

ENSURING THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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The right to privacy is considered fundamental, enshrined in Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which reads: “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.” Traditionally, to provide “protection of the law against such interference or attacks” was a relatively straightforward matter, but that has changed in the digital age. With the onset of modern information technology and the world wide web, protecting privacy is more complicated than ever. Particularly in the past decade, as people have become comfortable with the use and storage of personal data, documents, and vital information online, digital privacy has become a more pressing concern.

The United Nations Human Rights Council and General Assembly have both made a point of discussing the right to privacy in the digital age. These bodies have made it clear: all humans have a right to privacy in our digital age, that that right is fundamentally connected to the freedom of opinion and expression (A/RES/69/166), and that protecting privacy is increasingly complex in the digital age of today and tomorrow (A/RES/71/199).

The Scope of the Right to Privacy

Beyond the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, privacy is also a core element of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a treaty that since its adoption by the United Nations in 1966 has gained the approval of 113 of the Member States. These states, through regular discussion on the protection of privacy between 2013 and 2020 have regularly reaffirmed that right. In that time the General Assembly has passed 5 resolutions, all titled “the right to privacy in the digital age” and all renewing debate for further discussion down the road.

Each of these resolutions took a similar form, with each successive iteration expanding on the scope and specifics of digital privacy, adapting for technological innovation over the years.

The right to privacy has always included basic things, such as the freedoms of thought and expression, but that has become more complicated. The General Assembly has repeatedly made it clear that people should not be subjected to any sort of involuntary surveillance or collection of personal data that fails to meet a reasonable standard of “Non-arbitrariness” (A/RES/68/167). This protection from arbitrary surveillance is relevant even as a means of preventing terrorism, which, while being a dire threat to public health remains constrained by the same basic human rights requirements as anywhere else (A/RES/68/167). In each of the General Assembly’s resolutions, the intent was made explicit: any right people have offline must also apply online (A/RES/68/167). A fundamental part of the right to privacy is the freedom of expression, specifically the freedom to “seek, receive and impart information” (A/RES/68/167). Online or offline, this right should not be hounded by the efforts of any nation to surveil citizens or without significant justification. This depends upon the significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights conventions, which place freedom of expression on the forefront of human rights (UDHR).

In recent years, the General Assembly has also pulled in discussion of the significance of business enterprises in the any discussion of digital privacy. The inclusion of business means an expansion of the scope of this issue. Now, the collection of digital data and metadata, from credit card information to the number of milliseconds between clicks, has become a valuable commodity to be bought and sold. The UN has reaffirmed that all consumers have a right to knowledge and consent before their data should be sold (A/RES/71/199). Further, the General Assembly has called upon business enterprises to create safeguards which protect their customers.

The right to privacy is expansive, and the specifics thus far laid out by the UN certainly fail to encompass its entire scope in the digital age. Delegates have an opportunity to further

expand this definition. Some areas of increasing interest are facial recognition and security technology, location tracking, and artificial intelligence.

Communication's Surveillance

Among the greatest and most long-lasting issues for privacy and technology is the risk of government, corporations, or individuals listening to personal communications. No longer does this take the form of a "tapped phone" or a "bug," personal communications can be intercepted from anywhere, and often are. The General Assembly and Human Rights Council have repeatedly made it clear that such policies should not be pursued without meeting an accessible, fair, and reasonable standard of "non-arbitrariness" (A/RES/69/166).

With cellphones, smartwatches, and other technology surrounding people constantly, governments and private business ventures can listen to calls, read texts, or record the day-to-day interactions of any individual. Member States are generally very private about their use of such programs, producing calls for further transparency (UN News Center, 2014), and meaning that there are few specific examples. One of the few examples available to us are the reports of the United States of America's National Security Agency's surveillance program which emerged in 2013 (Gellman 2013). Programs such as this will surveil even their own citizens without due process, although the US government mostly denied those claims when this information was first released. In response to leaks, US officials claimed that their policy did not surveil US citizens without a warrant, but made no such reservations about non-citizens or those overseas. In this example the US government apparently violated the right to privacy of both Americans and non-citizens, but while the government recognized to do so would be wrong if they were Americans, it did not make such a claim for non-citizens. This brings forth a significant question: do governments have an obligation to protect the digital privacy of foreign nationals or non-citizens?

