

HMDC Presents... TERRORISM: Video 1 Transcripts

These are the words spoken in the two Video 1 films for TERRORISM (The Topic). We read along while we watch, pause at each time mark, and circle any word we do not know so we can look it up together.

VIDEO 1 (EXPLAINER)

[0:00] Welcome, delegates. Let's get right into our explainer. Today, we're tackling a really tough, real-world puzzle. When, if ever, may a state act inside another country to fight terrorism? It's a huge challenge for international law. And you are going to be debating the exact rules that guide these high-stakes actions. To get you totally ready for committee, we'll cover five key areas. The central question? The harms? The four legal doors? Five major solutions. And finally, widening or narrowing doors. Alright, section one, the central question. We absolutely have to start with sovereignty. Sovereignty is a state's right to control its own territory and decisions without outside interference. Every recognized state has its right.

[0:45] It's truly the foundation of how our global system works. And because states have sovereignty, we also have non-intervention. Non-intervention is the rule that states must not interfere in the internal affairs of other states. Basically, you can't just cross a border because you disagree with what's happening over there. The United Nations Charter, signed on June 26, 1945, literally bans the threat or use of force against any state's territorial integrity or political independence. So sending your military into another country is generally banned. But terrorism makes this super complicated, because groups often hide right across a border. Which brings us to section two, the harms. Let's look at the actual human cost here. According to the Vision of Humanity by the Institute for Economics and Peace, published on March 19, 2026, terrorism caused 5,582 deaths in 2025 alone, across 2,944 incidents.

[1:41] Pakistan was the most affected, suffering 1,139 deaths. These aren't just statistics, they are massive threats to global peace. Now, think back to our rule on borders. That same Vision of Humanity report from March 19, 2026, found that over 76% of these attacks happen within 100 kilometers of an international border. It's a clear tactic. They use borders as a shield. They attack on one side and hide on the other. And this danger is intensely concentrated in certain regions. On July 29, 2026, the Council on Foreign Relations reported that the Sahel border zone accounts for over half of all global terrorism deaths. To show you how bad it can get, the International Crisis Group noted on May 8, 2026, that armed groups launched a massive offensive across Mali just a month prior.

[2:29] They literally blockaded the capital city. But delegates, we also have to look at the harms of the response. The Watson Institute at Brown University, in data last accessed in October 2026, counts more than 940,000 people killed directly in post-9/11 wars. Plus, the United Nations Development Programme reported on February 7, 2023, that government abuses actually drive terrorist recruitment. So military force can sometimes backfire and create even more terrorism. Let's move to Section 3, the four legal doors. If the UN Charter generally bans force, but terrorism causes so much harm, what can states do? There are four legal avenues, or doors, for action. The Security Council, self-defense, host state consent, and regional organizations acting with council approval.

[3:20] Door number one relies on Chapter 7. Chapter 7 is the part of the UN Charter that lets the Security Council make binding decisions, including authorizing force. It's the ultimate green light to restore global peace. Door number two is Article 51. Article 51 is the right of a state to use force after an armed attack until the Security Council acts. This is pure self-defense. But self-defense gets really tricky when you're fighting a non-state actor. A non-state actor is a group that is not a government, such as a terrorist group, militia, or rebel movement. Does a state actually have the right to invade a neighbor just to chase a non-state actor? This is a huge issue when these groups use a safe haven. A safe haven is an area where a terrorist group can operate and train without being stopped.

[4:07] It is the perfect shield for a non-state actor. Okay, let's dive into Section 4, Five Major Solutions. Solution 1 is Security Council-authorized action. This is highly desirable because it's the clearest legal route and helps bring the world together. But it can be undesirable when vague wording causes disagreements. For example, according to the United Nations Press, on November 20, 2015, Resolution 2249 had such vague wording that different countries used it to justify totally separate military actions. That definitely causes harm. Solution 2 is the Unwilling or Unable Self-Defense Doctrine. This helps close safe havens when host states cannot do it themselves, making it a desirable option for some, as the Lieber Institute at West Point noted on August 1, 2024.

[4:57] However, it's highly undesirable to others. Claiming this as global law is simply incorrect. The Lieber Institute also pointed out on February 23, 2024, that this causes harm by inviting open-ended foreign military deployments. Solution 3 is Intervention by Invitation, where the host state gives consent. This is desirable because it helps produce fast, measurable results, as reported by the International Crisis Group on May 8, 2024. But it's an undesirable strategy long-term. Why? Because consent can be withdrawn overnight. As the Council on Foreign Relations pointed out on July 29, 2026, this causes harm by leaving massive security gaps when troops are suddenly forced to leave. Solution 4 involves UN-funded regional missions. This helps significantly and is incredibly desirable because it comes with strict human rights rules built right in.

[5:48] But as the United Nations Press reported on December 21, 2023, there's a catch. It's undesirable because the funding remains incomplete and short-term, causing harm to the actual stability of these missions. Solution 5 focuses on non-military approaches. This is desirable because it truly helps create lasting peace. A RAND Corporation study from June 30, 2008 found that history shows most terrorist groups end without armies. But this approach is undesirable when you have an urgent crisis. It is simply too slow and causes harm when an armed group is already actively seizing towns. Finally, we arrive at Section 5, Widening or Narrowing Doors. You have seen the harms of terrorism, the harms of war, the rules of sovereignty, and the major solutions.

[6:34] Now, as you step into your committee, you have to ask yourself one huge question. Which legal door does your own country want widened or narrowed? The choice is entirely up to you. Good luck out there!

