The Oxford Process on International Law Protections in Cyberspace

The Oxford Process on International Law Protections in Cyberspace, convened by Professors Dapo Akande and Duncan Hollis, is an initiative of the Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law and Armed Conflict (ELAC) at the Blavatnik School of Government. It was set in motion in May 2020 in partnership with Microsoft and the Government of Japan.

What are the goals of the Oxford Process?

A collaborative effort of leading international legal experts from across the Globe to build consensus around international law protections:

- Aimed at identifying and clarifying the rules of international law applicable to cyber operations targeting particular objects of protection or using particular methods;
- Moving beyond the assertion that international law applies in cyberspace to clarify exactly the extent to which and how it does so.
- Responding to the most urgent problems facing the international community with respect to information and communications technologies and their cyber environment.

What distinguishes the Oxford Process from other initiatives?

- The Oxford Process complements existing initiatives, inter-governmental and academic, that already address the international regulation of information and communication technologies.
- It articulates points of broad consensus on international legal rules. The goal is to identify areas of consensus about what the law prohibits, permits and requires. The emphasis is on unity, not differences.
- Rules of international law are not discussed in the abstract. The Oxford Process looks at specific objects and areas of protection, as well as particular methods of conducting cyber operations by, inter alia, identifying forbidden targets and methods.
- The Oxford Process is chiefly substantive and outcome-driven, in that it seeks to lay out what existing legal prohibitions and protections impose on states rather than the specific legal route of rules or principles that ground the outcomes.
The five Oxford Statements

Over the course of 2020 and 2021, the Process has produced a number of significant outputs, including five Oxford Statements on International Law Protections in Cyberspace, each of which articulates short lists of consensus protections that apply under existing international law, and reports detailing workshop discussions. The Oxford Process has also led to a report on Cyber Due Diligence in International Law, prepared in partnership with the Government of Japan.

More than a hundred international lawyers from all continents have endorsed each of the Oxford Statements. The Statements have subsequently earned recognition by both public and private fora grappling with related problems.

URLs of all Statements:

1. The Oxford Statement on the International Law Protections Against Cyber Operations Targeting the Health Care Sector


3. The Oxford Statement on International Law Protections Against Foreign Electoral Interference Through Digital Means

4. The Oxford Statement on the Regulation of Information Operations and Activities

5. The Oxford Statement on the Regulation of Ransomware Operations

For more information on the Oxford Process, see our website:
https://www.elac.ox.ac.uk/the-oxford-process