



Background

In March 2023, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism provided her report to the Human Rights Council, in which she addresses the human rights challenges and consequences of the development, use, and transfer of new technologies in the context of counter-terrorism and countering and preventing violent extremism. The Special Rapporteur's report builds upon previous and ongoing work of the mandate, including a decade of agenda-setting reports on drone technology and the Special Rapporteur's recent position paper on the global trade in spyware.

New technologies have a substantial capacity to positively transform lives and enhance the full realization of human rights, equality, and dignity for human rights, particularly for individuals from marginalized and vulnerable communities. Also, new technologies can help states better fulfil their human rights obligations to protect those under their jurisdiction by strengthening their capability to detect and prevent terrorist activities. Regrettably, at the same time, new technologies are being misused worldwide to restrict and violate human rights. Such misuse is often purportedly in service of counter-terrorism and security imperatives, and initially confined to exceptional circumstances of terrorism or conflict, only to be expanded and normalized over time until government deployment of sophisticated technology to monitor and affect civilians has become ubiquitous and everyday. The persistent problem in the counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism space of the lack of robust internationally-agreed definitions of these concepts provides unacceptable latitude to many states to define terms and deploy justifications to suit their own interests, without sufficient safeguards or oversight.

Not only could these technologies be misused to directly violate human rights, but they could be used to undermine the effective function of existing remedial frameworks. The negative impact on human rights worldwide is especially keenly felt in respect of the rights to privacy, expression, association and political participation.

Given the unique challenges for human rights posed by new technologies deployed in the counter-terrorism and national security space, the Special Rapporteur has called for a moratorium on the use and transfer of certain technologies, including autonomous weapon systems and spyware surveillance technology. Further, the Special Rapporteur has proposed a template for a new approach to the global regulation of the international spyware technology industry.



This side event provides an opportunity for discussion between multiple stakeholders including representatives from global civil society to consider the particular risks posed to human rights by the misuse of new technologies, and policy options for a more human-rights-based approach to the development and use of new technologies in this field, taking into account States' obligations under international human rights law, a holistic understanding of technology and holistic governance and regulatory efforts. The side event will also acknowledge and address the practicalities of parallel discussion on moratoriums and proposed reforms.

Objective

This event organized on the margins of the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council aims to bring together key interlocutors to reflect on concerns raised by the misuse of new technologies worldwide in purported service of counter-terrorism and countering or preventing violent extremism. The event will review developments in the field of new technologies, including in particular biometrics, artificial intelligence, surveillance technology, and drones, and will consider the challenges that the increasingly ubiquitous use of these technologies pose for the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. The event will also engage with proposals made by leading intergovernmental and civil society voices for potential reforms to international regulation of such technologies, including moratoriums, and consider what direction future human rights regulation of the field may take.

Opening Remarks:

- Ambassador of Ireland, H.E. Mr. Noel White
- Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

Panelists

- Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism
- Carly Kind, Director, Ada Lovelace Institute
- Vidushi Marda, Senior Programme Officer, Article 19, Mexico and Central America Office
- Iliia Siatitsa, Privacy International

Closing Remarks:

- Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, H.E. Mr. Seong deok Yun
- Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

Information and registration

The event will be conducted in ***English only***. No interpretation is available.

Participants are kindly requested to register for the event via the following link: <https://indico.un.org/event/1004646/overview>. ***Registration is mandatory.***

Kindly address any questions or concerns regarding this event to Ms. Karen Reyes Tolosa (karen.reyestolosa@un.org).