



**UNHRC**

**Measures to Protect Digital Rights in the Context of increasing Surveillance Technologies and Artificial Intelligence with a Focus on Safeguarding Freedom of Expression Online.**

-Committee Guide-

**Matilda Schübler**

-Chairperson-

**Hanna Willer**

-Chairperson-

**Laila Topalak**

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## I. Introduction

### 1. Introduction to the committee

The Human Rights Council (HRC) is an intergovernmental body of the United Nations responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights around the world. Established in 2006, the Council replaced the former UN Commission on Human Rights and works to address human rights violations, respond to emergencies, and strengthen international cooperation on human rights issues.

The HRC is composed of 47 Member States elected by the UN General Assembly for staggered three-year terms. Its headquarters are located in Geneva, Switzerland. The Council meets regularly throughout the year and may also hold special sessions to address urgent human rights crises.

One of the HRC's most important mechanisms is the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), through which the human rights records of all UN Member States are reviewed on a regular basis. In addition, the Council works closely with independent experts, special rapporteurs, and investigative commissions to monitor and report on human rights situations worldwide.

The agenda of the Human Rights Council covers a broad range of issues, including freedom of expression, discrimination, refugee rights, gender equality, the protection of minorities, and the impact of armed conflicts on civilians. Through resolutions, debates, and international cooperation, the HRC aims to uphold the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and promote dignity, equality, and justice for all people. As delegates in this committee, participants are expected to engage in constructive debate, develop diplomatic solutions, and balance national interests with the universal responsibility to protect human rights.

## 2. Introduction to the Topic

In recent years, the rapid development of surveillance technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) has transformed the way governments, companies, and societies collect, process, and use digital information. While these technologies can improve security, public services, and communication, they also raise serious concerns regarding privacy, digital rights, and fundamental freedoms. In particular, the increasing use of facial recognition systems, biometric databases, online monitoring tools, and AI-driven content moderation has created new challenges for the protection of human rights in the digital sphere.

Freedom of expression online is one of the most affected rights. Social media platforms and digital communication spaces have become essential tools for political participation, journalism, activism, and the exchange of ideas. However, excessive surveillance and the misuse of AI technologies can lead to censorship, self-censorship, discrimination, and the suppression of dissenting opinions. In some cases, individuals may fear expressing their views online due to the risk of being monitored, profiled, or targeted by state authorities or private actors.

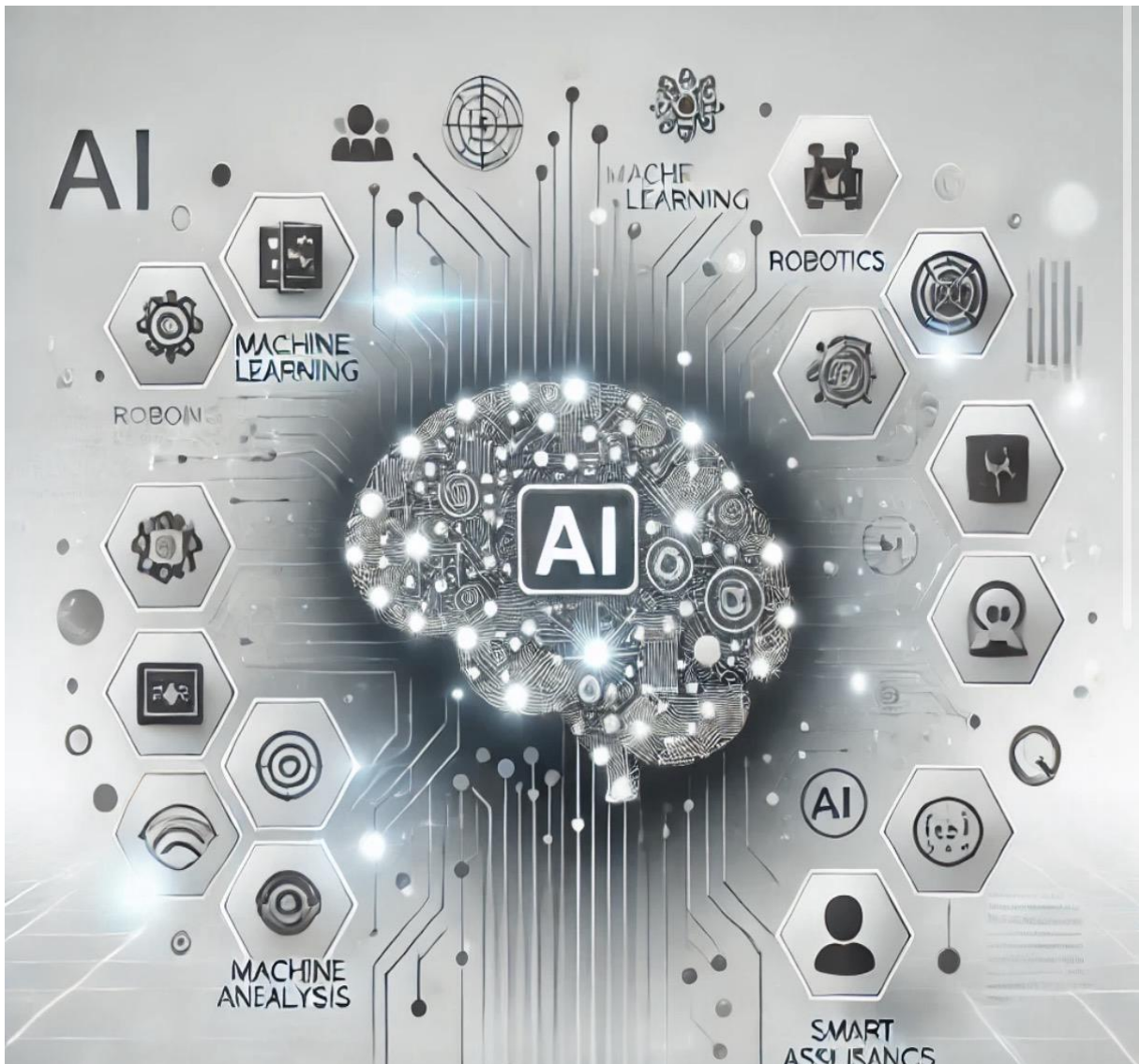
At the same time, governments face the challenge of balancing national security, public safety, and the fight against harmful online activities such as hate speech, terrorism, and misinformation, while still respecting international human rights standards. This raises important questions about transparency, accountability, data protection, and the ethical use of AI technologies.

