



## 1. Maritime Security

### ***The Frequency and Sophistication of Uncrewed Systems in Maritime Security***

Uncrewed systems, also known as drones, are increasingly important in modern warfare. This is evident in the increasing frequency and severity with which attacks by uncrewed systems are reported.<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs points out that uncrewed systems are used not only by state but also by non-state actors in the aerial, ground, and maritime domains; this means that they can be deployed in a variety of ways and achieve a high level of effectiveness at relatively low cost.<sup>2</sup> The United Nations Secretary-General's "New Agenda for Peace" from 2023 expands on this topic and emphasizes the threat of uncrewed systems for civilians and infrastructure. He also highlights the inadequate governance framework, which is becoming a risk due to the progressive development of software, artificial intelligence, and quantum technologies; they make the potential for damage to societies, economies, and warfare itself unpredictable.<sup>3</sup>

Naval forces use uncrewed systems as force multipliers to enable more efficient, flexible operations, extend their reach, ensure a permanent presence in conflict zones, and strengthen deterrence. This has led to a reassessment of naval fleets' size, composition, and capabilities.<sup>4</sup> In practice, the use of uncrewed vessels is demonstrated in the Russia-Ukraine War, where Ukraine successfully deployed the uncrewed surface vehicle (USV) "Sea Baby USV" against Russian targets in the Black Sea. However, other fleets, such as those of the USA, the Netherlands, Brazil, and South Korea, are also increasingly being equipped with USVs.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, uncrewed systems are not only changing maritime warfare in a material and tactical sense but are also raising new ethical questions. The former United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, Christof Heyns, stated in front of the Human Rights Council that without a legal framework for accountability, the use of uncrewed vessels reduces the protection of civilians and increases the risk for potential victims of war crimes.<sup>6</sup>

However, there is potential for USVs not only in warfare but also in the fight against crime. In this case, USVs serve as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance vehicles to locate suspicious vessels. This applies in particular to Latin America and the Caribbean, where USVs could combat both illegal fishing and naval drug trafficking. Christian Ehrlich, director of the Institute for Strategy and Defense Research, also sees other benefits in UPVs: They can be used in search and rescue missions and scientific operations. Furthermore, they could be used to protect offshore infrastructure and secure ports.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security (A/76/135)*. 2021. p.4.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Armed uncrewed systems*. 2024.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9 A New Agenda for Peace*. 2023. pp. 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Prasanga. Center for International Maritime Security. *The Strategic Impact Of Military Drone Proliferation On Indo-Pacific Maritime Security*. 2023. p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Sanchez. Center for International Maritime Security. *Do USVs Have a Future in Latin American and Caribbean Navies?*. 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Hassib et al. *The Challenges and Implications of Military Cyber and AI Capabilities in the Middle East: The Geopolitical, Ethical, and Technological Dimensions*. 2023. pp. 58-59.

<sup>7</sup> Sanchez. Center for International Maritime Security. *Do USVs Have a Future in Latin American and Caribbean Navies?*. 2024.



## ***The Situation in the Red Sea and Maritime Security***

The Red Sea crisis is directly linked to the conflicts in the Middle East, especially the current situation in the Gaza Strip. Since the beginning of the war in October 2023, the passage along the Yemen coast has become one of the most dangerous routes in the world.<sup>8</sup> Especially the maritime security situation in the Red Sea continues to deteriorate due to repeated attacks by Houthi forces on merchant ships since November 2023, posing significant risks to international trade routes and endangering seafarers.<sup>9</sup> The Houthis control large parts of Yemen and are part of the “Axis of Resistance”, which takes an anti-Israeli and anti-Western stance.<sup>10</sup> The United Nations Security Council has categorically condemned these attacks and called on all parties involved to respect international maritime law, stressing the need for stability in a region already affected by protracted conflicts.<sup>11</sup>

One of the most pressing incidents involves the car freighter *Galaxy Leader*, hijacked on November 19, 2023, with its multi-national crew reportedly held in harsh conditions. The Security Council underscored the necessity of immediate release for all detained crew members, referring to obligations under Resolution 2216 to prevent arms transfers to the Houthis and further escalation.<sup>12</sup>

However, the attack on the “*Galaxy Leader*” is only the most well-known of many. By now, over 100 vessels have been attacked by the Houthi Rebels, and two vessels were detained by the Houthi.<sup>13</sup> Foreseeing the potential for humanitarian crises, the United Nations are aware of the danger and discussing this in several other organs and external organizations such as the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations or the International Maritime Organization.<sup>14</sup> The latter focused in its 132nd session of the Council on preventive diplomacy and the need to make arrangements for safe navigation, emphasizing that these maritime corridors are central to humanitarian relief efforts and global trade.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, divisions persist over the extent of external support to various factions, complicating the search for an immediate resolution and raising questions about the enforcement of existing UN embargoes.<sup>16</sup> However, there are initial signs of relaxation: With the ceasefire agreed between Hamas and Israel on January 15, 2025, the Houthis released the crew of the “*Galaxy Leader*” on January 22, 2025. They also want to reduce their attacks as long as the ceasefire is observed.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Spiegel Ausland. *Houthis lassen Crew von gekapertem Autofrachter »Galaxy Leader« frei*. 2025.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Security Council. *Security Council Press Statement on Houthi Threats to Security at Sea (SC/15513)*. 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Spiegel Ausland. *Houthis lassen Crew von gekapertem Autofrachter »Galaxy Leader« frei*. 2025.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 2722 (S/RES/2722 (2024))*. 2024. pp. 1-2.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 2722 (S/RES/2722 (2024))*. 2024. pp. 1-2.

