The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)

What is it?
A 1975 legally binding treaty that bans biological weapons

Membership:
- 186 state parties to the Treaty, including Palestine
- 4 signatories: Egypt, Haiti, Somalia, and Syria
- 7 have neither signed nor ratified: Chad, Comoros, Dijibouti, Eritrea, Israel, Kiribati, and Micronesia

Why is it important?
The first multilateral treaty to ban an entire class of weapon

Prohibitions:
- The development, stockpile, production, or transfer of biological agents and toxins
- Delivery systems, weapons, and other equipment designed to deliver biological agents in an armed conflict
- The transfer of or assistance with acquiring biological weapons or their delivery systems

What should I know?
There is no implementation body to assess treaty compliance

It does not explicitly ban “use” of biological weapons, however, 1996 Final Declaration of the Review Conference says their use is a violation of the convention

It has been violated in the past by several countries:
- Soviet Union: maintained biological weapons program after ratifying BTWC
- Iraq: covert biological weapons program uncovered by the UN Special Commission on Iraq
- North Korea, Iran, Libya, Syria, and Cuba accused of violating treaty by the United States

For more information, visit: www.nti.org