

## HMDC Presents... DISEC: Full Report

# HMDC Presents... Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC): Drone Surveillance and Privacy (Research Report, December 2026)

Prepared for HMDC Forensics delegates attending Harvard Model United Nations Online, December 5-6, 2026. Every fact below comes from a page or official document that was opened and read in October 2026. Each evidence entry repeats its publication and date so the source is always visible.

## WHAT OUR CHAIRS WILL FOCUS ON

Harvard explains that this committee looks at drones in two ways: drones that help people in disasters, and drones that are used in war and raise security worries. Harvard splits the topic between two sessions, and our December session is the one about privacy, surveillance and intelligence, which means how drones watch people and gather information. The October session, not ours, covers armed drones and who is held responsible when they are used. In December, we will be asked to build international frameworks, or shared rules between countries, that support the "responsible use of drones" while keeping the world secure.

Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online Committee Page, Last Accessed: October 2026

<https://www.harvardmun.org/disec-online>

The parts of this HMDC report that match this focus most closely are the Introduction, Section 1A (the surveillance entries), Sections 1B to 1F, Sections 2B, 2C, 2E and 2F, and Sections 3A to 3C.

**How we use this report:** This report spends a lot of space on autonomous weapons, sometimes called killer robots, and on drone strikes in Ukraine, Russia and Sudan (Sections 1G, 2D, 2G and 3E, and the war entries in Section 1A). Those topics are about weapons that attack, which is closer to the October session than to ours, so we treat them as background only. We use them to show that the camera on a drone can lead to a strike, but we do not make a killer-robot treaty our main solution. Our speeches, position papers and resolutions should put privacy limits, registration, rules on face scanning, export controls on surveillance tools and transparency first.

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# INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING THE TOPIC

A drone is an aircraft with no pilot on board. Officials often call it an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), an unmanned aircraft system (UAS) or a remotely piloted aircraft. Drones range from military aircraft that can stay in the air for a day and fly a thousand kilometres, to tiny machines that fit in one hand. Almost all of them carry cameras or other sensors, which means almost every drone is a surveillance tool, whether or not it also carries a weapon.

This topic asks how the world should handle drones that watch people. Governments use them to guard borders, find missing people, fight terrorism and watch protests. Militaries use them to find targets, and in recent wars the camera on a drone has become the tool that chooses whom to attack. Terrorist groups and criminals also use cheap commercial drones to spy on targets. Each of these uses touches the right to privacy, which is protected by Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

DISEC is the General Assembly's First Committee. It deals with weapons, arms control and threats to international peace. DISEC cannot pass binding law, but it can recommend treaties, set norms, ask the Secretary-General for reports and start negotiations. Delegates must decide where the line sits between legitimate security surveillance and harmful intrusion, and which international tools (treaties, export controls, transparency rules, aviation rules) can hold that line.

## PART 1, THE TOPIC

### 1A. THE HARMS

Drone surveillance harms people in several ways. It strips away privacy for whole communities, it discourages people from protesting or speaking freely, it spreads to governments with weak rule of law, and in war and counterterrorism it supplies the targeting information for lethal strikes. The entries below show who is hurt, how many, and how badly.

#### **UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/44/38), August 15, 2020: At least 102 countries have military drones**

Tagline: Counting countries with military drones

Source: According to... UN Human Rights Council, August 15, 2020

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/44/38>

Fact: It states... As of 2020, at least 102 countries had an active military drone inventory, and about 40 had or were buying armed drones. At least 20 armed non-State groups, including the Houthis, ISIL and a Mexican drug cartel, had obtained armed or unarmed drones. Exports of commercial drone technology have lowered prices and helped drones spread.

This means... Drone surveillance is no longer limited to a few powerful states. Any rule DISEC writes must cover dozens of governments and also groups that sign no treaties at all.

### **UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/44/38), August 15, 2020: Large drones can collect private phone conversations**

Tagline: Collecting private conversations from the sky

Source: According to... UN Human Rights Council, August 15, 2020

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/44/38>

Fact: It states... The largest military drones (class III) can stay airborne for more than 20 hours, fly over 1,000 km at more than 300 km per hour and carry advanced sensors. The report says they can pick up huge amounts of data, even private conversations sent through mobile phones and computers. Some drones can circle one location for about 14 hours.

This means... A single drone can watch a whole town and listen to its communications for most of a day. Delegates must decide whether international law should limit how much data military and intelligence drones may gather about civilians.

### **UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/52/39), March 1, 2023: More than 1,000 US police departments use drones**

Tagline: Moving drones from war to policing

Source: According to... UN Human Rights Council, March 1, 2023

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/52/39>

Fact: It states... The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and counter-terrorism found that drones have followed a path "from the battlefield to the home front." Research shows more than 1,000 police departments in the United States use drones, and at least 40 police forces in the United Kingdom do. Police in Africa, Europe, the Persian Gulf and the Americas also use them. Newer police drones carry thermal and night-vision cameras, automatic target tracking, loudspeakers and spotlights.

This means... Surveillance tools first justified as exceptional counterterrorism measures become ordinary police equipment. DISEC delegates should ask whether limits written for war also need to cover peacetime use at home.

### **UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/52/39), March 1, 2023: A 20-gram spy drone is used by about 20 militaries**

Tagline: Shrinking drones to pocket size

Source: According to... UN Human Rights Council, March 1, 2023

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/52/39>

Fact: It states... The Black Hornet micro-drone weighs less than 20 grams, fits in one hand, flies almost silently and carries cameras with a range of about 1.6 km. About 20 military forces use it, and thousands have been deployed in five years. The Rapporteur warns that smaller drones are easier to deploy and harder to notice.

This means... People may be watched without ever knowing a drone is there. Any privacy rule that depends on people seeing a drone, or on drones being large enough to register, will miss this kind of device.

### **UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/51/17), August 4, 2022: Drones are now normal at protests**

Tagline: Watching protests from above

Source: According to... UN Human Rights Council, August 4, 2022

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/51/17>

Fact: It states... The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that using drones for surveillance has become normal in many countries, where they monitor protests and other gatherings. The same report notes that more than 40 percent of video surveillance cameras sold by 2016 included video analytics, and that facial recognition and software that flags "suspicious" behaviour are among the most problematic features.

This means... When people know they are filmed and identified from above, many stay home. Drone surveillance therefore harms freedom of assembly and expression as well as privacy, which links this DISEC topic to human rights law.

### **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 17, 2019: At least 75 of 176 countries use AI surveillance**

Tagline: Mapping AI surveillance worldwide

Source: According to... Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 17, 2019

Link: <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2019/09/the-global-expansion-of-ai-surveillance>

Fact: It states... Carnegie's AI Global Surveillance Index found at least 75 of 176 countries (43 percent) using artificial intelligence for surveillance, including 64 using facial recognition. Chinese companies supplied 63 countries, and US companies were present in 32. The study found that regime type is a weak predictor of use: 51 percent of advanced democracies used AI surveillance. The quality of governance, such as the rule of law and independent oversight, matters most.

This means... When drones carry AI cameras, the harm depends less on the machine and more on the laws and courts that control it. Supplier countries and buyer countries will both be in the room, and both will have interests to defend.

### **UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/27/37), June 30, 2014: Surveillance data has been used to aim drone strikes**

Tagline: Linking surveillance data to strikes

Source: According to... UN Human Rights Council, June 30, 2014

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/27/37>

Fact: It states... The High Commissioner's first report on privacy in the digital age noted reports that metadata (information about who called whom, when and where) gathered by electronic surveillance had been analysed to find the location of targets for lethal drone strikes. Such strikes raise serious questions under human rights and humanitarian law.

This means... Surveillance and killing are connected. Data collected about ordinary communications can end in a strike, so privacy protection is also a question of the right to life, which is why this topic belongs in a security committee.

### **OHCHR, May 28, 2025: Drone cameras used to hunt civilians in Kherson**

Tagline: Hunting civilians with drone cameras

Source: According to... OHCHR, May 28, 2025

Link: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/05/un-commission-concludes-russian-armed-forces-drone-attacks-against-civilians?sub-site=HRC>

Fact: It states... The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine found that from July 2024 Russian forces used live video from drone cameras to pick out visibly civilian targets along more than 100 km of the Dnipro River in Kherson Province and then dropped explosives on them. Nearly 150 civilians were killed and hundreds injured. Hundreds of the drone videos were posted on Telegram channels. The Commission concluded these attacks were the crime against humanity of murder.

