

Committee: United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

Country: Kingdom of Belgium

Agenda: Deliberating the Human Rights Implications of Mass Digital Surveillance During Political Protests and Civil Unrest

We live in an era of rapid technological advancement, where data has become one of the world's most valuable resources. While digital technologies have significantly enhanced governments' ability to maintain public order and address security threats, they have also created challenges in balancing national security with the fundamental right to privacy. The Delegation of Belgium recognizes that states face legitimate security concerns and that surveillance, when conducted within a clear legal framework, can serve as a necessary tool to protect the safety of the nation. However, Belgium also acknowledges that unchecked surveillance may endanger digital privacy of the citizen, undermine fundamental human rights, and erode public trust. Therefore, Belgium believes in working relentlessly to find the path that balances both necessary surveillance and the fundamental rights of the people.

The Kingdom of Belgium has consistently upheld the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and the protection of fundamental human rights in both its domestic and international policies. As a founding member of the European Union, Belgium implements the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), one of the world's most comprehensive legal frameworks governing the protection of personal data. Belgium further reaffirms its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, particularly the rights to privacy, freedom of

expression, and peaceful assembly. Consequently, Belgium maintains that any surveillance measure undertaken by a state must be lawful, pursue a legitimate objective, remain necessary and proportionate to the threat concerned, and be subject to effective judicial or independent oversight to prevent abuse.

Belgium acknowledges that governments bear the responsibility to maintain order and protect citizens during periods of unrest. However, indiscriminate surveillance of protesters is not a proportionate measure and very often not even a legal one. Extensive surveillance measures should only be taken if they are bounded by a legal framework and if they are proportionate to the issue at hand. Caution must be exercised regarding technologies such as metadata collection and AI systems monitoring social media activity of the people. Use of private spyware applications should be extremely controlled and bounded legally. Availability of internet and social media should not be closed to the public unless extremely necessary. Application of facial recognition technology during protests should also be checked as its misuse can endanger the fundamental right to peaceful protest.

Furthermore, Belgium advocates for international cooperation in developing and sharing the best practices on safeguarding privacy, accountable surveillance technologies and capacity-building for states seeking to strengthen both security and human rights protections. Through constructive dialogue and multilateral cooperation, solutions that protect democratic values while enabling governments to respond effectively to genuine security threats can be developed and implemented globally.

The Kingdom of Belgium remains committed to working with all Member States to formulate practical, consensus-based solutions that reinforce accountability, uphold international human rights law, and ensure that

technological progress serves humanity without compromising the fundamental freedoms upon which democratic societies are built.