VIDEO 1 (CINEMATIC)

[0:00] Welcome to this special session on terrorism. Today, we are examining one of the most difficult legal dilemmas in modern global security, the collision between state sovereignty and military intervention. The foundation of international relations is state sovereignty. This is a nation's absolute right to strictly control its own territory and make its own decisions without outside interference. In 1945, the United Nations Charter codified this concept into international law, establishing a strict ban on military force against any state's territory. But terrorist groups are non-state actors. They do not hold territory the way governments do. Instead, they exploit international borderlines, attacking on one side and slipping across to hide where the victim's military cannot legally follow.

[0:47] This legal loophole forces the international community into a trap. Respecting sovereign borders means watching attacks continue, while crossing them means breaking international law. Global terrorism deaths actually fell 28 percent in 2025, hitting a multi-decade low. But the remaining violence has become hyper-concentrated in a few fragile regions. This map of the Sahel highlights the Liptako-Gourma intersection, where Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger meet, accounting for over half of global terrorism deaths. Looking closely reveals how armed groups operate. In 2025, over 76 percent of attacks happened within 100 kilometers of a border. These armed factions now possess the tactical capability to besiege urban centers. In April 2026, militants successfully blockaded Bamako, trapping more than 4 million people.

[1:38] When border-shielded groups possess the military capacity to strangle an entire capital, defending a strict policy of non-intervention becomes incredibly difficult. Post-9/11 counter-terrorism wars in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria have directly killed over 940,000 people. Breaking a sovereign border to intervene carries a massive human cost. To look at this issue from another perspective, let's examine the counter-arguments. Some argue that state sovereignty remains the essential building block of a stable world. If powerful countries can cross borders whenever they want, it creates a world where might makes right. This was a core concern during the 2003 Iraq War. Critics argue that intervening to stop terrorists often creates more violence than it prevents.

[2:24] As seen in the long conflicts that followed the 2011 intervention in Libya. They warn of a slippery slope where humanitarian missions turn into long-term occupations. Finally, many experts argue that military force doesn't solve the core problem, as it can actually increase local support for extremist groups. In the modern debate, one influential perspective is the Responsibility to Protect, or R2P, doctrine. To finish our discussion on terrorism, this doctrine represents a major shift from seeing sovereignty as a right to seeing it as a responsibility. It argues that a state's right to control its territory depends on its ability to protect its own people. If a government either cannot or will not stop mass violence or terrorism within its own borders, that right to non-intervention is forfeited, and the international community has a duty to step in. This doctrine shifts the legal conversation from one about the rights of governments to one about the rights of populations to basic safety.

[3:22] In short, balancing sovereignty and security is an ongoing struggle. As we look to the future, the goal isn't just to stop attacks, but to do so in a way that creates a more stable world rather than more chaos. This bar chart compares the reasons why recruits join extremist groups. 71% point to a specific government abuse, like the arrest or killing of a family member, as their tipping point. Only 17% cite religion. Military intervention frequently fuels the exact radicalization cycle it intends to stop. To intervene without triggering unlawful wars or mass radicalization, the international community relies on four specific legal pathways. Four doors. Door one is the UN Security Council. Under Chapter 7 of the Charter, the Council can legally authorize collective military action against a threat, making it the safest and most legally sound route. However, any of the five permanent members can block this action with a veto. Even when resolutions pass, the wording is often vague, leaving individual states to argue over what military actions are actually permitted.

[4:30] Relying exclusively on the Security Council prevents rogue invasions, but the resulting gridlock often sacrifices the speed required to stop immediate cross-border threats. Door two is the Unwilling or Unable Doctrine. If a host country fails to police its own territory, this rule permits a victim state to launch self-defense strikes across the border without asking permission. Only about 13 states globally recognize this doctrine as legitimate law. The majority argue that letting individual countries decide when a neighbor is unable to govern provides legal cover for endless foreign deployments. Door three is intervention by invitation. When Mozambique invited Southern African and Rwandan forces into its territory in 2024 [Our report says: 2021], that coalition rapidly cut insurgent numbers from 3,000 down to just 300. But consent is fragile.

[5:22] Host governments can change their minds and expel foreign partners overnight, suddenly collapsing the entire security framework and leaving a vacuum behind. Door four is regional peace operations. By partnering with organizations like the African Union, the UN attempts to combine global legal approval with the local legitimacy of neighboring states. The persistent vulnerability here is money. UN resolutions currently cap funding for these missions at 75%, forcing regional armies to run on chronic deficits and uncertain voluntary donations. Every alternative to the Security Council requires a compromise. States must trade away either global legal consensus, long-term political stability, or guaranteed funding. There is a fifth solution, abandoning military force altogether. Instead, the international community can focus entirely on intelligence sharing, local policing, and political settlements.

[6:19] This pie chart, visualizing decades of data from the RAND Corporation, reveals how terrorist organizations actually end. A massive 83% dissolve through political processes or targeted policing. Only 7% are defeated by military force. Because they rely on negotiations and arrests, non-military methods are slow and politically difficult. But they bypass the sovereignty trap entirely, and they avoid creating the civilian casualties that drive new recruitment. The international community faces a stark choice. We can respect sovereign borders strictly and allow terrorist networks to hide, or we can breach those borders and risk deadly, open-ended wars. Which of these legal doors is desirable to open, and which must be locked away permanently?

[7:07] The committee must forge a solution that dismantles transnational terror networks without destroying the foundations of international law itself.