This issue is also deeply connected to national security and terrorism, with those generally being the justifications attached to surveillance. This requires additional consideration,

because undoubtedly it is true that preventing terrorism requires some sacrifice. The job of the committee, if they choose to pursue it, would be to determine where the line between the human right of privacy and the need for security is drawn. In the past the General Assembly has emphasized that national security concerns must not trump due process, but has not gone into more detail (A/RES/71/199).

Personal Data

Among the more pervasive threats to privacy in the digital age is the use of personal metadata. Metadata is data that comes from the way you act on the internet or on any form of technology. It is the measure of things like what sites you go to, how long you stay there, what you are reading. Data of this sort allows advertisers and governments to truly understand and market to the people in question, making this data, and the means of tracking it, extremely valuable. This becomes an issue much less from any risk of governments overstepping, but rather from the risk of private business ventures using this value for themselves or collecting it to sell to others. This has led both the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly to include expansive language within their resolutions directly addressing business ventures, as well as calling on governments to ensure proper regulation. Most commonly, discussion of these issues calls upon governments and business ventures to ensure there is an option for informed consent before any data is collected or sold. This topic is unique among the issues to be discussed, because it is so deeply connected to business ventures rather than Member States. Delegates should use this as an opportunity to pursue unique resolutions that involve business ventures directly.

Privacy and Choice

Significant and yet rarely talked about is the importance of privacy in personal medical and financial decisions. These decisions are extremely important to the way any person lives their life, and the impact of a government or business venture watching these decisions being

made may directly or indirectly change the choices that are made. The serious question in this is to what extent should governments have the power to monitor the decisions and also how regulations should be used to protect business or consumers in this area.

The breadth of medical decisions that require privacy is massive. Oversight in these areas can make individuals fearful of repercussions to their medical decisions, whether that is to seek treatment for a terminal illness or to seek an abortion. It is a significant question whether governments should be at all involved. Such privacy has presented itself as particularly significant in recent months as abortion rights are threatened or made stricter in places such as the United States and Poland (Fowler, 2022)(The New York Times, 2022). Additionally, it creates issues with private companies, where the decision-making process may be tracked and the data correlated may be used or sold to others. The use of this data would bring businesses seeking financial gain into the decision-making process, muddying the waters. The same is true of financial decisions, where any outside influence may have a significant impact on the outcome. Delegates should ask whether governments or businesses should express their potential for influence, and if restrictions should be pursued. This has yet to be significantly addressed by the United Nations, meaning that there is potential for groundbreaking discussions to be had in this area.

Facial Recognition Technology

Facial recognition technology, if widely adopted, would change the way the world works. The ability for technology to identify individuals without a specific reason has the potential to be a force for good or evil, depending on how it is implemented. Advocates look forward and see the potential that facial recognition has to change security systems and the way society handles crime. Society would, theoretically, be able to overcome the plight of crime for once and all using facial recognition. Opponents are fearful of what that peace would cost, saying it would mean doing away with privacy as well, comparing it to dystopian stories of George Orwell and his idea of “big brother” (Grierson 2022). No matter what the delegates believe the truth is, facial

recognition is certainly a major factor in any discussion of privacy in the increasingly digital world.

Facial recognition draws heat from critics because of the way in which it effectively does away with privacy, and by extension due process. It does so by performing constant surveillance, searches, and analysis on each individual, without reasonable suspicion, without a warrant, and without procedure. Should the committee discuss this issue, they should first ask themselves when or if the use of facial recognition, and potential it has to do away with legal procedure, is justified and safe, and what guidance to provide to Member States. Delegates should bear in mind the value placed upon due process and procedural safeguards by the General Assembly in earlier resolutions on the right to privacy in the digital age (A/RES/73/179).