The Human Rights Council must therefore examine how international cooperation, legal frameworks, and technological safeguards can be strengthened to protect digital rights and ensure that freedom of expression online remains secure in an increasingly digitalized world. Delegates are encouraged to consider both the opportunities and risks associated with surveillance technologies and AI, while working toward solutions that uphold human dignity, democratic values, and human rights in the digital age. The number of internet users worldwide exceeds 5 billion people, making digital spaces central to communication and political participation.

### 1. Facts

- i. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly used for:
  - a. content moderation
  - b. facial recognition
  - c. predictive policing
  - d. data analysis
  - e. online surveillance

- ii. Governments and private companies collect large amounts of personal data through:
  - a. smartphones
  - b. social media
  - c. cameras
  - d. online platforms
  - e. biometric systems
- iii. Mass surveillance can threaten:
  - a. privacy rights
  - b. freedom of expression
  - c. freedom of assembly
  - d. press freedom
- iv. Many journalists, activists, and human rights defenders face online monitoring and digital censorship in different parts of the world.
- v. AI algorithms can contain bias and discrimination, especially against minorities and vulnerable groups.
- vi. Facial recognition technology has already been banned or restricted in some cities and countries due to human rights concerns.
- vii. Social media platforms use AI systems to remove harmful content, but these systems sometimes incorrectly delete legitimate political speech or journalism.
- viii. The United Nations recognizes internet access and freedom of expression online as important human rights issues.
- ix. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects:
  - a. freedom of opinion
  - b. freedom of expression
  - c. the right to seek and share information
- x. Cybersecurity and national security are often used by governments to justify increased digital surveillance.
- xi. Data breaches and cyberattacks have exposed the personal information of millions of people worldwide.
- xii. There is currently no universal international treaty specifically regulating AI and digital surveillance technologies.
- xiii. The European Union introduced the AI Act to regulate high-risk AI systems and increase transparency.
- xiv. Human rights organizations call for:
  - a. stronger data protection laws
  - b. transparency in AI systems
  - c. limits on mass surveillance
  - d. accountability for technology companies and governments
- xv. Key debate questions include:
  - a. How can security and human rights be balanced?
  - b. Should facial recognition technology be limited or banned?
  - c. Who should regulate AI technologies?
  - d. How can online freedom of expression be protected from censorship and surveillance?



<https://share.google/W7Ts8Y7NU45695Ch2>

## **2. Current Situation**

Today, surveillance technologies and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are becoming more common around the world. Governments and companies use AI systems to monitor online activities, collect personal data, and control digital platforms.

Technologies such as facial recognition, online tracking, and AI-based content moderation are growing quickly.

Many countries argue that these technologies help fight terrorism, cybercrime, hate speech, and misinformation. However, human rights organizations warn that too much surveillance can threaten privacy and freedom of expression. People may become afraid to share their opinions online if they feel constantly monitored.

