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UNHRC: Topic #2 -The Right To Privacy in the Digital Age

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Statistical forecasts have shown a growth rate in the increase of emerging technology of 104% between 2018 and 2023, and this only continues to grow.¹The world is faced with the rapid improvement of technology, which contains benefits and drawbacks concerning global human rights.

On December 18th, 2013, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted resolution 68/167. The resolution addressed the need to protect human rights specifically in regard to the Internet. The resolution states, "Noting that the rapid pace of technological development enables individuals all over the world to use new information and communication technologies and at the same time enhances the capacity of governments, companies and individuals to undertake surveillance, interception and data collection, which may violate or abuse human rights, in particular the right to privacy..."² This resolution brought to light the power that technology plays in the world and the future threats it poses to society.

These powerful technological forces have shown immense improvement in terms of lifestyle and enhancing our human rights. AI technology has become a prevalent tool among people, companies, and governments across the globe. While this technology has incredible advantages, it in fact does have a major effect on the world and on human rights. For example, this has given companies and governments easier access to high-tech surveillance and data collection. AI technology can be used to operate lethal autonomous weapons, as well as to support and encourage authoritarian leadership: the possibilities are endless.³ It is obvious that with all of these technological advances, there are many benefits, but it is important to note that the accessibility of this technology can be manipulated and be used in ways that violate human privacy.

¹<https://www.channelpronetwork.com/blog/entry/25-crucial-information-technology-statistics-facts-know#:~:text=Emerging%20Technology%20Statistics&text=Statista%20forecasts%20that%20emerging%20techreach%20%24780%20million%20by%202025>

²<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N13/449/47/PDF/N1344947.pdf?OpenElement>

³<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/07/artificial-intelligence-must-be-grounded-human-rights-sayshigh-commissioner>

There are multi-faceted barriers to solving this issue of the right to privacy in the digital age, but it is the obligation of the UNHRC to explore and implement solutions to protect the privacy of human rights. In your research and deliberation, it is important to consider the following:

- What are some ground rules that should be implemented in terms of the usage of technology in order to ensure the privacy of human rights? Additionally, should there be any rules in place?
- How should we balance the principle of the right to privacy and the principle of national security?
- What limits should be placed on Artificial technology usage?
- How can we maintain the good that the advancement of technology brings to the world but also limit its use in order to maintain privacy?

Just a reminder, please make sure to carefully review all your position papers in order to ensure no plagiarism. Please consider when writing position papers that you are representing how your country acts, believes, and responds to this dilemma. As always everyone should feel free to email me at abotnick@mail.yu.edu if you have any questions or points of clarification. While this is an ongoing issue, I truly believe that if we can come together as countries we can take steps together to begin to conquer this problem.

Best of luck,

Ashley Botnick

Chair, United Nations Human Rights Council

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