Artificial Intelligence

Similar to facial recognition, artificial intelligence (AI) is a developing technology. While true intelligence in technology is not yet fully capable, purpose-driven artificial intelligence has grown to be widely-used, especially in the developed world. The primary privacy risks associated with AI are akin to the risks outlined in the section about communications surveillance. AI represents a device which is constantly listening to and observing the area around it, and, in advanced versions, learning from what it hears. This makes it potentially more impactful than other forms of this information, as for observations, conclusions, and decisions to be made about this information, there is no need for a human operator. Since AI is so undeveloped, there is less to be said than other issues. Delegates have an opportunity to encourage Member States to create pre-emptive regulations surrounding artificial intelligence. Such regulations could direct how AI should be developed and incorporated in our societies.

Conclusion

Privacy takes on a substantial new level of complexity in the digital age. Because of the ease of unnoticeable surveillance, people have no way of knowing whether their privacy is being protected or not. It falls to the United Nations to attempt to maintain an international standard for this critical human right. It is impossible to fully anticipate the way that technology will continue to develop in the coming decades. As it stands, the greatest issues the nations of the world face right now involve personal communications, data, and choice, while in the near future those issues will involve facial recognition technology and artificial intelligence. This guide is far from exhaustive, but is intended to provide a broad picture of the issues to be discussed.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is included in the right to privacy?
2. How can the United Nations protect individual privacy online?
3. Are there steps that can be taken to protect individual privacy from business enterprises?
4. What role does the right to privacy play in military and counter-terrorist operations and intelligence?
5. Should non-citizens have an expectation of privacy outside of their own state?
6. How should nations balance the risks and advantages of facial recognition technology?
7. In the developing artificial intelligence industry, what procedural safeguards should Member States institute to avoid violations of privacy rights?
8. How can the United Nations protect free and private choice on medical, financial, and other personal decisions?

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The United Nations and Human Rights

Human Rights are at the center of the work carried out by the United Nations and its Member States. On 24 October 1945, the United Nations Charter came into force. The principles set forth in this document guide the work done by the United Nations and are a form of international law because UN Member States are bound by its content.¹ The Preamble of the Charter states, “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small,”² as one of the guiding purposes of the newly founded international body. The UN method for obtaining and protecting human rights internationally, has evolved over time, but the primary intergovernmental subsection of the UN responsible for human rights is the Human Rights Council (HRC), established on 15 March 2006. The HRC works to ensure all people have access to education to inform them of their rights and, further, protects their ability to exercise these rights.³ What is regarded as the most innovative feature of the HRC is the Periodic Review. “This unique mechanism involves a review of the human rights records of all 193 UN member states once every four years.”⁴ From the founding document of the organization to present there has been a plethora of international law developed surrounding the maintenance of human rights.

Adopted by the General Assembly on 10 December 1948, The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) states, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” The foundation of these rights are, “the right to life, liberty, and the security of person.”⁵ The

UDHR serves as a broad definition of human rights and Member States' commitments to strengthening them. The International Bill of Human Rights consists of three separate covenants that together have formed the foundation of international laws pertaining to human rights. The UDHR serves as the first of these agreements followed by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which entered into force in 1976.⁶ This area of international law now includes protections specifically for women, people with disabilities, and against racism and other forms of discrimination. Presently, the principles laid out in these founding documents can be seen in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are centered around human rights and are taken into account in all the work done to reach these goals.⁷

Human Rights and Unilateral Coercive Measures

The United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights describes unilateral coercive measures (UCMs) as strategic actions, usually economic, that are taken by one State to insight policy change in another State. These measures can take various forms, such as trade sanctions and holds on financial investments flows. In recent years a rise in measures that target individuals in a given state has taken place. This new form of coercion is referred to as "smart" or "targeted" sanctions and can take the form of travel bans and asset freezing.⁸ Targeted sanctions have been implemented in place of traditional UCMs in an effort to reduce negative humanitarian impacts. "All UN sanctions today are 'targeted' at individuals, those

⁶ Office of The High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Fact Sheet No.2 (Rev.1), The International Bill of Human Rights," June 1996.

