

Cognitive Freedom Coalition

COGNITIVE FREEDOM / UNITED NATIONS SUBMISSION

THE HUMAN MIND MUST NEVER BECOME AN INSTRUMENT OF STATE POWER

Formal Comments to the UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee

THE HUMAN MIND MUST NEVER BECOME AN INSTRUMENT OF STATE POWER

Formal Comments on the Draft Recommended Guidelines for Applying the Existing Human Rights Framework to Neurotechnologies

Submitted by: Cognitive Freedom Coalition | Date: November 2026

An Urgent Appeal

There is one boundary no government, intelligence agency, military organization, corporation, or individual should be permitted to violate: the human mind.

Our thoughts, memories, emotions, perceptions, and independent judgment are fundamental to human dignity. They are not privileges granted by governments. They are freedoms governments are obligated to respect and protect.

Neurotechnology offers extraordinary medical and scientific benefits. It also raises the possibility of surveillance, coercion, manipulation, and experimentation reaching into the most intimate aspects of human existence.

The danger is especially serious when emerging capabilities intersect with classified military programs, intelligence operations, extensive international infrastructure, and limited public scrutiny.

The Cognitive Freedom Coalition welcomes the Advisory Committee's draft guidelines. We urge the Committee to strengthen protections against government misuse and establish practical safeguards that extend across national borders.

The world must establish these protections before irreversible harm occurs.

1. Classified Programs Must Remain Accountable

Relevant Guidelines: 13–21

The draft recognizes States' obligations to prevent violations, investigate misconduct, and provide remedies. These duties must explicitly extend to classified neurotechnology research, procurement, testing, and operations.

The documented history of MKULTRA illustrates why secrecy cannot substitute for independent accountability.

We recommend independent oversight authorities with lawful access to classified records, facilities, contracts, and personnel; authority to investigate credible complaints; and procedures for referring established violations to competent judicial authorities.

Oversight must extend to intelligence agencies, military organizations, private contractors, and international partnerships. Whistleblowers must have protected reporting channels.

No government should be permitted to do secretly what human rights law forbids openly.

2. Prohibit Coercive Interference and Nonconsensual Experimentation

Relevant Guidelines: 37–49

The draft addresses informed consent, experimentation, social control, and manipulation. It should expressly prohibit coercive neural interference, unlawful acquisition of neural information, and nonconsensual experimentation, including activities conducted through government contractors.

Consent must be free, informed, specific, and meaningful. Dependency on an employer, institution, or government must never be exploited to manufacture consent.

Practices incompatible with absolute human rights cannot be legitimized by consent, government authorization, or national security claims.

The human mind is not a laboratory without consent.

3. Protect Civilians from Intelligence and Military Misuse

Relevant Guidelines: 100–103 and 112–116

The guidelines should explicitly address the potential misuse of neurotechnology for unlawful civilian surveillance, coercive interrogation, political repression, intimidation, or suppression of independent judgment.

States should require independent legal review before high-risk deployment, documented authorization, ongoing auditing, and effective remedies.

These safeguards must apply to domestic and overseas operations, intelligence partnerships, and government contractors, consistent with applicable international law.

Classification must not prevent appropriately authorized independent authorities from examining credible evidence of serious human rights violations.

4. Defend Mental Privacy Against Intrusive Surveillance

Relevant Guidelines: 50–56 and 117–120

Neural data and information about thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and cognitive states require exceptional protection.

States should establish strict limits on collection, inference, retention, transfer, and repurposing of sensitive cognitive information.

Safeguards should include independent authorization where required, data minimization, audit trails, meaningful oversight, and accessible remedies.

Protections must remain technology-neutral as new capabilities emerge.

The privacy of the human mind must not depend on whether a technology is implanted, wearable, noninvasive, or remotely operated.

5. Provide Independent Investigation and Scientific Review

Relevant Guidelines: 15, 21, 46 and 119

People reporting suspected neurotechnology-related abuses need accessible, impartial investigative procedures.

Complaints should receive fair assessment, appropriate confidentiality, protection against retaliation, and evidence-based investigation when warranted.

Investigations should involve qualified independent scientific and legal experts, secure evidence preservation, transparent methodologies, and reproducible findings.

The Coalition's Neuro Frequency Investigation Initiative (NFII) encourages independent scientific research into reports attributed to neural, physiological, electromagnetic, and related phenomena.