This means... In current wars, the surveillance camera is the targeting system. DISEC delegates cannot treat "surveillance drones" and "attack drones" as separate problems.

### **OHCHR, October 28, 2025: The drone attack zone grows to 300 km**

Tagline: Widening the drone attack zone

Source: According to... OHCHR, October 28, 2025

Link: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/10/russian-authorities-committed-crimes-against-humanity-targeting-civilian?sub-site=HRC>

Fact: It states... In its report to the General Assembly, the Commission said the drone attacks had spread along more than 300 km of the Dnipro across three provinces and had continued for over a year. Ambulances and fire brigades were hit, and thousands of people fled. The Commission concluded the attacks were crimes against humanity of murder and forcible transfer. It could not finish its inquiry into Russian claims of Ukrainian drone attacks because it lacked access.

This means... Cheap camera drones allow a military to watch and terrorise a whole region. The Commission's lack of access also shows a weakness delegates must address: investigations depend on states letting investigators in.

### **Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 13, 2025: Russia launches over 1,000 Shahed drones a week**

Tagline: Launching over 1,000 drones weekly

Source: According to... Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 13, 2025

Link: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/drone-saturation-russias-shahed-campaign>

Fact: It states... Russian launches of Shahed-type long-range drones against Ukraine rose from about 130 per week before September 2024 to about 1,100 per week within six months. Each drone costs an estimated 20,000 to 50,000 US dollars. Ukrainian intelligence reportedly found 200 Chinese-made components in Russian strike systems.

This means... Drones are now cheap enough to use in the thousands, and their parts cross many borders. Export controls on components, not only on finished drones, are part of this debate.

### **Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 28, 2025: Ukraine and Russia use millions of drones a year**

Tagline: Flying millions of drones each year

Source: According to... Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 28, 2025

Link: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russia-ukraine-drone-war-innovation-frontlines-and-beyond>

Fact: It states... Experts at a CSIS event estimated that Ukraine made about 800,000 drones in 2023 and about 2 million in 2024, with up to 5 million planned for 2025. Russia may have used up to 4 million drones in 2024, compared with about 2,000 in its fleet before 2022. Drones now provide reconnaissance and watch over the whole battlefield, so most moving targets can be tracked and attacked. Ukraine has used the commercial DJI Mavic, which costs about \$2,000, for surveillance since 2014.

This means... A cheap shop-bought camera drone has become a main tool of war surveillance. Rules that only cover large military drones will miss most of the drones that actually watch people in conflict.

### **Council on Foreign Relations, June 3, 2025: Smuggled drones struck bombers deep inside Russia**

Tagline: Putting precision strikes in anyone's hands

Source: According to... Council on Foreign Relations, June 3, 2025

Link: <https://www.cfr.org/articles/ukraines-operation-spiders-web-shows-future-drone-warfare>

Fact: It states... In "Operation Spider's Web," Ukraine said it used 117 attack drones against airfields deep inside Russia and claimed hits on 41 aircraft; Russia admitted damage but disputed how much. The drones were hidden in commercial trucks for months and launched from places as far apart as the Ukrainian border and Siberia. The Council on Foreign Relations explained that drones now cost from a few hundred dollars to tens of thousands, and that "low-cost precision strikes are now accessible to almost any state or militant group."

This means... A weapon that once only rich militaries owned is now cheap, easy to hide and easy to copy. DISEC delegates must plan rules for armed groups and small states, not only for the great powers, because the drone that watches a target today can strike it tomorrow.

### **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 22, 2026: Drone war spreads from Ukraine to Sudan and Gaza**

Tagline: Spreading drone war across continents

Source: According to... Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 22, 2026

Link: <https://carnegieendowment.org/emissary/2026/01/drone-war-ukraine-sudan-gaza-effects>

Fact: It states... Two Carnegie experts discussed reports that about 70 percent of casualties in the Russia-Ukraine war are linked to drones. In Sudan, both the army and the Rapid Support Forces use drones, including strikes on Port Sudan more than 1,000 km from territory the RSF holds. In Gaza, AI systems that sort large amounts of data were said to raise the number of targets produced about tenfold. Armed groups such as the Houthis and the Islamic State use drones, some built with 3D printers. One expert suggested starting with rules for advanced long-range and autonomous drones.

This means... Drone surveillance and targeting are now part of wars on several continents and in the hands of armed groups. A DISEC resolution may need to start with the most dangerous systems, because a single rule for every drone may be too hard to agree.

### **United Nations News, July 3, 2026: Fifteen drone strikes hit one Sudanese city in three weeks**

Tagline: Besieging a city from the air

Source: According to... United Nations News, July 3, 2026

Link: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/07/1167871>

Fact: It states... The UN human rights office recorded 15 drone strikes on El Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan in Sudan, and the area around it in just three weeks of June 2026, killing at least 45 civilians. Both the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces launched the strikes, which hit markets, schools, fuel stations, water systems and civilian vehicles. The city holds more than half a million residents and at least 100,000 displaced people, and residents reported drone attacks along the roads they would use to escape. UN High Commissioner Volker Türk said the warning "is not a drill."

This means... Drones now let armed forces trap and frighten a whole city, because people cannot move safely when cameras and bombs watch the roads. Delegates should ask how DISEC can protect civilians when both sides of a civil war use drones and neither has signed any drone rules.

### **United Nations News, August 19, 2026: Drones caused 80 percent of civilian deaths in Sudan in early 2026**

Tagline: Reshaping war against civilians and aid workers

Source: According to... United Nations News, August 19, 2026

Link: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/08/1168153>

Fact: It states... On World Humanitarian Day, the UN aid office (OCHA) reported that armed drones caused 80 percent of civilian deaths in Sudan in the first four months of 2026. Drones killed 80 civilians in Ukraine in April 2026 alone, and attacks with weaponised drones in Colombia quadrupled between 2024 and 2025. An aid worker was killed when a drone hit a residential building in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and four humanitarian convoys were attacked in Ukraine in a single week. UN relief chief Tom Fletcher said drones are "extending the reach of war."

This means... Cheap drones have spread from Ukraine to Africa and Latin America, and they now reach the people who deliver food and medicine. Delegates can argue that drone rules are urgent for the whole world, not only for the countries at war in Europe.

### **Global Counterterrorism Forum, Last Accessed: October 2026: Terrorists use drones to spy on targets**

Tagline: Listing terrorist uses of drones

Source: According to... Global Counterterrorism Forum, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link:

<https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Framework%20Documents/2019/Berlin%20Memorandum%20EN.pdf>

Fact: It states... The Forum's Berlin Memorandum lists ways terrorists can misuse drones: collecting intelligence and surveillance, watching targets and security routines, filming propaganda, disrupting police operations and infrastructure, smuggling, and spreading panic at crowded events. It notes ISIL used drones for attacks, surveillance and propaganda in Iraq and Syria, and that cheap commercial drones put these abilities within reach of even low-skilled people.

This means... Governments argue they need drone surveillance and counter-drone tools to stop terrorist drones. Delegates must balance that security need against the privacy harms caused by state surveillance itself.

## **1B. MAJOR SOLUTION 1: STRICT LEGAL LIMITS ON SURVEILLANCE (NECESSITY, PROPORTIONALITY, TIME LIMITS)**

This solution asks every state to allow drone surveillance only when it is lawful, necessary and proportionate: limited to specific places and times, with data deleted after a set period and independent approval for intrusive use.

Advantages: it builds on rules already in UN human rights resolutions, it applies to every kind of surveillance tool rather than only drones, and it does not ban useful uses such as search and rescue. Disadvantages: the standard is broad, so each government interprets it differently; it is hard to enforce across borders; and military and intelligence agencies often claim national security exemptions.

### **OHCHR, September 16, 2022: Limit public surveillance to what is strictly necessary**

Tagline: Limiting public surveillance strictly

Source: According to... OHCHR, September 16, 2022

Link: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/spyware-and-surveillance-threats-privacy-and-human-rights-growing-un-report>

Fact: It states... The UN High Commissioner recommended limiting public surveillance to what is strictly necessary and proportionate, focused on specific places and times, with limits on how long data is stored. The report urged states to urgently restrict biometric recognition in public spaces and to set up strong export controls for surveillance technologies that pose serious human rights risks. It also warned that tools built for legitimate purposes are often repurposed.

This means... The UN human rights office has already written a model for a DISEC resolution: necessity, proportionality, time and place limits, data deletion and export controls. Delegates can build on this language rather than inventing new standards.