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FactSheet2Rev.1en.pdf>

⁷ Office of The High Commissioner for Human Rights, "OHCHR and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," <https://www.ohchr.org/en/sdgs>

⁸ Office of The High Commissioner for Human Rights, "OHCHR and Unilateral Coercive Measures," [ohchr.org/en/unilateral-coercive-measures](https://www.ohchr.org/en/unilateral-coercive-measures)

targeted at specific commodities, and those targeted at particular regions in a country.”⁹ It is important to prevent UCMs because of the negative impacts they have on economies and the development efforts of least developed nations. Further, UCMs hinder international economic cooperation globally and have restricted the opening of a multilateral trading system. Striving for unanimity among Member States, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 27/21 on Human Rights and Unilateral Coercive Measures, stating, “ no State may use or encourage the use of any type of measure, including but not limited to economic or political measures, to coerce another State in order to obtain from it the subordination of the exercise of its sovereign rights and to secure from it advantages of any kind,”¹⁰ and essentially barring Member States from practicing coercive measures. Each year the UN reaffirms its commitment to “the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in their internal affairs and freedom of international trade and navigation, which are also enshrined in many international legal instruments.”¹¹

Despite the various agreements made to reduce the use of UCMs, these tactics are still commonly imposed, predominantly by wealthy nations. Having faced the consequences of UCMs imposed by the United States, Cuba is often the most outspoken opponent to UCMs. In 1962, John F. Kennedy banned all trade and financial transactions with Cuba marking the start of a series of UCMs imposed on the State. These restrictions have severely impacted Cuba’s

⁹ Global Policy Forum, “Targeted Sanctions,” <https://archive.globalpolicy.org/security-council/index-of-countries-on-the-security-council-agenda/sanctions/targeted-sanctions-new-tools-new-challenges.html>

¹⁰ United Nations Human Rights Council, “Human Rights and Unilateral Coercive Measures: A/HRC/RES/27/21,” 3 October 2014.

<https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2FRES%2F27%2F21&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

¹¹ United Nations General Assembly, “ A/RES/72/4: Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba,” 10 November 2017.

<https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FRES%2F72%2F4&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

ability to build international trade relations and meet essential developmental milestones.¹² With the support of many LDCs and larger economically powerful states, Cuba leads the movement to abolish UCMs. Resolution, A/RES/72/4, *Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba*, has been passed in the General Assembly nearly thirty times. The continual and nearly unanimous support for this resolution expresses strong solidarity in the effort to put an end to unilateral coercive measures and is a goal shared by many Member States. Enrique Manalo, the permanent representative of the Philippines, stated in support of the resolution, “For the twenty-ninth year, we have witnessed again today a clear expression of solidarity with the Cuban people.” However, there are some opponents to the resolution and its goals. The United States argues, “Sanctions are a legitimate way to achieve foreign policy, national security and other national and international objectives,”¹³ and has voted against the resolution.

Cuba is not the only nation that has been negatively affected by UCMs imposed by more developed nations. In a Report of the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, the Special Rapporteur details the impact of these measures in eight countries. In a panel discussion, facilitated by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (7 March 2019), the human rights violations produced by the unilateral actions of the United States and suffered by the Iranian people was a key topic. The impacts of the United States’ measures include the violations of the right to shelter from extreme poverty, the right of health and of access to food.¹⁴ Sanctions on Iran, particularly the ban from SWIFT

¹² Oliver, Isabella.Venancio, Mariakarla Nodarse.“Understanding the Failure of the U.S. Embargo on Cuba,” WOLA. 4 February 2022. <https://www.wola.org/analysis/understanding-failure-of-us-cuba-embargo/> ¹³ United Nations General Assembly, “Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba: A/73/85,” 29 August 2018. [file:///Users/oliviayork/Downloads/A_73_85-EN%20\(1\).pdf](file:///Users/oliviayork/Downloads/A_73_85-EN%20(1).pdf)

¹⁴ United Nations General Assembly, “Negative Impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures on The Enjoyment of Human Rights: A/HRC/42/46,” 5 July 2019. <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F42%2F46&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

has prohibited the State's ability to pay for essential goods such as food and medicine. The ultimate victims of these sanctions are the Iranian people who are deprived of their humanitarian rights. "This situation effectively amounts to an unlawful blockade, or may be comparable to collective reprisals, both of which are banned under humanitarian law.¹⁵ " Similar measures, taken by developed nations, as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine have spurred a new wave of humanitarian crises.

