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to the United Nations



**SPECIAL PROCEDURES**  
UNITED NATIONS  
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

## United Nations Human Rights Council 61<sup>st</sup> Session Side Event Concept Note

### Protecting Human Rights while Using Artificial Intelligence to Counter Terrorism

#### Discussion of the Position Paper of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

**Date:** 10 March 2026 | **Time:** 1:00-2:00 pm | **Location:** Palais des Nations, building A, Room Concordia 4 (A)

#### Background

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in countering terrorism and violent extremism presents stark new challenges for human rights, civic space, and the rule of law. Governments are increasingly using AI for surveillance, law enforcement, biometric identification, border management, threat detection and military targeting. AI's ability to rapidly process vast amounts of data and automate decision-making is intensifying concerns about surveillance, privacy and even the right to life. There are risks of algorithmic bias and a lack of transparency, explainability and accountability in AI systems, as well as concerns about the degree of human supervision and control. Many AI systems are still in developmental phases, and their impacts in real-world conditions remain unproven. There is a real risk that proponents of AI, including corporate actors fuelling the current global AI investment boom, may overstate the benefits and minimise the costs and risks.

It is vital to examine how the use of AI in countering terrorism may impact on human rights, including by disproportionately affecting marginalized groups. The diverse uses of AI in counter-terrorism have the potential to violate numerous fundamental rights, including privacy and data protection; equality and non-discrimination; freedoms of expression, association, peaceful assembly and religion; political participation; liberty; security of person; life; and the rights of vulnerable, marginalised and disadvantaged groups. The work and safety of human rights defenders is also at risk.

The General Assembly and Human Rights Council have affirmed that AI systems must be developed and used in ways that respect, protect, and promote human rights and that Member States must refrain from deploying systems that cannot comply with international human rights law or that pose undue risks to rights. Global calls for inclusive, transparent, and accountable AI governance must address the risks in counter-terrorism and security contexts, including by rejecting the troubling exemptions in some recent legal frameworks for AI systems used for national, public and border security, military and law enforcement purposes.

The Special Rapporteur's [Position Paper](#) on Protecting Human Rights while Using Artificial

Intelligence to Counter Terrorism makes vital recommendations for the responsible use of AI. The Position Paper was financially supported by the Government of Switzerland, which also co-sponsored its launch at United Nations Headquarters in New York in October 2025.

## **Objective**

This event will present the findings and recommendations of the Special Rapporteur's Position Paper and convene key interlocutors, including from Member States, international organizations, policy makers, academia and civil society to reflect on the human rights impacts of using AI to counter terrorism and strengthen compliance with international human rights law in such uses of AI.

Chair-moderator: Ben Saul, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

## **Opening Remarks**

- H.E. Ambassador Julien Thöni, Permanent Mission of Switzerland

## **Presentation of the Position Paper**

- Ben Saul, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

## **Panellists**

- Shehzad Charania, Director of Legal Affairs and Mission Policy, United Kingdom's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ)
- Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Executive Director, Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism
- Cecilia Naddeo, Senior Human Rights Officer, United Nations Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)
- Anna Oosterlinck, Senior Global Advocacy Advisor, Article 19
- Azin Tadjini, Human Rights Officer, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Digital Tech and Human Rights
- Tomaso Falchetta, Global Advocacy Coordinator, Privacy International

## **Closing Remarks**

- Chair-moderator

## **Information and registration**

The event will be hybrid and will be conducted in English.

Participants are kindly requested to register for the event via: <https://indico.un.org/event/1022548/registrations/25275/>. Please register before 10 March 2026, at 10am.

Join by video: <https://web.webex.com/join-meeting>

Meeting number: 2744 116 6199

Password: uMPQ7ZSpJ28

Kindly address any questions or concerns regarding this event to: [hrc-sr-ct@un.org](mailto:hrc-sr-ct@un.org).