### **Brookings Institution, November 2014: Regulate surveillance itself, not just drones**

Tagline: Regulating the harm, not the machine

Source: According to... Brookings Institution, November 2014

Link: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/drones-and-aerial-surveillance-considerations-for-legislatures/>

Fact: It states... A Brookings policy paper argued that early drone laws focused on the technology (drones) rather than the harm (constant surveillance). It recommended limits on how long any one person can be watched from the air, rules for deleting stored footage, and public logs of aerial surveillance. It also noted that features such as geofencing and automatic blurring could make drones more privacy-protective than piloted aircraft.

This means... A disadvantage of drone-only rules is that governments can switch to helicopters, satellites or fixed cameras. A technology-neutral rule closes that gap, which is an argument for writing the resolution around surveillance in general.

## **1C. MAJOR SOLUTION 2: REGISTRATION, IDENTIFICATION AND NO-FLY ZONES FOR DRONES**

This solution treats drones like vehicles: owners register them, drones broadcast an identity, and authorities draw zones where drones may not fly, for safety and for privacy. The European Union has done this for its 27 member states, and the International Civil Aviation Organization (see Part 3) works on global aviation standards.

Advantages: it makes drone operators identifiable and accountable, and it already works at a regional level. Disadvantages: it mainly covers civilian drones, not military or police ones; small drones and toys may be exempt; and many countries lack the capacity to run registration systems.

### **EUR-Lex (Regulation (EU) 2019/947), May 24, 2019: Drones with cameras must be registered**

Tagline: Registering drones that carry cameras

Source: According to... EUR-Lex, May 24, 2019

Link: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg\\_impl/2019/947/oj](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2019/947/oj)

Fact: It states... The EU drone regulation divides operations into open, specific and certified categories by risk. In the open category, an operator must register if the drone weighs 250 grams or more, or if it carries a sensor able to capture personal data (unless it is a toy). The regulation says registration is needed because of risks to privacy and the protection of personal data, and the online exam for pilots includes privacy and data protection.

This means... The EU treats a camera as a privacy risk in itself. Delegates could propose that the UN encourage all states to adopt similar registration rules, though poorer states may need technical help to do so.

### **EUR-Lex (Regulation (EU) 2019/947), May 24, 2019: States may close airspace for privacy reasons**

Tagline: Drawing privacy zones in the sky

Source: According to... EUR-Lex, May 24, 2019

Link: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg\\_impl/2019/947/oj](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2019/947/oj)

Fact: It states... Article 15 allows EU member states to define geographical zones where drones are banned or limited for safety, security, privacy or environmental reasons. Before an operator receives authorisation for higher-risk flights, the operator must confirm compliance with rules on privacy, data protection, liability, insurance, security and the environment.

This means... No-fly zones are a practical privacy tool that already exists. A DISEC resolution could recommend such zones over homes, schools, hospitals and places of worship, while noting that they do not restrict government or military drones.

## **1D. MAJOR SOLUTION 3: BANNING OR RESTRICTING FACIAL RECOGNITION FROM THE AIR**

This solution targets the most intrusive part of drone surveillance: software that identifies individual people by their faces or bodies in real time.

Advantages: it removes the ability to track named individuals in crowds, which is the main threat to protesters and rights defenders. Disadvantages: police argue they need it to find missing children and terrorism suspects, and the strongest current law (the EU AI Act) excludes military and national security uses entirely.

### **EUR-Lex (Regulation (EU) 2024/1689), June 13, 2024: Live face scanning by police is largely banned**

Tagline: Restricting live face scanning

Source: According to... EUR-Lex, June 13, 2024

Link: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj>

Fact: It states... The EU Artificial Intelligence Act prohibits police use of real-time remote biometric identification in publicly accessible spaces, except in a short list of situations: searching for certain crime victims and missing persons, preventing specific threats to life or a terrorist attack, and finding suspects of serious crimes. Each use needs prior approval from a judge or independent authority (or approval within 24 hours in an emergency) and a fundamental rights impact assessment.

This means... A regional model already exists for limiting face recognition, including from drones. Delegates can debate whether a global norm should copy the EU's narrow exceptions or go further.

## **EUR-Lex (Regulation (EU) 2024/1689), June 13, 2024: Military and national security AI is excluded**

Tagline: Excluding military and security uses

Source: According to... EUR-Lex, June 13, 2024

Link: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj>

Fact: It states... The AI Act says AI systems used for military, defence or national security purposes are outside its scope, no matter who uses them. A system used for civilian or law enforcement purposes is still covered.

This means... The exact area DISEC covers, military and security use, is the gap left by the most advanced regional AI law. This gives DISEC a clear reason to act: no one else currently regulates military drone surveillance.

## **1E. MAJOR SOLUTION 4: EXPORT CONTROLS ON DRONES AND SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGY**

This solution limits who can buy drones and surveillance systems, so that governments likely to abuse them cannot get them easily.

Advantages: it acts before harm happens and uses arms-control systems that already exist. Disadvantages: control regimes are voluntary and include only some producers; commercial drones and parts are sold freely; and exporting states may see controls as a threat to their industries.

## **UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/44/38), August 15, 2020: Stricter controls on drone transfers**

Tagline: Tightening drone export controls

Source: According to... UN Human Rights Council, August 15, 2020

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/44/38>

Fact: It states... The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions recommended that states exporting armed drone technology enact stricter controls on military and dual-use drone transfers with clear criteria to prevent irresponsible sales. She also urged states to control drone proliferation through export and multilateral arms control regimes or treaties, and to develop standards of transparency and accountability.

This means... A UN expert has already asked for the exact kind of measure that falls under DISEC. Delegates from exporting countries and importing countries will likely disagree on how strict the criteria should be.

## **Wassenaar Arrangement, Last Accessed: October 2026: Unmanned vehicles are on the Munitions List**

Tagline: Controlling unmanned vehicle exports

Source: According to... Wassenaar Arrangement, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://www.wassenaar.org/about-us/>

Fact: It states... The Wassenaar Arrangement, based in Vienna since 1996, coordinates export controls among 42 participating states on conventional arms and dual-use goods. Its Munitions List includes "aircraft and unmanned airborne vehicles," and its dual-use list covers sensors, lasers, telecommunications and information security. Each state applies the controls through its own national law.

This means... An export-control tool for drones already exists, but only 42 states take part and the controls are applied nationally. Producers outside the group are not bound, which limits how much this solution can achieve alone.

## **1F. MAJOR SOLUTION 5: TRANSPARENCY, OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS**

This solution asks states to publish how and when they use drones, to let independent bodies review that use, and to investigate when harm occurs.

Advantages: it does not ban any technology, so more states may accept it, and it gives victims a path to remedies. Disadvantages: states guard military and intelligence secrets, and without verification, transparency pledges can be ignored.

### **UNIDIR, December 1, 2017: Transparency and accountability for armed drones are lacking**

Tagline: Closing the accountability gap

Source: According to... UNIDIR, December 1, 2017

Link: <https://unidir.org/publication/increasing-transparency-oversight-and-accountability-armed-unmanned-aerial-vehicles>

Fact: It states... The UN Institute for Disarmament Research found that the international community had not agreed on how established international principles apply to armed drones. It said this gap was unsatisfactory for civilian protection, peace and security and the rule of law, and that drones are more open to misuse than many other technologies. The study suggested ways to build shared understandings on transparency, oversight and accountability.

This means... DISEC's own research institute has already mapped this solution. A resolution could ask UNIDIR to update the study for surveillance drones and AI cameras.

### **UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/52/39), March 1, 2023: Police must plan drone use and investigate harm**

Tagline: Planning and investigating police drone use

Source: According to... UN Human Rights Council, March 1, 2023

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/52/39>

Fact: It states... The Special Rapporteur said law enforcement must plan drone operations in advance rather than using drones whenever officers prefer. When drones risk death or serious injury, investigations must be independent, impartial and open to public and family scrutiny. She also warned that states holding powerful drone tools have a heavy duty to keep them from reaching other actors.

This means... Accountability can be written as concrete steps: plan, record, investigate and publish. These steps give delegates specific clauses to include rather than general appeals.

## **1G. MAJOR SOLUTION 6: A NEW TREATY ON AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS**

As drones gain AI, some can find and attack targets without a human decision. This solution asks states to negotiate a binding treaty that bans the most dangerous autonomous systems and regulates the rest.

