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Ⅰ. Letter from the Secretary-General

Dear Esteemed Delegates, Honorable Chairs and Distinguished Guests,

My name is Zeynep Kayalacin and it is my great honor to serve as the Secretary General of this year's FLZMUN. I am truly delighted to have the opportunity to lead such an inspiring academic gathering.

I firmly believe that diplomacy is not simply about expressing opinions but also about understanding different perspectives. Throughout this conference, I encourage each of you to embrace these values and step outside your comfort zones.

Whether this is your first MUN experience or one of many, I hope this conference will provide you with an environment where you can grow intellectually, strengthen your leadership skills and create unforgettable memories. Do not be afraid to speak up, defend your ideas and most importantly, learn from one another.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who has contributed to making this conference possible. I also wish all delegates an inspiring, productive and enjoyable conference

Eat an apple, revise hard and prepare yourself for the conference.

If you have any prior questions about the conference you can contact me anytime.

Welcome to FLZMUN26.

Secretary General

Zeynep Kayalacin

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Ⅱ. Letter from the Under-Secretary-General

Dear Delegates,
Welcome to the committee!

My name is Demir Özel, and I am honored to serve as your Under-Secretary-General.

As you read through this study guide, you will encounter complex challenges ranging from the rapid evolution of drone warfare to the accountability gaps introduced by automated weapon systems. These topics touch upon the core of international humanitarian law and require our collective dedication to finding meaningful safeguards for vulnerable populations.

I encourage you to approach these discussions with critical thinking, deep empathy and a strong commitment to upholding human rights. I look forward to working with all of you and seeing the thoughtful resolutions you bring forward.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me!

Sincerely,

Demir Özel

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Ⅲ. Introduction to the Committee: United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is the main intergovernmental body within the United Nations system, established in 2006 by the General Assembly to replace the former Commission on Human Rights, and supported technically and secretariat-wise by the OHCHR while meeting year-round at the United Nations Office at Geneva. Composed of 47 Member States elected directly and individually by a majority of the UN General Assembly through annual elections with seats equitably distributed across five regional groups for staggered three-year terms (limited to two consecutive terms), the Council functions as a multilateral forum to address human rights violations, adopt resolutions, hold urgent special sessions, and authorize commissions of inquiry. Furthermore, it operates through key mechanisms established in its institution-building package, including the State-led Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to assess all UN member states, independent Special Procedures experts monitoring thematic and country situations, an Advisory Committee acting as a think tank, and a Complaint Procedure allowing individuals and organizations to report human rights abuses.

Ⅳ. Introduction to the Agenda Item: Protecting civilians from Human Rights Violations in Armed Conflicts

Protecting civilians during wars and armed conflicts is one of the most important goals of international law. Today, fighting often takes place in crowded cities, and military forces increasingly use advanced technology and automated systems. Because of this, ordinary people suffer the most from violence, displacement, and damaged neighborhoods. To protect them, we must look closely at how modern warfare, such as computer-guided decisions and drone operations, makes it harder to hold people responsible, keep human control, and keep civilians safe.

A. Protecting Civilians During Urban Warfare

1. The Impact of Heavy Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas

It is estimated that roughly 50 million individuals currently face the severe impacts of combat in urban areas, an escalating crisis driven by rapid global urbanization. These conflicts usually rely on long-range, heavy weapons with wide blast zones that are fundamentally unsuited for densely populated areas, resulting in destruction that claims lives, disrupts livelihoods, damages critical infrastructure and shatters prospects in the long term.

2. Direct Casualties and the Demographic Toll

A primary concern centers on employing wide-area explosive weapons within inhabited sectors. Because these weapons were built for open combat, deploying them in urban settings makes them effectively aimless, raising civilian casualties and triggering severe humanitarian crises. But civilian suffering extends far beyond direct casualties. Communities also face merging secondary impacts when healthcare, educational, commercial and social facilities are destroyed. Furthermore, lingering unexploded ordnance poses long-term lethal threats, blocks rebuilding efforts and prevents displaced residents from safely returning.

3. The Domino Effect on Interconnected Urban Infrastructure

Cities consist of delicate and tightly linked utility networks located underground, at ground level and overhead, spanning everything from wastewater pipelines and power substations to treatment plants. Because this critical civic infrastructure is not engineered to endure heavy explosive force, combat strikes easily trigger large scale operational failures. Secondary and cascading impacts in urban combat accumulate and worsen over time, as built up populated environments rely on fragile and interconnected webs of utilities where damage to a single component, such as an electrical transformer or substation, instantly halts municipal water treatment, wastewater management and healthcare facilities.Thus, the localized destruction of a single grid node sets off a chain reaction that simultaneously cripples regional sanitation, power and medical care, leading to widespread public health emergencies, the spread of illness and disease and severe long term civilian harm.