Conflict and Unilateral Coercive Measures

The most visible human rights violations are those inflicted upon the Ukrainian people as a result of the war. However, secondary effects of the conflict and the unilateral coercive measures taken because of the conflict, have led to the mass displacement of food production. These unintended consequences are of great concern to Member states as the threat of a new world hunger crisis looms. These impacts will be especially devastating for least developed nations. The Brookings Institute found that, "Before the war, Ukraine exported on average about 6 million tons of agri-commodities monthly to countries in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa." These exports have been diminished by about 80% since the onset of the conflict. In addition to Ukraine's inability to export grain due to blocked ports or destroyed trade routes, the trade risks created by sanctions imposed on Russian exports has led to a sharp increase in the cost of distribution and the overall supply chain worldwide. An estimated 800 million people face food insecurity globally and this number will likely grow as the conflict continues. Most of these 800 million people reside in less developed countries (LDCs).

Another fundamental human right, as defined by Article 19 of the UDHR, is the freedom of information and the freedom of the press. It has been widely reported that both domestic and

¹⁵ United Nations General Assembly, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, Idriss," August 10, 2015. <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F30%2F45&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

international media organizations have been barred from reporting the full picture of the conflict within Russia. The restriction of information, freedom of thought and expression is barred by both the UDHR and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Ratified in 1976, The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, states, “the ideal of free human beings enjoying civil and political freedom and freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his civil and political rights, as well as his economic, social and cultural rights.”¹⁶ The protection of political and civil rights is integral to the maintenance of human rights and peace globally.

The withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan and the subsequent take over by the Taliban has led to new sanctions and restrictions imposed on the State. Since the pull-out, “the country’s overall economy and banking system has been almost completely incapacitated by decisions by the US and other governments to cut off Afghanistan’s Central Bank, officially the Da Afghanistan Bank, from the international banking system.”¹⁷ The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is heading up research, developing new aid routes, and providing consultation to other bodies of the UN on the ensuing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. The UNDP developed a Transnational Engagement Framework for Afghanistan that states, “Almost 23 million people are projected to face acute food insecurity, and over one million children risk dying from severe acute malnutrition. Poverty may become nearly universal, affecting 95-97 percent of the population.”¹⁸ Although the Taliban are not recognized as a legitimate

¹⁶ United Nations General Assembly, “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: Resolution 2200A (XXI),” 16 December 1966.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, “Afghanistan: Economic Roots of the Humanitarian Crisis,” 1 March 2022.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/01/afghanistan-economic-roots-humanitarian-crisis>

¹⁸ United Nations Development Program, “United Nations Transnational Engagement Framework for Afghanistan,” January 2022.

https://afghanistan.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/UN_Transitional_Engagement_Framework_Afghanistan_2022.pdf

government, the UCMs in place in the country reach further than the government and the economy. In fact, "Private Afghan banks cannot recover withdrawals by depositors, including humanitarian aid organizations."¹⁹ Therefore, the access to desperately needed humanitarian aid has become nearly impossible in the region. Even more troubling, some UCMs imposed on the country have directly targeted developmental efforts, deeply impacting the human rights of the Afghan people. On 15 August 2021, donor governments, with the United States at the helm, ordered the World Bank to cut off approximately \$2 billion in outside international assistance. Prior to this order, the World Bank distributed these funds through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). The ARTF supplied the salaries of millions of teachers, health workers, and other essential workers. The World Bank also used these investments to fund projects led by the International Development Association (IDA).²⁰ Although the Taliban does not encompass all of the ideals shared by the world's democracies and wealthier nations, the UCMs in place today may have a greater effect on the Afghan people than any bodies of authority.

