



StarMUN 2025, OHCHR:

Role of States in Countering the Negative Impact of Disinformation on the Enjoyment and Realization of Human Rights

Introduction

In the digital age, disinformation—intentionally false or misleading information—is not merely a threat to facts but a serious impediment to the enjoyment and realization of human rights. Whether it spreads through social media, state-sponsored campaigns, or covert propaganda, disinformation disrupts democratic processes, fuels violence, undermines public health, and suppresses civil liberties. States have a dual responsibility: to counter harmful disinformation while upholding the rights to freedom of expression, opinion, and access to information. This report explores the scope of the issue, the human rights most affected, and the appropriate role of states under international law.

Definition of Key Terms

Disinformation: Deliberately false or misleading information spread with the intent to deceive.

Misinformation: False information shared without malicious intent.

Freedom of Expression: The right to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds.

Digital Literacy: The ability to critically evaluate digital content to identify credible information.

Information Integrity: The trustworthiness and reliability of information disseminated in public discourse.

Background Information

The spread of disinformation is not a new phenomenon, but its scale and speed have been drastically amplified by modern technology. Political disinformation has been used to sway elections, delegitimize opposition voices, and inflame ethnic and religious tensions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, health-related disinformation fueled vaccine hesitancy and contributed to unnecessary deaths. While the right to freedom of expression is enshrined in Article 19 of the ICCPR, this right is not absolute. It may be restricted under international law to protect national security, public order, or the rights of others.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

- Russia: Accused of state-sponsored disinformation campaigns.
- China: Known for strict information control and digital diplomacy.
- United States: Balancing anti-disinformation with constitutional free speech.
- European Union: Enforced Digital Services Act and Code of Practice.
- UNESCO: Promotes media and digital literacy.
- Major tech platforms: Facebook, X (Twitter), Google.

Relevant International Agreements

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
- UN Human Rights Council Resolution 49/21.
- UN General Assembly Resolution 76/227.
- UN Plan of Action on Hate Speech.

Implications on Human Rights

- Right to Health: COVID-19 disinformation delayed vaccine uptake.
- Right to Participate in Public Affairs: Electoral disinformation undermines democracy.
- Right to Privacy: Disinformation exploits personal data.
- Freedom of Opinion and Expression: States must act without censorship.
- Right to Non-Discrimination: Marginalized groups targeted by hate speech.

Past UN Actions

- UNESCO's Media and Information Literacy Initiatives.
- OHCHR reports on digital technologies and human rights.
- Global Digital Compact (proposed).
- UN Tech Envoy Consultations.

Possible Solutions

- Media and Digital Literacy Programs.
- Transparent Content Moderation Policies.
- Legislative Frameworks with Safeguards.
- Multistakeholder Cooperation.
- Independent Fact-Checking Networks.

Conclusion

The rise of disinformation poses a profound challenge to human rights. States must act decisively but in line with international human rights law. STAR MUN 2025 offers a platform for delegates to explore solutions that defend truth, trust, and transparency.

Bibliography

- UNHRC Resolution 49/21
- UNESCO Guidelines for Regulating Digital Platforms
- ICCPR, Article 19
- UN General Assembly Resolution 76/227
- European Commission: Code of Practice on Disinformation
- OHCHR Reports on digital rights
- Access Now, Article 19, and GNI publications

Useful Links and Sources

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<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/report-plastic-pollution-and-human-rights-2021>

<https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/RES/48/13>

<https://www.basel.int/Implementation/Plasticwaste/PlasticWasteAmendments/tabid/8347/>

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