B. The Compromise of Personal Data and Right to Privacy in Modern Conflict

Modern armed conflicts rely heavily on information, leading militaries and governments to gather, combine and analyze massive amounts of personal data. This data collection creates a major conflict between military goals and the basic right to privacy. Because civilian communications infrastructure and military ecosystems are increasingly intertwined, everyday personal information becomes highly valuable to surveillance, data mining and advanced technological targeting tactics. When ordinary digital footprints are harvested during active hostilities, civilian populations are exposed to pervasive tracking, profiling, and digital exploitation that can persist long after immediate combat concludes.

Furthermore, significant regulatory ambiguities and accountability gaps persist regarding how data protection standards apply during armed conflict, leaving affected populations with few



enforceable safeguards against invasive surveillance and digital intrusion. The widespread integration of digital technologies into daily life means that civilian infrastructure doubles as a vast repository of sensitive personal information. Communications metadata, financial

transactions, location tracking from mobile devices, and biometric records are constantly generated and stored across interconnected networks. When hostilities break out, this digital landscape is frequently leveraged for operational advantage, transforming routine civilian activities into potential security risks. At the same time, existing legal protections for data during wartime remain fragmented and ill-equipped to handle modern technological capabilities. Traditional international laws of war were created primarily to address physical violence and tangible destruction, leaving major gray areas regarding digital surveillance and information warfare. As a result, individuals must navigate environments where their personal information can be intercepted, analyzed, or weaponized with little oversight, creating deep vulnerabilities that extend far beyond physical safety into the digital sphere.

C.Psychological Impact on Civilian Communities

Military combat, wartime tragedies, and political upheaval have grown increasingly severe over time. These organized violent conflicts are responsible for a major portion of the global disease burden, creating both physical health problems and mental health challenges. Such dangerous periods create conditions where various mental illnesses can easily develop. Because of this, ongoing and unpredictable stress in combat zones affects all areas of daily life, leaving vulnerable populations at high risk for mental health disorders.

According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, a global decline in mortality attributed to organised violence was observed between 2014 and 2019. However, this trend was significantly reversed in 2021, when a staggering 46% rise led to over 119 100 deaths globally, in contrast to the 81 700 deaths in the previous year. The growing hostilities in Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Yemen were mainly accountable for the preceding upsurge.Recent

reports demonstrate nearly 55 000 people succumbing as a consequence of organised violence just in the first half of 2022.Alongside causing substantial mortality, armed conflicts also provoke mass migrations and displacements. By May 2022, more than 100 million individuals have been compelled to flee from their hometowns because of an ongoing conflict, as compared with 89.3 million by the end of 2021.Among displaced individuals, 53.2 million were internally displaced, 32.5 million were refugees, 4.9 million were asylum seekers and 5.3 million needed international protection.

In recent times, the psychological well-being of people living in war-affected countries has attracted increasing attention because these regions are frequently linked to greater levels of psychosocial distress and leave populations more susceptible to psychiatric disorders.According to estimates from the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 20% of individuals residing in conflict-affected areas have some form of mental illness, with 10% of cases being moderate to severe.Several studies have suggested a higher prevalence among conflict-affected populations than non-exposed populations.Depressive (also used interchangeably with depression) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms have been the major focus of epidemiological studies on mental health problems among war survivors.PTSD is characterised by four symptom clusters, which include psychological distress at exposure to traumatic events, avoidance symptoms, cognitive or mood changes, and baseline arousal.Depression is often divided into five subcategories, all of which share the characteristic symptoms of a persistent sense of melancholy, emptiness or irritability, coupled with somatic, psychic and cognitive changes that have a significant impact on an individual’s functionality and overall well-being.Meta-analyses from war-afflicted regions show a high incidence of PTSD and depressive symptomatology, with pooled estimates ranging from 15.3% to 30.6% for PTSD and 10.8% to 30.8% for depression.It is imperative

to target and treat major depressive disorder (MDD) and PTSD at onset to reach not only the resolution of core symptoms but also the ability to reach pre-morbid functionality.

D.Artificial Intelligence and Automated Life-or-Death Decisions

The deployment of artificial intelligence and automated decision support systems in armed conflict introduces profound legal, ethical, and operational challenges, particularly when applied to decisions concerning life and death. As military organizations increasingly adopt machine learning applications to process vast quantities of battlefield intelligence, target identification and threat assessment are frequently delegated to algorithmic processes. These technologies operate at speeds and scales that can vastly exceed human cognitive capacity, creating a structural shift in how military operations are conducted.