Advantages: it would set a clear legal line before the technology spreads further, and it has strong support from the UN Secretary-General and the ICRC. Disadvantages: major military powers prefer non-binding guidance, negotiations are slow, and a treaty on weapons may not directly address surveillance and privacy.

### **ICRC, October 5, 2023: The UN and ICRC call for a treaty by 2026**

Tagline: Calling for a treaty by 2026

Source: According to... ICRC, October 5, 2023

Link: <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/joint-call-un-and-icrc-establish-prohibitions-and-restrictions-autonomous-weapons-systems>

Fact: It states... UN Secretary-General António Guterres and ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric jointly urged states to negotiate a new legally binding instrument on autonomous weapon systems and finish by 2026. They called for a ban on systems whose effects cannot be predicted, such as those controlled by machine learning, and for limits on where, when and against what other systems may be used. They said: "The autonomous targeting of humans by machines is a moral line that we must not cross."

This means... The 2026 deadline falls in the year of this conference. Delegates must decide whether to push for the treaty now, extend the deadline, or rely on non-binding measures.

### **ICRC, May 12, 2021: Ban unpredictable and anti-personnel autonomous weapons**

Tagline: Banning unpredictable and anti-personnel systems

Source: According to... ICRC, May 12, 2021

Link: <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/icrc-position-autonomous-weapon-systems>

Fact: It states... The ICRC recommends new binding rules that ban unpredictable autonomous weapons, ban autonomous weapons designed or used to apply force against people, and limit all others by target type, time, place, scale and situations where civilians are present. It requires effective human supervision and the ability to switch systems off.

This means... An AI drone that watches a crowd and selects people as targets would fall under the ICRC's proposed ban. This connects surveillance (identifying people) directly to the weapons debate in DISEC.

### **Reaching Critical Will, September 11, 2025: 42 states say they are ready to negotiate**

Tagline: Moving the rolling text toward negotiations

Source: According to... Reaching Critical Will, September 11, 2025

Link: <https://reachingcriticalwill.org/news/latest-news/18048-group-of-governmental-experts-on-autonomous-weapons-digs-into-details-of-elements-for-a-treaty-but-needs-to-now-advance-to-negotiations>

Fact: It states... The Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons met in Geneva from September 1 to 5, 2025. Its Chair, from the Netherlands, offered a "rolling text" divided into the possible parts of a future instrument. 42 states issued a joint statement saying they are ready to "move ahead towards negotiations within the CCW on the basis of the rolling text."

This means... A draft text already exists, and a group of states wants to turn it into a treaty. Delegates must decide whether DISEC should support starting negotiations now or wait for full agreement in Geneva.

### **ICRC, August 25, 2026: The UN and ICRC renew their call**

Tagline: Renewing the call before the Review Conference

Source: According to... ICRC, August 25, 2026

Link: <https://www.icrc.org/en/statement/renewed-call-un-secretary-general-and-icrc-president-adopt-rules-autonomous-weapons>

Fact: It states... UN Secretary-General António Guterres and ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric renewed their 2023 joint appeal, saying the risks of autonomous weapons have grown since then. They urged states to start negotiations now on a binding instrument with clear prohibitions and restrictions. They called the Seventh Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in November 2026 "the clearest path available for States," and wrote: "This year must mark a turning point."

This means... The Review Conference happens only weeks before this committee meets. Delegates should check its result and decide whether DISEC should welcome it, push it further, or offer the General Assembly as another path.

**Council on Foreign Relations, September 14, 2026: The United States plans about \$55 billion for autonomous warfare**

Tagline: Racing to build drone fleets

Source: According to... Council on Foreign Relations, September 14, 2026

Link: <https://www.cfr.org/articles/is-the-u-s-army-backing-off-on-drones>

Fact: It states... In a training exercise in Hohenfels, Germany, in April and May 2026, about 3,500 US soldiers faced a formation that included Ukrainian troops, and press reports said the Ukrainian drone operators performed better than the Americans. The US administration's budget request for 2027 includes about \$55 billion for a Defense Autonomous Warfare Group. The Council's senior fellow describes the new goal of armies as "precise mass": cheap, highly accurate, uncrewed systems used in very large numbers.

This means... This shows a disadvantage of the treaty solution. The largest military powers are spending billions to build autonomous drone fleets, so they have strong reasons to resist bans, and delegates who want a treaty must offer them something they can accept.

**1H. LESSER SOLUTIONS**

- **Encryption and privacy-protective design:** encourage companies to build drones that blur faces, limit storage and protect data (see A/RES/79/175 and the Brookings entry).
- **Human rights due diligence for companies:** ask manufacturers and sellers to assess how buyers will use drones and AI cameras before selling (see A/RES/79/175).
- **Digital literacy and public awareness:** help citizens understand what drones collect and what rights they have.
- **Counter-drone technology:** help states detect and stop hostile drones, while ensuring counter-drone tools are not themselves used for mass surveillance.
- **Technical assistance:** fund training so developing states can build registration systems and independent oversight bodies.

**PART 2, THE UNITED NATIONS RECORD**

The UN has never adopted a resolution that is specifically about drone surveillance. Instead, the issue sits across four tracks: the right to privacy in the digital age (General Assembly Third Committee and Human Rights Council), armed drones and accountability (Human Rights Council), terrorist use of drones (Security Council), and autonomous weapons and military AI (General Assembly First Committee, which is DISEC). The table lists every relevant resolution whose symbol was confirmed on the official UN document system.

**2A. TABLE OF UN RESOLUTIONS AND INSTRUMENTS**

| Symbol       | Year | Body             | What it does                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------|------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A/RES/68/167 | 2013 | General Assembly | First resolution on the right to privacy in the digital age; warns that new technology increases the power of governments and companies to carry out surveillance. |
| A/RES/69/166 | 2014 | General Assembly | Renews the right to privacy in the digital age resolution.                                                                                                         |
|              |      |                  |                                                                                                                                                                    |

|                 |      |                      |                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------|------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A/RES/71/199    | 2016 | General Assembly     | Renews the right to privacy in the digital age resolution.                                                                                                         |
| A/RES/73/179    | 2018 | General Assembly     | Renews the right to privacy in the digital age resolution.                                                                                                         |
| A/RES/75/176    | 2020 | General Assembly     | Renews the right to privacy in the digital age resolution.                                                                                                         |
| A/RES/77/211    | 2022 | General Assembly     | Asks states to regularly review laws on mass surveillance, profiling and biometric technologies.                                                                   |
| A/RES/79/175    | 2024 | General Assembly     | Warns about facial recognition and remote biometric identification without safeguards and asks for human rights due diligence on AI.                               |
| A/HRC/RES/28/16 | 2015 | Human Rights Council | Creates the post of Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy.                                                                                                    |
| A/HRC/RES/34/7  | 2017 | Human Rights Council | Renews the Council's right to privacy in the digital age resolution.                                                                                               |
| A/HRC/RES/42/15 | 2019 | Human Rights Council | Renews the Council's right to privacy in the digital age resolution.                                                                                               |
| A/HRC/RES/48/4  | 2021 | Human Rights Council | Says unlawful use of biometric technologies and surveillance violates privacy and harms free assembly.                                                             |
| A/HRC/RES/54/21 | 2023 | Human Rights Council | Warns that facial recognition and surveillance technology can cause discrimination and that some uses may be incompatible with human rights law.                   |
| A/HRC/RES/25/22 | 2014 | Human Rights Council | Urges states to ensure armed drones used in counterterrorism and military operations comply with international law, and calls for transparency and investigations. |
| A/HRC/RES/28/3  | 2015 | Human Rights Council | Repeats the call for armed drone use to comply with international law.                                                                                             |
| A/HRC/RES/44/20 | 2020 | Human Rights Council | Expresses concern about surveillance of peaceful protesters with facial recognition and phone-tracking tools.                                                      |
| A/HRC/RES/50/21 | 2022 | Human Rights Council | Names "aerial surveillance vehicles" as a concern at protests and urges states not to use facial recognition arbitrarily on protesters.                            |
| A/HRC/RES/58/23 | 2025 | Human Rights Council | Expresses concern about aerial surveillance of human                                                                                                               |