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Security Council. *Security Council Press Statement on Anniversary of Houthis' Unlawful Detention of Galaxy Leader Crew (SC/15904)*. 2024.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Security Council. *Alarmed by Attacks on Ships in Red Sea, Top UN Officials Urge Protection of Global Supply Chains, Avoiding Deeper Regional Tensions, in Security Council Briefing (SC/15552)*. 2024.

<sup>15</sup> International Maritime Organization. *Council, 132nd session (C 132)*. 2024.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 2768 (S/RES/2768 (2025))*. 2025. p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Choukeir. Reuters. *Yemen's Houthis free crew of Galaxy Leader after over a year, Al Masirah TV reports*. 2025.



## Bibliography

Choukeir. Reuters. *Yemen's Houthis free crew of Galaxy Leader after over a year, Al Masirah TV reports*. 2025. Retrieved on 24 January 2025 from:

<https://www.reuters.com/world/yemens-houthis-release-crew-galaxy-leader-after-more-than-year-al-masirah-tv-2025-01-22/>

Hassib et al. *The Challenges and Implications of Military Cyber and AI Capabilities in the Middle East: The Geopolitical, Ethical, and Technological Dimensions*. 2023. Retrieved 9 January 2025 from: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mohammad-Eslami-8/publication/372743618>

International Maritime Organization. *Council, 132nd session (C 132)*. 2024. Retrieved 16 January 2025 from:

<https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/MeetingSummaries/Pages/Council-132nd-session>

Prasanga. Center for International Maritime Security. *The Strategic Impact Of Military Drone Proliferation On Indo-Pacific Maritime Security*. 2023. Retrieved 24 December 2024 from:

[https://www.academia.edu/111533148/The\\_Strategic\\_Impact\\_Of\\_Military\\_Drone\\_Proliferation\\_On\\_Indo\\_Pacific\\_Maritime\\_Security](https://www.academia.edu/111533148/The_Strategic_Impact_Of_Military_Drone_Proliferation_On_Indo_Pacific_Maritime_Security)

Sanchez. Center for International Maritime Security. *Do USVs Have a Future in Latin American and Caribbean Navies?*. 2024. Retrieved 24 December 2024 from:

<https://cimsec.org/category/drones-unmanned/>

Spiegel Ausland. *Huthis lassen Crew von gekapertem Autofrachter »Galaxy Leader« frei*. 2025. Retrieved on 24 January 2025 from:

<https://www.spiegel.de/ausland/jemen-rotes-meer-huthi-miliz-laesst-crew-von-frachter-galaxy-leader-frei-a-3cc54d30-cded-4c2b-9214-641fa24d3783>

United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9 A New Agenda for Peace*. 2023. Retrieved 24 December 2024 from:

<https://www.un.org/NewAgendaforPeace>

United Nations, General Assembly. *Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security (A/76/135)*. 2021. Retrieved 24 December 2024 from: <https://documents.un.org/A/76/135>

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Armed uncrewed systems*. 2024. Retrieved 24 December 2024 from: <https://disarmament.unoda.org/armed-uncrewed-systems/>

United Nations Security Council. *Security Council Press Statement on Houthi Threats to Security at Sea (SC/15513)*. 2023. Retrieved 16 January 2025 from:

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15513>

United Nations Security Council. *Alarmed by Attacks on Ships in Red Sea, Top UN Officials Urge Protection of Global Supply Chains, Avoiding Deeper Regional Tensions, in Security Council Briefing (SC/15552)*. 2024. Retrieved 16 January 2025 from:

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15552>



United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 2722 (S/RES/2722 (2024))*. 2024. Retrieved 16 January 2025 from: <https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2722>

United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 2768 (S/RES/2768 (2025))*. 2025. Retrieved 16 January 2025 from: [https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2768\(2025\)](https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2768(2025))

United Nations Security Council. *Security Council Press Statement on Anniversary of Houthis' Unlawful Detention of Galaxy Leader Crew (SC/15904)*. 2024. Retrieved 16 January 2025 from: <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15904>



## 2. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts

According to the 4th Geneva Convention, civilians should be protected in wars and conflicts and their human rights respected.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, the reality shows that protecting civilians is a complex task that requires additional assistance from the international community.