UCMs and Health

As seen in Cuba, Iran, Afghanistan, and other less developed nations, UCMs are detrimental to economies and in general to the well-being of the States' populations. The COVID-19 Pandemic exacerbated many problems faced by LDCs, especially the consequences of UCMs. "As a result of conflict, COVID-19, severe drought and the economic crisis in 2022, 24.4 million people in Afghanistan are projected to be in need of humanitarian aid, up by over 30 percent since the start of 2021, and amounting to over 55 percent of the entire population." The Pandemic emphasized the far-reaching impacts of UCMs and increased the urgency with which

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, "Afghanistan: Economic Roots of the Humanitarian Crisis," 1 March 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/01/afghanistan-economic-roots-humanitarian-crisis>

²⁰ Human Rights Watch, "Afghanistan: Economic Roots of the Humanitarian Crisis," 1 March 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/01/afghanistan-economic-roots-humanitarian-crisis>

the issue must be addressed. In June of 2021, the Permanent Mission of China co-hosted a virtual webinar on “the impact of unilateral coercive measures on national health systems of targeted developing countries.”²¹ Although many Western nations impose measures to protect freedom and democracy globally, the result is often a systematic degradation of human rights in LDCs. In regions composed predominantly of LDCs, unilateral coercive measures restrict already strained supply chains. “In the context of COVID-19, UCMs severely affect the capacity of targeted countries in their response to the pandemic, lead to the deterioration of humanitarian situations, and seriously violate the right to life, health, development, education and other human rights of their people.”²² The Secretary General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights have worked throughout the COVID health crisis to lift unilateral coercive measures to allow for the distribution of humanitarian aid, medical equipment, and vaccines. Member nations, including China, are urging its partners and other developed nations to support countries impacted by UCMs, especially in the context of humanitarian crises. Further, the protection of rights impacting health and well-being is a fundamental mission of the UN. A resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2019, “Reaffirms that essential goods such as food and medicines should not be used as tools for political coercion and that under no circumstances should people be deprived of their own means of subsistence and development.”²³ There is a confluence of factors that contribute to LDCs position in the world economy, and their ability to establish stable institutions and respond to crises like the COVID-19 Pandemic.

²¹ Permanent Mission of The People’s Republic of China to the UN, “Ambassador Zhang Jun: Unilateral coercive measures are turning a health crisis into a moral crisis,” June 3, 2021.
<https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/ceun/eng/hyyfy/t1881327.htm>

²² Permanent Mission of The People’s Republic of China to the UN, “Ambassador Zhang Jun: Unilateral coercive measures are turning a health crisis into a moral crisis,” June 3, 2021.
<https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/ceun/eng/hyyfy/t1881327.htm>

²³ United Nations General Assembly, “Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2019: RES/74/154,” December 18, 2019.
<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/428/37/PDF/N1942837.pdf?OpenElement>

Moving Forward

The United Nations recognizes “the deep-rooted problems and grievances within the international system and the importance for the United Nations to give a voice to all members of the international community in order to ensure multilateralism, mutual respect and the peaceful settlement of disputes.”²⁴ It is essential for all Member States to reflect on the core tenets of the United Nations and to reaffirm their commitment to the establishment and protection of human rights globally. The present epoch is challenging the global community to withstand modern health crises, climate change, and instability in Europe. The UN stands firm in its commitment to champion diplomatic alternatives to violence and ensuring access to free trade for all Member States. To do this, Member States may consider resolutions that would ensure global cooperation to remedy the effects of UCMs on LDCs, make commitments to ending the practice of UCMs, establish metrics by which to evaluate progress in ending the practice of UCMs, and possibly contribute to the development goals of LDCs impacted by UCMs. Although UCMs are argued to be a less-aggressive tactic for remedying conflict between nation states, the impacts on humanitarian rights are far reaching and must be addressed. The United Nations and its Member States must continue to ensure the protection of human rights and the sovereignty of all recognized states.

Questions to Consider

1. Is there a positive function for unilateral coercive measures?
2. How have unilateral coercive measures impacted your country? Has your country imposed unilateral coercive measures?
3. In what ways has the COVID-19 Pandemic exacerbated the effects of unilateral coercive measures in your country?

²⁴ United Nations General Assembly, “Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2019: RES/74/154,” December 18, 2019.
<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/179/07/PDF/G1417907.pdf?OpenElement>

4. In the context of the current conflict, what role do unilateral coercive measures play in diplomacy?

5. Does your country intend to advocate for the end of unilateral coercive measures? If so, what steps can your country take to support the cause? If not, how will your country make arguments in support of unilateral coercive measures?

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