|                |      |                                    |                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------|------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                |      |                                    | rights defenders and says biometric identification must not be used for mass surveillance.                                                               |
| A/RES/67/234 B | 2013 | General Assembly                   | Adopts the Arms Trade Treaty, which regulates the international trade in conventional arms.                                                              |
| A/RES/78/241   | 2023 | General Assembly (First Committee) | First General Assembly resolution on lethal autonomous weapons systems; asks the Secretary-General to collect state views.                               |
| A/RES/79/62    | 2024 | General Assembly (First Committee) | Convenes open informal consultations in 2025 on lethal autonomous weapons systems.                                                                       |
| A/RES/79/239   | 2024 | General Assembly (First Committee) | Affirms that international law applies to AI throughout its life cycle in the military domain and asks for a report to the 80th session.                 |
| A/RES/80/57    | 2025 | General Assembly (First Committee) | Calls on CCW parties to complete a set of elements for an instrument on lethal autonomous weapons "with a view to future negotiations"; adopted 164-6-7. |
| A/RES/80/58    | 2025 | General Assembly (First Committee) | Artificial intelligence in the military domain; convenes informal exchanges of states in Geneva (June 15-17, 2026); adopted 167-5-5.                     |
| A/RES/78/265   | 2024 | General Assembly                   | Promotes safe, secure and trustworthy AI for sustainable development.                                                                                    |
| S/RES/2098     | 2013 | Security Council                   | Authorises the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to use surveillance by unmanned aerial systems to monitor arms flows.                  |
| S/RES/2370     | 2017 | Security Council                   | Condemns the flow of weapons, including unmanned aircraft systems, to terrorist groups and asks states to stop it.                                       |
| S/RES/2482     | 2019 | Security Council                   | Repeats concern about unmanned aircraft systems reaching terrorists and criminals.                                                                       |
| S/RES/2617     | 2021 | Security Council                   | Expresses concern about terrorist use of drones and asks the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate to raise awareness of the threat.         |

## 2B. THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

### **United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/68/167), December 18, 2013: The UN privacy agenda begins**

Tagline: Starting the UN privacy agenda

Source: According to... United Nations General Assembly, December 18, 2013

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/68/167>

Fact: It states... In its first resolution on the right to privacy in the digital age, the General Assembly noted that rapid technological development increases the ability of governments, companies and individuals to carry out surveillance, interception and data collection that may violate the right to privacy. It reaffirmed that no one may be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence.

This means... The legal foundation for this topic is already agreed by the whole General Assembly. Delegates can cite this resolution to argue that aerial surveillance is covered by existing privacy rights.

### **United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/79/175), December 17, 2024: Facial recognition without safeguards threatens rights**

Tagline: Warning about biometric surveillance

Source: According to... United Nations General Assembly, December 17, 2024

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/79/175>

Fact: It states... The latest resolution warns that facial recognition and remote biometric identification without proper safeguards can harm human rights, notes reports that facial recognition is less accurate for certain groups, and notes the growth in collecting sensitive biometric data. It encourages states and companies to carry out human rights due diligence through the whole life of AI systems and to stop using AI that cannot comply with human rights law until safeguards exist.

This means... Drones with facial recognition fall directly under these concerns. The resolution does not mention drones by name, which leaves room for DISEC to address aerial use specifically.

## 2C. AERIAL SURVEILLANCE OF PROTESTERS AND RIGHTS DEFENDERS

### **UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/RES/50/21), July 14, 2022: Aerial surveillance vehicles at protests**

Tagline: Naming aerial surveillance vehicles

Source: According to... UN Human Rights Council, July 14, 2022

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/50/21>

Fact: It states... The Council expressed concern at arbitrary and unlawful surveillance of peaceful protesters through closed-circuit television and "aerial surveillance vehicles," and through facial and emotional recognition and phone-tracking devices. It urged states not to use biometric identification, including facial recognition, arbitrarily or unlawfully to identify people at peaceful assemblies.

This means... This is one of the few UN texts that names surveillance from the air. Delegates can quote it as agreed language when drafting clauses on drones at protests.

### **UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/RES/58/23), April 7, 2025: Biometrics must not be used for mass surveillance**

Tagline: Protecting human rights defenders

Source: According to... UN Human Rights Council, April 7, 2025

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/58/23>

Fact: It states... The Council expressed concern at surveillance of human rights defenders through aerial surveillance vehicles, facial recognition and spyware. It called on states to ensure that biometric and facial recognition technologies are not used by public or private actors for mass surveillance, and to provide remedies for victims of unlawful surveillance.

This means... The most recent Council language goes further than earlier texts by rejecting mass surveillance with biometrics. Delegates who favour strong limits can cite it; delegates who favour security flexibility will need to argue for narrow exceptions.

## **2D. ARMED DRONES AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/RES/25/22), March 28, 2014: Transparency and investigations on armed drones**

Tagline: Demanding transparency on armed drones

Source: According to... UN Human Rights Council, March 28, 2014

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/25/22>

Fact: It states... The Council urged all states to ensure that armed drones used in counterterrorism and military operations comply with the UN Charter, human rights law and humanitarian law, including precaution, distinction and proportionality. It called on states to be transparent in their records on drone use and to conduct prompt, independent and impartial investigations. It passed by 27 votes to 6, with 14 abstentions; France, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States voted against.

This means... The UN agreed on transparency in principle more than a decade ago, but major drone users opposed it. Delegates should expect the same split today.

### **UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/44/38), August 15, 2020: International oversight has failed**

Tagline: Exposing weak international oversight

Source: According to... UN Human Rights Council, August 15, 2020

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/44/38>

Fact: It states... The Special Rapporteur concluded that international oversight mechanisms have not addressed drone killings with the seriousness they deserve. She found that the Security Council questioned the legality of an extraterritorial targeted killing in only one instance, and that most drone strikes receive little public scrutiny at national or international level.

This means... The UN's current system does not hold drone users accountable. DISEC delegates could propose a new reporting or review mechanism, but they must design it to work despite the Security Council veto.

### **UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/56/45), August 20, 2024: Drones were among the first technology issues the UN examined**

Tagline: Mapping UN work on drones

Source: According to... UN Human Rights Council, August 20, 2024

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/56/45>

Fact: It states... A UN human rights mapping report found that drone targeted killings, and the lack of transparency about criteria for drone strikes, were among the first issues human rights treaty bodies considered about new military technologies. Special rapporteurs have discussed armed drones and autonomous weapons since the early 2010s.

This means... The UN has studied this issue for more than a decade, but mostly through reports and recommendations rather than binding action. Delegates should explain why earlier efforts have not led to agreed rules.

## **2E. THE UN'S OWN USE OF SURVEILLANCE DRONES**

### **United Nations Security Council (S/RES/2098), March 28, 2013: UN peacekeepers use surveillance drones**

Tagline: Using drones for peacekeeping

Source: According to... United Nations Security Council, March 28, 2013

Link: [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2098\(2013\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2098(2013))

Fact: It states... The Security Council directed the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to monitor arms moving across the eastern border, including by using surveillance capabilities provided by unmanned aerial systems, and to share information with the UN Group of Experts.

This means... The UN itself uses surveillance drones and sees value in them. Delegates can argue that drone surveillance can protect civilians, and that the UN should model privacy-protective practices in its own missions.

## **2F. TERRORIST USE OF DRONES**

### **United Nations Security Council (S/RES/2370), August 2, 2017: Stop drones reaching terrorists**

Tagline: Stopping drone flows to terrorists

Source: According to... United Nations Security Council, August 2, 2017

Link: [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2370\(2017\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2370(2017))

Fact: It states... The Security Council strongly condemned the continued flow of weapons, military equipment, unmanned aircraft systems and their components to ISIL, Al-Qaida, their affiliates, illegal armed groups and criminals, and encouraged states to prevent and disrupt these flows.

This means... The Security Council sees drones as a terrorism threat, which supports state arguments for counter-drone surveillance. Delegates must decide how to stop terrorist drones without expanding surveillance of ordinary people.

### **United Nations Security Council (S/RES/2617), December 30, 2021: Awareness of terrorist drone threats**

Tagline: Raising awareness of terrorist drones

Source: According to... United Nations Security Council, December 30, 2021

Link: [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2617\(2021\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2617(2021))

Fact: It states... Renewing the mandate of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), the Council noted the increasing global misuse of drones by terrorists against infrastructure and public places. It acknowledged the need to balance encouraging innovation with preventing misuse, and asked CTED to raise awareness of terrorist drone use for attacks and trafficking. It referenced the Global Counterterrorism Forum's Berlin Memorandum.

This means... The Council itself recognises a balance between innovation and security. Delegates can use that "balance" language to include privacy in the same equation.

