

Houston Area Model United Nations Standard Committee



SPECPOL

Topic A

Chair | Aaleen Ali

Houston Area Model United Nations 46

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HAMUN 46

SPECPOL

TOPIC A: *Issues of global
surveillance and
telecommunications*



Hello fellow delegates,

My name is Aaleen Ali, and I am a junior at Texas A&M University. I am studying at the Mays Business School as a Supply Chain Management major. I have a deep passion for Model United Nations, and I have walked in your shoes twice as a delegate at HAMUN, served as the president of my MUN chapter, chaired many a time, and finally served in the capacity of Public Relations officer for HAMUN 45. I know the value being in your position at this conference can bring- so give it your all. Speak up, test yourself, and brainstorm some creative solutions. By challenging myself in these ways, I was awarded both Best Delegate and Honorable Mention in my committees. I know each and every one of you has the capacity to be recognized in a similar fashion.

My promise to you is that I will be present, inclusive, and fair in our committee room.

What qualities will you bring?

See you soon,

Aaleen Ali
Chair of SPECPOL, HAMUN 46
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Hello delegates!

My name is Nini Dang and I'm currently a freshman at the University of Houston studying International Studies and government! I will serve as the Vice Chair this conference. This is one of many conferences I've been lucky enough to be a part of and I can't wait to meet all of you! With all of this unfortunate circumstances and uncertain times, I appreciate all of your hard work and I can't wait to see how you'll represent your countries! Prepare well and get ready to talk!

See you all so soon!

Nini Dang (she/her)

Committee Background

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECOPOL), or the Fourth Committee, as it is also known, was created in 1993 in accordance with the General Assembly Resolution 47/233, with the main objective of addressing significant political matters that the First Committee (DISEC) was not able to handle, such as self-determination, decolonization and other international security concerns. Later, SPECOPOL was given other topics to address and a broader overall scope due to its success in addressing the Palestine Question, among others.

Currently, the Fourth Committee can be viewed as the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) entrance door, since the questions discussed at the Council are often assessed earlier by SPECOPOL - not only because of the broader approach it has in terms of international security, but also because it allows all United Nations (UN) member States to be heard before the question reaches other UN organs. Therefore, although they are not binding, the committee's resolutions are very appealing, since they reflect the opinion of a majority of countries regarding substantive matters.

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) considers a broad range of issues covering a cluster of five decolonization-related agenda items, the effects of atomic radiation, questions relating to information, a comprehensive review of the question of peacekeeping operations as well as a review of special political missions, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Report of the Special Committee on Israeli Practices and International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

In addition to these annual items, the Committee also considers the items on Assistance in mine action, and University for peace biennially and triennially respectively.

Topic A: Issues of global surveillance and telecommunications

Today, a global industry consisting of hundreds of companies develops and sells surveillance technology to government agencies around the world. Together, these companies sell a wide range of systems used to identify, track, and monitor individuals and their communications for spying and policing purposes. The advanced powers available to the best equipped spy agencies in the world are being traded around the world. It is a lucrative business, but is so secretive and murky that no-one really knows its overall value.

When it comes to surveillance technology, you might think of small GPS tracking devices, cameras, and hidden bugs - and you'd be right. But it also consists of a wide range of constantly developing sophisticated systems the very existence of which is kept secret. This includes equipment used to monitor internet communications on a mass nationwide scale, malware deployed through national internet providers which can turn on your computer or mobile's camera, and mobile phone monitoring technology which can trick hundreds of mobiles into connecting to it, used for example to identify everyone at a protest.

The spread of the internet and new communications methods has increased the intrusiveness of surveillance as well as its power. It's now technically possible to monitor entire groups and nations on a mass scale, systematically and relatively cheaply. This poses a fundamental threat to individuals security, civil society, human rights, as well as democracy itself.

Even in political systems with significant checks and balances, surveillance capabilities have regularly outstripped the ability of laws to effectively regulate them. In non-democratic and authoritarian countries, surveillance technology can be used for human rights abuses and undermine democratic development and privacy, a human right essential in allowing individuals control, dignity, and the realisation of other human rights such as freedom of expression. The global surveillance industry has sold such systems to some of the world's worst human rights abusers, where they have been targeted at human rights activists, journalists, opposition members, and the judiciary. Activists have had their communications read to them during torture.

Discussion Questions

1. What threats does global surveillance bring?
2. How is global surveillance justified by countries around the world?
3. Can global surveillance ever be beneficial, if so, what are some examples?
4. Can countries use surveillance as a power tactic?
5. Does surveillance keep segments of the population and countries accountable?
6. What are alternatives to global surveillance?

Works Cited

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