Its objective is to determine what can be objectively measured, reproduced, and independently verified through studies involving qualified researchers and consenting participants.

No individual should need access to classified information or advanced laboratory equipment merely to have a concern considered fairly.

6. Protect Democracy and Civil Society

Relevant Guidelines: 122–124

The guidelines should explicitly address potential misuse against journalists, whistleblowers, political opponents, human rights defenders, peaceful demonstrators, and civilian populations.

Neurotechnology must not become an instrument for suppressing dissent, undermining independent judgment, or interfering unlawfully with democratic participation.

Complaints involving government agencies must be reviewable independently of the institutions implicated.

7. Make Prevention an Immediate Obligation

Relevant Guideline: 4

The Coalition strongly supports the draft's precautionary approach.

Scientific uncertainty must not justify inaction against serious, irreversible, or widespread human rights risks.

States should conduct independent human rights assessments before high-risk deployment, review those assessments as capabilities evolve, and suspend or prohibit applications that cannot satisfy applicable safeguards.

The Coalition's proposed Cognitive Freedom Bill of Rights offers a complementary framework for protecting mental privacy, cognitive liberty, neural integrity, and autonomy.

8. Establish Permanent International Oversight and Cross-Border Accountability

Relevant Guidelines: 24, 36, 112–116 and 125

National protections alone cannot address every threat posed by emerging neurotechnologies.

Military installations, intelligence facilities, defense partnerships, and other infrastructure operate across international borders.

If technologies capable of unlawfully interfering with neural activity or cognitive autonomy were deployed through such infrastructure, their effects and human rights consequences could extend beyond the territory of the operating State.

The Coalition urges the United Nations to consider establishing a dedicated, independent international mechanism to monitor neurotechnology-related human rights risks and suspected violations.

Its responsibilities should include:

- Receiving confidential submissions from individuals, researchers, whistleblowers, and civil society organizations.
- Coordinating independent scientific and human rights assessments.
- Requesting cooperation and relevant information from States.
- Facilitating investigations involving overseas military installations, intelligence partnerships, and cross-border activities.
- Publishing periodic findings and recommendations while protecting sensitive information and due process.

Host States and operating States should establish procedures for lawful evidence preservation, independent review, and accountability where violations are established.

The mechanism's investigative powers, jurisdiction, and access to classified material must be established through an appropriate legal mandate.

A nation’s technological reach must never exceed the reach of human rights accountability.

No State should evade responsibility for prohibited conduct merely by operating through foreign territory, allied intelligence services, or classified military programs.

9. Develop International Protective Technology and Research Infrastructure

Relevant Guidelines: 4, 21, 24, 36 and 125

Laws alone may be insufficient to prevent emerging technological threats. The international community must also develop the scientific capacity to identify, investigate, and counter verified risks.

The Coalition recommends investment in independent research laboratories, electromagnetic monitoring capabilities, controlled testing environments, and scientifically validated protective technologies.

Research should examine potential risks involving radiofrequency, microwave, millimeter-wave, and other electromagnetic systems without presuming that any particular mechanism has been established.

Assessment should not be limited to commercial telecommunications. Appropriately authorized independent investigators should also be capable of evaluating relevant restricted military spectrum allocations and classified electromagnetic systems when credible evidence warrants investigation.

Where harmful mechanisms are demonstrated, States should cooperate to develop and validate detection methods, shielding technologies, and other protective measures.

Humanity must develop not only the laws to prohibit technological abuse, but also the scientific knowledge and protective capabilities necessary to prevent it.

Final Appeal

The United Nations was created to defend human dignity against abuses of power. That responsibility now reaches the most private dimension of human existence.

The question is not only what technology will make possible. It is what humanity will permit.

Will classified programs remain beyond meaningful scrutiny? Will civilians have a credible path to justice? Will safeguards arrive before preventable harm becomes irreversible?

We urge the Advisory Committee to strengthen its guidelines through explicit prohibitions, independent oversight, international accountability, scientific investigation, and effective protective measures.

The human mind is not government property.

It is not a battlefield.

It is not an intelligence asset.

It is not a laboratory without consent.

It belongs to the individual. Protecting that freedom is an international responsibility that cannot wait.

Cognitive Freedom Coalition

The Future Demands Cognitive Freedom.

https://CognitiveFreedomCoalition.org

contact@CognitiveFreedomCoalition.org