### **UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/52/39), March 1, 2023: The Delhi Declaration leaves out state abuse**

Tagline: Criticising the Delhi Declaration gaps

Source: According to... UN Human Rights Council, March 1, 2023

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/52/39>

Fact: It states... The Special Rapporteur welcomed the inclusive process behind the Counter-Terrorism Committee's 2022 Delhi Declaration on new technologies, including drones. She was very concerned, however, that it did not address the abuse of armed drones by states or the widespread abuse of surveillance technology by states, and warned the Security Council against narrow guidance that ignores human rights.

This means... UN counterterrorism work focuses on drones in the hands of terrorists, not on governments that misuse them. A DISEC resolution could close this gap by covering both.

## **2G. AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS AND MILITARY AI**

### **United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/78/241), December 22, 2023: First Assembly resolution on autonomous weapons**

Tagline: Requesting views on autonomous weapons

Source: According to... United Nations General Assembly, December 22, 2023

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/78/241>

Fact: It states... On the report of the First Committee, the General Assembly asked the Secretary-General to collect the views of states on lethal autonomous weapons systems, including the humanitarian, legal, security, technological and ethical concerns they raise and the role of humans in the use of force, and to report to the 79th session.

This means... DISEC itself has opened this debate. Delegates are continuing a process their own committee started.

### **United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/79/62), December 2, 2024: Consultations in 2025**

Tagline: Convening consultations in 2025

Source: According to... United Nations General Assembly, December 2, 2024

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/79/62>

Fact: It states... The General Assembly decided to convene open informal consultations in 2025 to consider the Secretary-General's report, in a way that supports the Group of Governmental Experts working under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in Geneva.

This means... The UN now has two parallel tracks: the General Assembly in New York, open to all states, and the expert group in Geneva, which works by consensus. Delegates must decide which track should lead.

### **United Nations News, May 14, 2025: The first New York consultations on autonomous weapons**

Tagline: Agreeing on a two-tier approach

Source: According to... United Nations News, May 14, 2025

Link: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/05/1163256>

Fact: It states... The consultations called for by resolution 79/62 met in New York for two days in May 2025, bringing together member states, academic experts and civil society. Secretary-General Guterres told them, "There is no place for lethal autonomous weapon systems in our world," and "We cannot delegate life-or-death decisions to machines." UN News explained that these weapons broadly include advanced drones that select targets and use force without human instruction. A civil society leader said agreement was forming on a "two-tiered" approach, banning some systems and regulating others, but states still disagreed on a definition and on what "meaningful human control" means.

This means... The two-tier idea (ban the worst systems, regulate the rest) is now the main middle ground. Delegates can write clauses on both tiers, but they must also offer a clear definition, because disagreement over words has slowed the talks for years.

### **United Nations (A/79/88), July 1, 2024: The Secretary-General calls for a ban**

Tagline: Urging a ban on killer machines

Source: According to... United Nations, July 1, 2024

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/79/88>

Fact: It states... In his report on lethal autonomous weapons, the Secretary-General said machines with the power to take human lives are politically unacceptable and morally repugnant and should be banned. He repeated his call for a legally binding instrument, concluded by 2026, that prohibits systems working without human control and regulates all others. Several state submissions in the report mention drones, including swarms of small drones that could cause mass casualties.

This means... The UN's top official has set a 2026 deadline. Delegates in December 2026 will be debating at the moment that deadline arrives.

### **United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/79/239), December 24, 2024: International law applies to military AI**

Tagline: Applying law to military AI

Source: According to... United Nations General Assembly, December 24, 2024

Link: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/79/239>

Fact: It states... The General Assembly affirmed that international law, including the UN Charter, humanitarian law and human rights law, applies at all stages of the life cycle of AI in the military domain. It encouraged national, regional and global efforts and asked the Secretary-General for a report on military AI beyond autonomous weapons for the 80th session.

This means... AI-enabled drone surveillance in the military is covered by human rights law, according to the Assembly. Delegates can use this to argue that military surveillance drones must respect privacy.

### **United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/80/57), December 1, 2025: Working toward elements of an instrument**

Tagline: Preparing elements of a future instrument

Source: According to... United Nations General Assembly, December 1, 2025

Link: [https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4095989/files/A\\_RES\\_80\\_57-EN.pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4095989/files/A_RES_80_57-EN.pdf)

Fact: It states... On the report of the First Committee, the General Assembly said a full and inclusive multilateral approach is needed to deal with the legal, technological, ethical, humanitarian and security concerns of lethal autonomous weapons. It stressed the urgent need to address them within the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, called the Chair's rolling text a "significant milestone," and called on states to complete a set of elements for an instrument "with a view to future negotiations." It kept the topic on the agenda of the 81st session.

This means... DISEC's own resolution now points toward negotiations, but it leaves the work in Geneva. Delegates in December 2026 will be writing the next resolution in this series.

### **United Nations Meetings Coverage (GA/12736), December 1, 2025: Voting on autonomous weapons and military AI**

Tagline: Recording the votes on autonomy and AI

Source: According to... United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, December 1, 2025

Link: <https://press.un.org/en/2025/ga12736.doc.htm>

Fact: It states... The General Assembly adopted the resolution on lethal autonomous weapons systems by 164 votes to 6, with 7 abstentions. Belarus, Burundi, North Korea, Israel, Russia and the United States voted against. It adopted the resolution on artificial intelligence in the military domain by 167 votes to 5, with 5 abstentions; Burundi, North Korea, Israel, Russia and the United States voted against.

This means... Almost every state supports action, but some of the largest drone and AI powers voted no. Delegates must decide whether to move ahead with the majority or soften the text to bring those powers in.

### **Arms Control Association, December 2025: The United States and Russia oppose AI resolutions**

Tagline: Splitting over military AI governance

Source: According to... Arms Control Association, December 2025

Link: <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2025-12/news/us-russia-oppose-un-resolutions-military-use-ai>

Fact: It states... The United States voted against the 2025 resolution on AI in the military domain after supporting a similar one in 2024, warning it could build a "global governance regime designed to institute centralized control over a critical technology." The resolution sets up a three-day meeting of UN members in 2026, with a summary for the General Assembly's fall 2026 session. Secretary-General Guterres said, "Humans must always retain authority over life-and-death decisions."

This means... Major powers changed their votes from one year to the next, so support is not fixed. Delegates representing the United States or Russia have a clear position to defend, and other delegates have a clear argument to answer.

### **United Nations News, September 22, 2026: The Secretary-General tells world leaders to outlaw killer robots**

Tagline: Opening the 81st General Assembly with a warning

Source: According to... United Nations News, September 22, 2026

Link: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/09/1168392>

Fact: It states... Opening the general debate of the 81st General Assembly, Secretary-General Guterres said power in the world is being reshaped in part by the "growing role of AI and autonomous weapons in decisions once reserved for humans." He said, "The danger is not technology. The danger is technology without accountability," and added, "Life-and-death decisions must never be surrendered to machines. Killer robots must have no place in our future." He called for a multilateral framework to manage AI risks with independent oversight.

This means... The UN's top official raised this issue in his most important speech of the year, just before DISEC began its 2026 session. Delegates can quote him to show that the whole UN system expects action now, not more years of discussion.

### **United Nations Meetings Coverage (GA/DIS/3767), October 12, 2026: States agree that humans must stay in control**

Tagline: Agreeing on elements in Geneva

Source: According to... United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, October 12, 2026

Link: <https://press.un.org/en/2026/gadis3767.doc.htm>

Fact: It states... During the First Committee's general debate in October 2026, the UN reported "an area of convergence": countries "across geopolitical divides" increasingly agree that humans, not algorithms, must keep final control over the use of force. The United Kingdom noted that in September 2026, after more than a decade of debate, the Group of Governmental Experts agreed on a set of elements for a possible future instrument on lethal autonomous weapons. Italy welcomed that consensus and said, "Human beings must remain responsible for decisions concerning the use of force." Sri Lanka warned that human judgment and control must remain clear "throughout the lifecycle of the weapon."

This means... For the first time, the Geneva group has agreed on the building blocks of a future agreement, and the real First Committee is discussing it this autumn. Delegates should treat human control as common ground and focus their debate on the harder question: whether to start negotiating a treaty, and where.

