This course explores how nations in the postcolonial era define and justify violence against human beings residing within their official national borders in the name of national security. We will begin the course by examining how achieving human security (of the security of persons) has been problematized by patriarchal-based definitions of nation, nationalism, and patriotism; modern-day imperialisms (mainly by Western power and members of the UN Security Council); and present-day attempts to resurrect ancient Muslim caliphates, for example, by Al Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIS). Course materials will guide students in examining how these ideologies collectively have impacted the security of people and communities residing within all nations globally, including: all women; indigenous peoples; members of the LGBTQI community; stateless peoples; individuals who have been unlawfully detained and incarcerated, among others.

We will also examine and critique UN attempts to reach a consensus on a definition of terrorism and how this has problematized the realization of human rights in both declared and undeclared conflicts. In that vein, we will also challenge common definitions of terrorism by examining how official nation-states themselves are consistently affecting acts of terrorism, for example, as evidenced in: Israel’s fostering of illegal Jewish settlements in Palestinian territories; the U.S.’s decade-long drone campaigns in Pakistan and Yemen, which are killing numerous civilians including children; the Syrian regime’s attacks against its own Sunni civilians using illegal barrel-bombs and chemical weapons; India’s excessive violence against peoples residing in the state of Jammu and Kashmir with full impunity; and the U.S.’s engagement in extraordinary rendition, or unlawful detention and torture of terror suspects in secret jails in third-party countries, as well as its activities in Guantanamo Bay.