However, relying on automated systems to inform or execute lethal force raises critical questions regarding accountability, legal compliance, and the preservation of human

judgment. Under international humanitarian law, adherence to foundational principles such as distinction, proportionality, and precautions requires nuanced human interpretation and contextual understanding. Automated systems struggle to evaluate complex, ambiguous real-world scenarios where civilian presence overlaps with military objectives or where intent must be assessed in fractions of a second.

Furthermore, the integration of autonomous capabilities generates a significant accountability vacuum. When algorithmic errors, faulty training data, or unpredictable machine learning behaviors result in unlawful civilian casualties or destruction, determining responsibility becomes exceptionally difficult. Software developers, military commanders, operators, and state actors are separated from the final kinetic action by layers of complex technology, weakening the traditional chain of moral and legal responsibility. This technological shift threatens to detach the gravity of life-or-death determinations from human agency, reducing human participation to mere oversight of automated recommendations in environments where errors carry irreversible consequences.

E.When Humans Lose Control Over Fast-Moving Combat Machines

People often break down automated weapon systems into three categories: human-in-the-loop, human-on-the-loop, and human-out-of-the-loop. In the first setup, a machine spots a target and suggests it, but a human must approve every strike. In the second, the system operates on its own while a person watches and can theoretically step in. In the third, the machine handles the entire process from finding to attacking a target completely on its own once it is turned on.

It is here that one of the main differences between the approaches of the United States, Ukraine and China can currently be seen. The American framework permits considerably broader autonomy provided that an appropriate level of human judgment over the use of force is retained; Ukraine is rapidly increasing the autonomy of its combat systems, but in publicly described models still leaves the decision on a specific engagement to the operator; China, for its part, officially stresses the need for ultimate human control and responsibility.

The issue is that these three categories do not always match what actually happens in practice. A person might technically stay in the loop, but they are just rubber-stamping a massive number of decisions without enough time to actually look at them. On the other hand, someone might sit on the loop by setting rules, location boundaries, time limits, and allowed target types, never looking at an individual target before the system attacks it.

The central question, therefore, is not whether a human is present somewhere within the system, but at what level the human is still genuinely making the decision. If the operator decides which particular target is to be engaged, that is one model of control. If the operator merely defines the rules according to which the machine will independently find dozens or hundreds of targets, that is an entirely different architecture of responsibility, even if formal human authorisation has never disappeared.

F. Overview of Drone Warfare and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

Short-range unmanned aerial vehicles have increasingly become a leading cause of civilian casualties in modern conflict zones, fundamentally altering the nature of everyday risk for non-combatants. Because these advanced systems feature sophisticated on-board cameras that allow operators to monitor surroundings and track targets in real time, they possess a high degree of tactical precision. Yet, this very capability creates severe dangers for civilian

populations, as operators frequently struggle to distinguish between active military targets and ordinary citizens performing daily routines.

Individuals commuting on public transit, driving cars, walking on foot, or riding bicycles find themselves directly in the line of fire. Furthermore, the pervasive presence of these aircraft traps frontline residents in a continuous state of hypervigilance. Constantly straining to listen for the distinct sound of approaching engines, communities live in perpetual fear that restricts their ability to seek shelter, escape danger zones, or access essential life-saving resources such as food, clean water, and medical care.



G. Accountability Challenges and Responsibility Distribution

A core concern with autonomous weapons is the accountability gap. When a machine selects and attacks a target independently, current legal rules struggle to hold any specific person responsible for the resulting harm. The problem runs deeper than procedure, as IHL and International Criminal Law were built around human decisions. Thus, when a critical choice is made by an AI-enabled system instead of a person, it becomes extraordinarily difficult to attribute violations to commanders, operators, or programmers. For example, who is accountable if an AWS erroneously targets people owing to a defective pattern recognition algorithm? The programmers and software engineers who developed the AI? If one is involved, the company employing them? The commander who deployed the AWS? Or the State that sanctioned its utilization? Relying on AI-enabled targeting is in itself highly problematic, let alone when both targeting and execution depend on it. When accuracy is unreliable and human supervision is minimal, the result is large-scale civilian deaths. Ultimately, filling this institutional void requires modernizing legal frameworks to match the rapid evolution of military technology. Without clear mechanisms for attributing liability, vulnerable populations remain unprotected against the collateral consequences of algorithmic error. Preserving human agency is therefore not just a matter of operational preference, but an absolute necessity for upholding the rule of law in modern conflict.

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