## **2H. WHAT IS WORKING AND WHAT IS NOT**

- **Working:** The UN has built a large body of agreed language on privacy, biometrics and surveillance, renewed every two years in the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. Special rapporteurs have documented drone harms in detail. The General Assembly has started a formal process on autonomous weapons. Investigative bodies, such as the Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, have used drone footage to establish crimes against humanity.
- **Not working:** No UN resolution deals directly with drone surveillance. The armed drone resolutions of 2014 and 2015 were opposed by major drone users and have not been followed by binding rules. Oversight of drone strikes is weak, and the Security Council has rarely examined them. UN counterterrorism texts focus on terrorist drones and say little about state abuse. The Secretary-General's 2026 deadline for an autonomous weapons treaty has not produced a negotiated treaty as of the sources reviewed: the Geneva expert group agreed a set of elements by consensus in September 2026, but some proposed bans were removed and formal negotiations have not started. The 2025 resolutions on autonomous weapons and military AI passed by large majorities, but the United States and Russia voted against both.

## **2I. WHERE THE MAJOR BLOCS STAND**

Delegates will meet the same groups again and again in this debate. The list below gives each group's known position in plain words, with one source each, so a delegate can predict who will support or oppose a clause.

1. **The United States:** The United States voted against the 2025 General Assembly resolutions on autonomous weapons and on AI in the military domain. It warned that the AI resolution could build a "global governance regime designed to institute centralized control over a critical technology," even though it had supported a similar AI resolution in 2024.
  - Source: According to... Arms Control Association, December 2025
  - Link: <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2025-12/news/us-russia-oppose-un-resolutions-military-use-ai>

2. **Russia:** Russia also voted against both 2025 resolutions, joined on both votes by the United States, Israel, North Korea and Burundi. Russia is also one of the heaviest users of drones in the war in Ukraine (see the OHCHR and CSIS entries in Part 1), so new limits would affect it directly.
  - Source: According to... United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, December 1, 2025
  - Link: <https://press.un.org/en/2025/ga12736.doc.htm>
3. **China:** China says autonomous weapons must stay under human control and supports a binding instrument only "when the conditions are mature." It would ban only systems that have all five of its listed traits at once (such as full autonomy and no way to switch them off), which leaves wide room for other autonomous drones, and it abstained on the 2025 First Committee draft.
  - Source: According to... Lieber Institute, United States Military Academy at West Point, March 27, 2026
  - Link: <https://lieber.westpoint.edu/human-oversight-chinese-characteristics-lethal-autonomous-weapons-ccw-gge/>
4. **France and its European Union partners:** France, a permanent member of the Security Council, welcomed the September 2026 Geneva report and wants the November 2026 Review Conference to give the expert group a new negotiating mandate. Its goal is an instrument that bans fully autonomous weapons and regulates systems with autonomous functions, while keeping human beings in control.
  - Source: According to... French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, September 10, 2026
  - Link: <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/presse-et-ressources/decouvrir-et-informer/actualites/organisations-internationales-reunion-du-groupe-d-experts-gouvernementaux-sur-les-systemes-d-armes>
5. **African states (ECOWAS and the African Group):** In the 2024 Freetown Communiqué, West African states backed negotiations on a binding treaty to ban autonomous weapons that work without meaningful human control. Sierra Leone's ambassador explained, "We are a vulnerable region," and said the region hopes a treaty will stop the most militarised countries from increasing their dominance.
  - Source: According to... Africa Renewal (United Nations), May 17, 2024
  - Link: <https://africarenewal.un.org/en/magazine/unregulated-autonomous-weapons-systems-pose-risk-africa>
6. **The Gulf Cooperation Council and Arab states:** Speaking for the Gulf states in the First Committee in October 2026, Bahrain condemned two Houthi drone attacks aimed at Mecca in September 2025 and condemned Iranian attacks on Gulf territory. These states see drones mainly as a terrorism and missile threat, so they are likely to support counter-drone cooperation and limits on drone transfers to armed groups.
  - Source: According to... United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, October 7, 2026
  - Link: <https://press.un.org/en/2026/gadis3764.doc.htm>

## PART 3, INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

Beyond the UN, several international organizations and treaties touch drone surveillance: regional data protection treaties, arms export control regimes, civil aviation standards, counterterrorism forums and humanitarian organizations. None of them covers the whole problem, which is why delegates may propose filling the gaps.

### 3A. DATA PROTECTION AND AI TREATIES

**Council of Europe, Last Accessed: October 2026: Convention 108 protects personal data**

Tagline: Protecting personal data by treaty

Source: According to... Council of Europe, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/data-protection/convention108-and-protocol>

Fact: It states... Convention 108, opened for signature on January 28, 1981, requires parties to apply its principles in national law to protect people when their personal data is processed. Its Additional Protocol requires independent supervisory authorities and covers data flows across borders. Convention 108+ is the modernised version. Only states may be parties, and membership is not limited to European states.

This means... A binding international data protection treaty already exists and can be joined by countries outside Europe. Delegates could encourage more states to join it as a way to regulate drone data.

### **Council of Europe, Last Accessed: October 2026: The first international AI treaty excludes defence**

Tagline: Signing the first AI treaty

Source: According to... Council of Europe, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/artificial-intelligence/the-framework-convention-on-artificial-intelligence>

Fact: It states... The Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence opened for signature on September 5, 2024. Signatories include the European Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Japan, Israel and Ukraine. It requires AI to respect human rights, democracy and the rule of law, but parties need not apply it to national security activities, and it does not apply to national defence.

This means... Like the EU AI Act, this treaty leaves military uses aside. That gap is exactly where DISEC could act on drone surveillance.

## **3B. ARMS AND EXPORT CONTROL REGIMES**

### **Missile Technology Control Regime, Last Accessed: October 2026: 35 partners control unmanned delivery systems**

Tagline: Controlling unmanned delivery systems

Source: According to... Missile Technology Control Regime, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://mtcr.info/>

Fact: It states... The Missile Technology Control Regime is a group of 35 countries that coordinate national export licensing to prevent the spread of unmanned delivery systems capable of carrying weapons of mass destruction. Brazil has chaired it since November 2023.

This means... The largest drones fall under an existing non-proliferation regime, but small surveillance drones generally do not. Delegates should note that this regime is about weapons delivery, not privacy.

### **Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat, Last Accessed: October 2026: 117 states are parties to the Arms Trade Treaty**

Tagline: Counting Arms Trade Treaty parties

Source: According to... Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://thearmstradetreaty.org/treaty-status.html>

Fact: It states... The Arms Trade Treaty, which regulates the international trade in conventional arms, entered into force on December 24, 2014. The Secretariat's summary lists 117 states parties and 25 signatories that have not yet ratified.

This means... A global arms trade treaty exists and was adopted by the General Assembly (A/RES/67/234 B). Delegates can debate whether its export assessment process should explicitly cover armed and surveillance drones.

### 3C. CIVIL AVIATION AND COUNTERTERRORISM COOPERATION

#### **ICAO, Last Accessed: October 2026: Global rules for unmanned aviation**

Tagline: Setting global drone aviation rules

Source: According to... ICAO, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://www.icao.int/safety/UA/Pages/default.aspx>

Fact: It states... The International Civil Aviation Organization, a UN specialised agency in Montréal, develops global rules, practices and guidance to integrate drones safely, securely and efficiently. Its Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems Panel writes standards for flying drones in shared airspace, and an Advanced Air Mobility Study Group advises on future air mobility. ICAO held its first Advanced Air Mobility Symposium in September 2024.

This means... ICAO focuses on safety and security in the air, not privacy. Delegates could ask ICAO to include privacy in its guidance, or keep aviation and privacy rules separate.

#### **Global Counterterrorism Forum, Last Accessed: October 2026: Non-binding practices against terrorist drones**

Tagline: Guiding states against terrorist drones

Source: According to... Global Counterterrorism Forum, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link:

<https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Framework%20Documents/2019/Berlin%20Memorandum%20EN.pdf>

Fact: It states... The Berlin Memorandum offers non-binding practices to guide governments in countering terrorist use of drones. It links drones to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which requires states to stop non-State actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, to the extent that drones are such a means of delivery.

This means... International counterterrorism cooperation on drones exists but is voluntary. Delegates can propose that it include privacy safeguards when states deploy counter-drone detection systems.

### 3D. HUMANITARIAN AND RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS

#### **ICRC, May 12, 2021: Pressing states through humanitarian law**

Tagline: Pressing states through humanitarian law

Source: According to... ICRC, May 12, 2021

Link: <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/icrc-position-autonomous-weapon-systems>

Fact: It states... The International Committee of the Red Cross, the guardian of the Geneva Conventions, supports international efforts on autonomous weapons, including under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, and stresses that agreed limits are needed quickly because the technology is developing fast.

