of cameras sold by 2016 could study their own video. (UN Human Rights Council, August 4, 2022)

WHAT THE UN HAS ALREADY DONE

1. **A/RES/68/167 (2013):** The General Assembly's first resolution on the right to privacy in the digital age warned that technology makes spying easier.
2. **A/HRC/RES/50/21 (2022):** The Human Rights Council said it was worried about "aerial surveillance vehicles," which are machines that watch protests from the sky.
3. **A/RES/79/175 (2024):** The General Assembly warned that facial recognition without safety rules can harm human rights.

4. **A/HRC/RES/58/23 (2025):** The Human Rights Council said face scanning must not be used to watch everyone at once.
5. **S/RES/2617 (2021):** The Security Council worried about terrorist drones and said we must balance new inventions against stopping their misuse.

THE MAIN SOLUTIONS

1. **Strict legal limits:** Drone watching is allowed only when needed, for a short time, and the data is deleted.
 - Help: It builds on rules the UN has already agreed.
 - Harm: Each government reads the rule its own way.
2. **Registration and no-fly zones:** Owners register drones, and some areas, such as schools, are closed to them.
 - Help: It already works in the European Union.
 - Harm: It mainly covers private drones, not police or military drones.
3. **Limits on face scanning from the air:** Countries limit computer programs that names people by their faces.
 - Help: It protects protesters from being tracked in a crowd.
 - Harm: Police say they need it to find missing children and terrorists.
4. **Export controls:** Countries limit who can buy drones and spying tools.
 - Help: It acts before harm happens.
 - Harm: Only 42 states belong to the main control group.

WHERE THE MAJOR BLOCS STAND

1. **The United States:** The United States voted against the 2025 UN resolution on military AI because it feared central control over technology.
2. **China:** China says humans must stay in control of weapons, but it would ban only a very narrow kind of machine.
3. **France and the European Union:** France and its partners want an agreement that bans weapons that choose and attack targets all by themselves.
4. **African states:** West African states want a binding treaty, which is a rule countries must obey.
5. **The Gulf states:** These states see drones mainly as a terrorist threat.

KEY WORDS IN OUR TOPIC

1. **Drone:** When we say drone, we mean an aircraft with no pilot inside it.
2. **Surveillance:** When we say surveillance, we mean watching or listening to people, often without them knowing.
3. **Privacy:** When we say privacy, we mean the right to keep our personal life to ourselves.
4. **Facial recognition:** When we say facial recognition, we mean a computer that names a person by looking at the face.

5. **Biometric:** When we say biometric, we mean using a body feature, such as a face or voice, to find a person.
6. **No-fly zone:** When we say no-fly zone, we mean a place in the sky where drones may not go.
7. **Export control:** When we say export control, we mean a rule that a country must give permission before a product is sold abroad.
8. **Proportionality:** When we say proportionality, we mean using only as much watching as the job truly needs, and no more.

QUESTIONS WE CAN ASK IN DEBATE

1. Is it ever fair for a government to scan faces from a drone over a peaceful protest?
2. Who will pay for drone registration in poorer countries?
3. How can our countries stop terrorist drones without watching our own citizens?
4. Should the UN set privacy rules for its own peacekeeping drones?