Social media platforms also use AI to remove harmful content, but mistakes often happen. Sometimes political opinions, journalism, or activist content are removed even when they do not violate rules. In addition, AI systems can show bias and unfairly target certain groups.

Different countries have different approaches to regulation. Some states support stronger surveillance for security reasons, while others demand stricter protection of digital rights and personal data. The international community is still discussing how AI and surveillance technologies can be controlled without violating human rights.

As technology continues to develop rapidly, the Human Rights Council faces the challenge of finding solutions that protect both security and fundamental freedoms online.

### **III Economy**

Digital technologies are an important part of the global economy. Data has become a valuable resource. Many companies make profit by collecting and using personal data.

Artificial Intelligence is also growing as an economic sector. At the same time, surveillance technologies are sold and used worldwide.

However, there are inequalities. Developing countries often have less access to technology. Strong regulations can protect human rights, but they may also affect economic growth.

#### **IV. Mission of the UN**

##### **a. United Nations Human Rights Council**

The HRC focuses on protecting human rights, including digital rights. It discusses issues like surveillance and freedom of expression.

##### **b. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**

The OHCHR provides reports and guidelines on human rights. It warns about risks of surveillance and AI.

##### **c. International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**

The ITU works on global communication systems and promotes digital access.

##### **d. UNESCO**

UNESCO focuses on ethical AI and supports freedom of expression and access to information.

#### **VII. Criticism of these Missions**

Despite the efforts of the United Nations, several critical aspects are remaining:

a. One major issue is that technology develops faster than regulations, making it difficult for the UN to keep up with new challenges.

b. Many UN guidelines are not legally binding, so some countries do not follow them.

c. There is no global agreement, as states have different priorities between security and human rights.

d. Coordination between UN organizations is sometimes inefficient, which can reduce effectiveness.

e. Technology companies are still not fully regulated and often lack accountability.

f. Limited funding and resources make it difficult to implement solutions, especially in developing countries.

### **VIII. Possible Solutions**

To address the challenges of increasing surveillance technologies and artificial intelligence, several concrete measures can be taken:

a. States should develop clear legal frameworks that regulate the use of surveillance technologies and artificial intelligence. These laws should define when surveillance is allowed and ensure that mass surveillance without justification is limited or prohibited.

b. Governments should strengthen data protection and privacy laws. Personal data should only be collected when necessary, and individuals should have the right to know how their data is used and stored.

c. Transparency of artificial intelligence systems should be improved. Governments and companies should clearly explain how AI systems make decisions, especially when content is removed or accounts are restricted. Users should have the right to appeal such decisions.

d. Independent monitoring mechanisms should be established to oversee the use of surveillance technologies and AI. These bodies should ensure accountability and investigate possible human rights violations.

e. Special protection measures should be implemented for journalists, activists, and human rights defenders. These groups should not be targeted by surveillance or censorship.

f. High-risk technologies, such as facial recognition, should be strictly regulated or limited. In some cases, temporary bans could be considered until proper safeguards are in place.

g. International cooperation should be strengthened. Member States should work together within the United Nations to develop common standards and guidelines for the ethical use of AI and surveillance technologies.

h. Technology companies should be required to follow international human rights standards. They should ensure that content moderation does not unfairly restrict freedom of expression.

i. Governments should promote digital education and awareness. Citizens should be informed about their digital rights and how to protect themselves online.

j. Human rights impact assessments should be introduced before implementing new technologies. This ensures that potential risks to fundamental rights are identified and minimized in advance.

## IX. Definition of Key Terms

Digital rights are human rights in the online world. Surveillance means monitoring people's activities. Artificial Intelligence refers to machines that make decisions. Freedom of expression means the right to share opinions freely.

## X. Useful Links and Resolutions

- OHCHR: [OHCHR Official Website](#)
- UNESCO: [UNESCO Official Website](#)
- ITU: [ITU Official Website](#)
- UNDP: [UNDP Official Website](#)
- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)
- <https://www.miragenews.com/un-experts-protect-freedoms-from-digital-1662654/>
- <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2025/uncertain-future-global-internet>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2026/mar/12/invasive-ai-led-mass-surveillance-in-africa-violating-freedoms-warn-experts>
- <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/04/un-experts-safeguard-human-freedoms-systematic-digital-interference>
- <https://time.com/7346091/ai-harm-risk/>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2026/mar/12/invasive-ai-led-mass-surveillance-in-africa-violating-freedoms-warn-experts>
- <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2026/03/19/3259178/0/en/Muck-Rack-s-2026-State-of-Journalism-Report-Finds-82-of-Journalists-Use-AI.html>
- <https://www.politics.ox.ac.uk/news/most-uk-journalists-perceive-ai-threat-new-risj-research-reveal>



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