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Center on Privacy & Technology

**University of California, Irvine  
School of Law**

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# Entrenching Authoritarianism

Expanding the Terrorism Framework and the  
Infrastructure of Surveillance to Repress Expression and  
Stifle Dissent

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## **THEMES:**

- **The Metastasizing “Terrorism” Framework**
  - **The Shrinking Space for Civil Society**
  - **An Infrastructure of Surveillance**
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## ***ICE, Shifting Tactics, Detains High School Student at N.Y.C. Courthouse***

The detention of a 20-year-old Venezuelan appears to be the first reported instance of immigration officials apprehending a student in the city this year.

## **Corporation for Public Broadcasting will shut down after Trump funding cuts**

## **Trump fires statistics chief after soft jobs report**

News | Donald Trump

## **'On edge': Trump's military deployment in Washington stirs fear, confusion**

*Critics call the federal takeover of US capital, a 'manufactured crisis' aimed at political gain and eroding local autonomy.*

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# The Metastasizing “Terrorism” Framework

To date, and by design, there is no singular definition of terrorism in U.S. Law, which is a subjective and political categorization. In recent years, through state and federal legislation and policies, environmental justice movements, racial justice activists, and students protesting Israel's genocide against Palestinians have all been targeted and maligned under the terrorism framework.

## Previous Recommendations calling for the closure of Guantanamo Bay Prison:

Recommendations from the **Third Cycle of US UPR** (175, 176, 177), A/HRC/46/15/Add.1, paras. 15 and 16; Recommendations from the **Second Cycle of US UPR** (247, 248, 241, 243, 245, 250) A/HRC/30/12/Add.1, para. 15; Recommendations from the **First Cycle of US UPR** (88, 89, 136, 137, 141, 147, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160), A/HRC/16/11.

## *‘Cop City’ Prosecutions Hinge on a New Definition of Domestic Terrorism*

Are the protesters against a new police training center part of a violent “extremist organization,” or are the serious charges they face a means of stifling free speech?

**Trump invokes 18th century law, declaring ‘invasion’ by gangs to speed mass deportations**

Politics Mar 15, 2025 5:45 PM EDT

## When anti-war protesters are called national security threats

Is this what VP Vance meant by free speech 'in retreat'? Case of detained green card holder shows how 'brittle' our rights are here, too.

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to continuing to call on the closure of Guantanamo, we recommend that Member States directly address the U.S.' severely bloated counterterrorism and national security infrastructure, and demand that the U.S.:

- Eliminate the laws and policies of the so-called “War on Terror” that are ripe for abuse against activists as well as Black, Muslim, Arab, South Asian, Indigenous, Latinx, and LGBTQIA+ communities.
  - Cease the weaponization of the terrorism framework and immediately repeal 18 U.S.C. §2339B of the material support statute.
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# Criminalization of civil society

By targeting NGOs that support and engage in work the Trump Administration deems to be progressive and out of line with Trump's stated anti-immigrant, anti-diversity, and anti-climate priorities, the U.S. is in violation of its human rights obligations, including ICCPR Article 19.

**Trump attacks on law firms begin to chill pro bono work on causes he doesn't like**

**'Fear Is the Point': Alarm as Republicans Launch Probe of 200+ Immigrant Charity Groups**

"An attack on civil society is an attack on us all," said Democratic Rep. Delia Ramirez. "We must dissent."

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

**We recommend that you call on the U.S. to:**

- Repeal all executive orders and directives that reduce or eliminate funding for nongovernmental organizations; or that target lawyers and law firms that have represented parties or entities that have taken a position in opposition to President Trump;
  - Cease its policy and practice of targeting political dissenters, including noncitizens, on the basis of their support for Palestinian rights.
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# **The human rights impact of the U.S.' sprawling infrastructure of surveillance**

Despite six countries recognizing the human rights violations of the U.S. surveillance infrastructure in 2020, the U.S. is in a time of heightened repression. As such, we urge specific attention to how such surveillance disincentivizes people from exercising their human rights, including the right to protest.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of these invasive government surveillance practices is to compile as much data as possible to carry out any goal that might arise for the agency at any time in the future. We therefore recommend that Member States specifically call on the U.S. to:

- Repeal any law or data practice that violates core human rights protections, e.g., Section (1)(1)(A) of the DNA Fingerprint Act or dragnet surveillance;
  - Disclose all the details relating to DHS's contract with Paragon Solutions (US) Inc.;
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# What authoritarians do



**Direct  
Investigations  
Against Critics**

**Deploy Military  
Domestically**



**Give License to  
Lawbreaking**

**Federal Law  
Enforcement  
Overreach**



**Regulatory  
Retaliation**

**The Autocrat Won't  
Leave**



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*For more information  
and full  
recommendations  
see:*



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Around the world, we are witnessing a surge in repressive tactics aiming at corroding respect for human rights. And these are contaminating some democracies. This is not a series of isolated events. It is a global contagion.

- *UN Secretary-General António Guterres*

*July 25, 2025*

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