This means... The ICRC is a neutral organization that many states respect. Delegates can cite its positions as a middle ground between a full ban and no rules.

#### **UNIDIR, December 1, 2017: Building on earlier UN study**

Tagline: Building on earlier UN study

Source: According to... UNIDIR, December 1, 2017

Link: <https://unidir.org/publication/increasing-transparency-oversight-and-accountability-armed-unmanned-aerial-vehicles>

Fact: It states... UNIDIR's 2017 study built on a 2015 UN publication on armed drones and proposed ways for states to strengthen shared understandings of transparency, oversight and accountability. It was written by researchers at UNIDIR in Geneva.

This means... UNIDIR is a ready research partner. A resolution could ask UNIDIR to study drone surveillance and privacy and report back to DISEC.

### **3E. ALLIANCE DEFENCE AND MILITARY AI DIPLOMACY**

#### **North Atlantic Treaty Organization, September 12, 2025: NATO launches Eastern Sentry after drone incursion**

Tagline: Guarding NATO airspace from drones

Source: According to... North Atlantic Treaty Organization, September 12, 2025

Link: <https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/articles/news/2025/09/12/nato-launches-eastern-sentry-to-bolster-posture-along-eastern-flank>

Fact: It states... Russian drones entered Polish airspace on September 10, 2025, which NATO called the largest concentration of airspace violations against the alliance so far. Poland asked for Article 4 consultations. NATO then launched "Eastern Sentry," a military activity that combines traditional forces with new technology, including tools against drones. Secretary General Mark Rutte said, "Russia's recklessness in the air along our eastern flank is increasing in frequency."

This means... Drones now test the borders of a major military alliance. Counter-drone systems that detect and track every object in the sky can also watch civilians, so delegates can ask that these systems include privacy safeguards.

#### **S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, February 26, 2026: Fewer states sign the newest military AI pledge**

Tagline: Losing support for military AI pledges

Source: According to... S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, February 26, 2026

Link: <https://rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/idss/ip26029-the-uncertain-future-of-the-reaim-summit/>

Fact: It states... The third summit on Responsible AI in the Military Domain (REAIM) met in A Coruña, Spain, on February 4-5, 2026. Of 85 states that attended, only 40 endorsed its outcome, "Pathways to Action." More than 50 countries endorsed the 2023 document and more than 60 endorsed the 2024 one. Neither the United States nor China endorsed the 2026 text, the first time a REAIM outcome lacked both superpowers.

This means... Voluntary pledges outside the UN are losing support. Delegates can argue that the UN, where almost every state takes part, is now the more important forum for rules on AI drones.

#### **Africa Renewal (United Nations), May 17, 2024: West African states call for a treaty**

Tagline: Building a regional voice for a ban

Source: According to... Africa Renewal (United Nations), May 17, 2024

Link: <https://africarenewal.un.org/en/magazine/unregulated-autonomous-weapons-systems-pose-risk-africa>

Fact: It states... The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held a conference on autonomous weapons in Freetown, Sierra Leone, on April 17-18, 2024. Its Freetown Communiqué supported negotiations on a binding treaty to ban autonomous weapons that operate without meaningful human control. Costa Rica, the Philippines, and Trinidad and Tobago also hosted regional conferences, and the article reported that more than 115 states supported starting treaty talks. Sierra Leone's ambassador said, "Machines and algorithms should not make life and death decisions."

This means... Regional meetings in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Caribbean are building support for a treaty from the bottom up. Delegates from these regions can present a united position, and their numbers matter in the General Assembly, where every state has one vote.

### **Lieber Institute, United States Military Academy at West Point, March 27, 2026: China's narrow definition of an unacceptable weapon**

Tagline: Supporting human control while keeping room for autonomy

Source: According to... Lieber Institute, United States Military Academy at West Point, March 27, 2026

Link: <https://lieber.westpoint.edu/human-oversight-chinese-characteristics-lethal-autonomous-weapons-ccw-gge/>

Fact: It states... China supports a two-tier approach: ban "unacceptable" fully autonomous systems and regulate the rest with "appropriate" human involvement. But China's 2022 working paper bans a system only if it has all five traits together: it is lethal, fully autonomous, impossible to switch off, indiscriminate, and able to evolve without control. The institute argues this line is very narrow and leaves out many autonomous systems China is developing. It also notes that China, like other major powers, shares little about its national weapons reviews, so checking whether they obey the rules is very hard.

This means... Two countries can both say "humans must stay in control" and still mean very different things. Delegates should write exact definitions and ask for transparency about weapons reviews, or a treaty could look strong on paper and change little in practice.

### **French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, September 10, 2026: 128 states adopt the Geneva report on autonomous weapons**

Tagline: Laying foundations for a future framework

Source: According to... French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, September 10, 2026

Link: <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/presse-et-ressources/decouvrir-et-informer/actualites/organisations-internationales-reunion-du-groupe-d-experts-gouvernementaux-sur-les-systemes-d-armes>

Fact: It states... After three years of talks, the 128 states party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons agreed on the final report of the Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons. France said the report helps define the systems concerned, sets out common principles, provides clear prohibitions for certain systems, and covers control, risk reduction and responsibility. It confirms that human beings "exercise control" over weapons with autonomous functions. France wants the November 2026 Review Conference to adopt a new negotiating mandate, so that states can begin work on an instrument that bans fully autonomous weapons and regulates the rest.

This means... The Geneva track has finally produced an agreed text, and the next decision comes at the Review Conference just before this committee meets. Delegates can welcome the report and urge a negotiating mandate, or, if the Review Conference fails, propose that the General Assembly take up the work instead.

### 3F. PROPOSED EFFORTS

- **A legally binding instrument on autonomous weapons by 2026**, proposed by the UN Secretary-General and the ICRC, with the November 2026 CCW Review Conference as the main opportunity (see 1G and 2G).
- **A moratorium on the sale of surveillance tools until human rights safeguards exist**, proposed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for hacking tools, which delegates could extend to drone surveillance systems (see 1B).
- **Stricter, criteria-based export controls on military and dual-use drones**, proposed by the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions (see 1E).
- **Wider membership of Convention 108+**, which is open to states outside Europe (see 3A).
- **A new negotiating mandate at the November 2026 CCW Review Conference**, proposed by France and built on the elements agreed in Geneva in September 2026 (see 3E and 2G).
- **A treaty that bans autonomous weapons working without meaningful human control**, proposed by West African states in the 2024 Freetown Communiqué (see 3E).

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### KEY VOCABULARY

1. **Unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) / unmanned aircraft system (UAS)**: an aircraft with no pilot on board, plus its controls and links; the formal names for a drone.
  2. **Remotely piloted aircraft**: a drone flown by a person on the ground, sometimes from thousands of kilometres away.
  3. **Surveillance**: watching, listening to or collecting data about people, often without their knowledge.
  4. **Biometric identification**: recognising a person by body features such as face, walk or voice.
  5. **Facial recognition**: software that compares a face in an image with a database to identify the person.
  6. **Metadata**: data about communications (who, when, where) rather than the content itself.
  7. **Necessity and proportionality**: the legal test that an intrusion must be needed for a lawful goal and no greater than required.
  8. **Geofencing / no-fly zone**: a virtual boundary that a drone is blocked from entering.
  9. **Dual-use**: technology with both civilian and military uses, such as a camera drone.
  10. **Export control**: government rules that require a licence before certain goods can be sold abroad.
  11. **Targeted killing**: a deliberate, planned use of lethal force against a specific person, often by drone.
  12. **Lethal autonomous weapons system (LAWS)**: a weapon that can select and attack targets without a human decision.
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### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Should international rules treat surveillance drones and armed drones as one issue or as two separate issues, given that drone cameras now choose targets in war?
2. When, if ever, is it acceptable for a government to use drones with facial recognition over a peaceful protest?
3. Should the UN recommend a global registration and identification system for drones, and who would pay for it in developing countries?
4. Should export controls on drones and AI cameras be voluntary, as in the Wassenaar Arrangement, or binding, as in the Arms Trade Treaty?
5. How can the UN hold states accountable for drone surveillance and strikes when the Security Council rarely examines them?
6. Should the 2026 deadline for a treaty on autonomous weapons be kept, extended or abandoned, and should such a treaty also cover AI surveillance?
7. How can states stop terrorist drones without expanding surveillance of their own citizens?
8. Should the UN set privacy standards for its own peacekeeping drones?