### ***Efforts to provide assistance, protect civilians, and seek accountability***

The current reality shows a steady incline of civilian toll despite efforts and investments due to a significant gap between legal obligations and practice, as reflected by the shocking increase of 72% of civilian deaths from 2022 to 2023.<sup>19</sup> Complexified by the involvement of non-state actors as well as the general changing nature of conflicts with new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and other spread of disinformation - there is evermore an urgent need for re-commitment to the Protection of Civilians (POC).<sup>20</sup>

In April 2021, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2573 (2021) was adopted, showcasing that POC extends beyond purely physical protection but also encompasses protection of civilian infrastructure that is essential for the survival of the population in armed conflicts, such as water supply systems, hospitals, and much more.<sup>21</sup>

Subsequently, in October 2021, the United Nations adopted Resolution 2601 (2021), emphasizing the protection of education in conflict zones, underscoring the importance of protecting schools and educational facilities during armed conflicts.<sup>22</sup>

Other International Alliances, such as the European Commission, continued its implementation and focused on strengthening international humanitarian law and human rights law to protect civilians in conflict zones in the European Union Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024).<sup>23</sup>

### ***Aggravated Suffering***

The widespread suffering of civilians around the world's many conflict zones was aggravated by different factors, such as the forced displacement of civilians, their denying of medical care, food and water insecurity, and environmental change, with the situations in Gaza, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ukraine being among the most dire, with each of them being severely affected by many of the said factors.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross. *The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949*. 2012. pp. 29-31.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Security Council. *Protection of civilians in armed conflict - Report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/385)*. 2024. pp. 9-12; United Nations, Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. *We Must Go Above, Beyond Compliance, Fully Protect Civilians against 'Harms They Are Suffering on Our Watch', Senior Humanitarian Official Tells Security Council (SC 15702)*. 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Human Rights Watch. *2024 Statement by members of the NGO Working Group on the Protection of Civilians*. 2024.

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 2573 (S/RES/2573 (2021))*. 2021. pp. 1-4.

<sup>22</sup> United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 2573 (S/RES/2573 (2021))*. 2021. pp. 1-6.

<sup>23</sup> European Commission. *EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024)*. 2020. pp. 12, 21.

<sup>24</sup> United Nations Security Council. *Protection of civilians in armed conflict - Report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/385)*. 2024. pp. 4-7.



Forced displacement affected 110 million people by the middle of 2023, with 60 percent of them being internally displaced. Additionally, 2,370 instances of interference with medical care were recorded. 117 million people experienced food insecurity, driven mainly by conflicts, with water scarcity also a huge issue. Finally, the ongoing climate crisis only worsened the humanitarian situations around the world through natural catastrophes and changes of the climate.<sup>25</sup>

The crisis in Sudan, considered one of the worst current humanitarian crises, encompasses many of the factors contributing to the aggravated suffering of civilians. Hunger is among the biggest issues experienced by its civilians, with 18 million people facing acute food insecurity and as many as 222.000 children at risk of malnutrition. In addition to that, the Sudanese conflict represents the world's worst displacement crisis, with 10 million people having to flee their homes.<sup>26</sup>

Overall, the trends around the globe concerning civilian safety and protection from conflict have been concerning in the past years. Despite this, the United Nations have continued to fight for the rights of civilians worldwide.

---

<sup>25</sup> United Nations Security Council. *Protection of civilians in armed conflict - Report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/385)*. 2024. p.4; United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 2417 (S/RES/2417 (2018))*. 2018.

<sup>26</sup> United Nations, Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. *Conflict Between Warring Parties in Sudan Pushing Millions to Brink of Famine, Top UN Officials Tell Security Council, Warning Entire Generation Could Be Destroyed*. 2024.





## Bibliography

- European Commission. *EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024)*. 2020. Retrieved 2 January 2025 from: [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu\\_action\\_plan\\_on\\_human\\_rights\\_and\\_democracy\\_2020-2024.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu_action_plan_on_human_rights_and_democracy_2020-2024.pdf)
- Human Rights Watch. *2024 Statement by members of the NGO Working Group on the Protection of Civilians*. 2024. Retrieved 2 January 2025 from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/2024-statement-members-ngo-working-group-protection-civilians>
- International Committee of the Red Cross. *The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949*. 2012. Retrieved 11 January 2025 from <https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/external/doc/en/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-0173.pdf>
- United Nations, Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. *Conflict Between Warring Parties in Sudan Pushing Millions to Brink of Famine, Top UN Officials Tell Security Council, Warning Entire Generation Could Be Destroyed*. 2024. Retrieved 11 January 2025 from <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15634.doc.htm>
- United Nations, Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. *We Must Go Above, Beyond Compliance, Fully Protect Civilians against 'Harms They Are Suffering on Our Watch', Senior Humanitarian Official Tells Security Council (SC 15702)*. 2024. Retrieved 2 January 2025 from: <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15702.doc.htm>
- United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 2417 (S/RES/2417 (2018))*. 2018. Retrieved 11 January 2025 from: [http://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2417\(2018\)](http://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2417(2018))
- United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 2573 (S/RES/2573 (2021))*. 2021. Retrieved 2 January 2025 from: [http://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2573\(2021\)](http://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2573(2021))
- United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 2601 (S/RES/2601 (2021))*. 2021. Retrieved 2 January 2025 from: [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2601\(2021\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2601(2021))
- United Nations Security Council. *Protection of civilians in armed conflict - Report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/385)*. 2024. Retrieved 2 January 2024 from: <https://undocs.org/en/S/2024/385>