About Statewatch

Monitoring the state and civil liberties

Statewatch was formed in 1991. It is an independent, not for profit group of journalists, researchers, activists, lawyers and academics that monitors civil liberties and the state in Europe.

The predecessor to Statewatch was State Research, 1977-1982. During this period it reported and documented the activities of MI5, Special Branch and the CIA, the use of the Official Secrets Act, the conduct of the British state in the north of Ireland, the policing of strikes and demonstrations and the 1981 uprisings. It was a time when the interventions of the state profoundly affected peoples’ lives.

Thirty years on and Statewatch continues to document issues that are all too often ignored or misrepresented by the mainstream media: the growing remit of police forces, law enforcement and security agencies, the imposition of ever expanding surveillance systems, the transformation of the military-industrial complex, ever more oppressive immigration and asylum policies, the privatisation of the prison system, the growth of institutional racism and the acceptance of the far-right into mainstream politics.

Statewatch also monitors another crucial development on the political and legal landscape: the European state and the implementation of EU justice and home affairs policies. More and more, EU decisions are undermining civil liberties in the Member States.

The aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001 has underscored the importance of Statewatch’s work and increased its workload significantly.

At a crucial time

In the space of just five years, the so-called “war on terrorism” has seriously undermined rights, liberties and democratic standards that had been struggled for and won over centuries.

These changes appear to be not temporary but permanent. The “war on terrorism” has replaced the “cold war” as a legitimating ideology that requires widespread state surveillance and social control of populations.

The balance between freedom and liberty on the one hand and the demands of security on the other no longer exists. The demands of security are dominant and the requirements of policing and security agencies, armed with permanent “emergency” legislation, are becoming the norm.

Statewatch’s work documents this process. It bears testimony to the fact that without vigilance basic freedoms and democratic standards - the freedom of movement, of expression and the right to protest, freedom from surveillance in everyday life, accountability and data protection – will be eroded until, one by one, they are whittled away altogether.
A key source of information

Documenting policy and practice

Over the years Statewatch has gained a reputation for accuracy and reliability. Through its bulletin, website and regular publications, it has become one of the primary sources of information on civil liberties issues in Europe.

The State Research Library in London dates back to the early 1970s and now includes some 10,000 books, pamphlets and reports on civil liberties issues. The SEMDOC collection documents in full the development of EU justice and home affairs policy.

Statewatch bulletin, containing news, feature articles and new material was launched in 1991, together with a searchable online database. The bulletin is now published quarterly and is in its sixteenth year of publication while the online database has grown to more than 25,000 articles, references and documents.

The Statewatch website was launched in 1999 and Statewatch News online followed in 2000. The internet allows Statewatch to react quickly to unfolding events. It also enables Statewatch to publish full-text documentation alongside its analysis, enabling others to draw their own conclusions.

Statewatch.org receives more than 100,000 visitors every month

Effecting change

The strength of Statewatch is its ability to analyse, contextualise and place important issues into the public domain in order to inform and effect change. Information provided by Statewatch is widely used by journalists, NGOs, campaigning organisations, parliaments, lawyers, activists and students.

In addition to its regular publications, Statewatch’s website also includes a number of “observatories” that document the development of specific issues, bringing together draft policies and adopted legislation, analysis from civil society, media reports, critiques and campaigns.

These observatories - there are currently 19 - cover issues such as the global “war on terror”, new frameworks for surveillance and control, freedom of information, the use of “anti-social behaviour” legislation in the UK and the development of “Fortress Europe”.

Through extensive documentation, Statewatch provides a critical link between state policy and its implementation on the ground, enabling people to follow secretive and complex issues and engage in debates ignored by the mainstream media.

Statewatch staff regularly brief journalists, lawyers and activists on civil liberties issues and speak at meetings and conferences. Statewatch also makes regular submissions on policy and practice to parliamentary committees and investigations.

The Statewatch website

Since its launch the Statewatch website has had more than 16 million “hits” (page views).

In 2005 the website had over 4 million “hits” and just under 1 million “user sessions” (unique visits).

Statewatch’s searchable database contains all material from News Online, the Bulletin and the State Research archive - more than 25,000 records.

Over 7,000 people have signed up to the Statewatch e-mail list to receive news and updates.

More than 100,000 external web pages contain links into www.statewatch.org.

Statewatch observatories

Statewatch’s observatories on EU surveillance policy cover the interception and retention of telecommunications, the surveillance of movement, law enforcement databases, EU-US agreements and data protection law.

The observatories on EU freedom of information provide a comprehensive guide to the legislation, case-law and practice of the EU institutions.

“In defence of freedom and democracy” was launched in the aftermath of 11 September 2001 to document new laws and policies affecting civil liberties in response to the “war on terrorism”. It includes 60 in-depth analyses by Statewatch.

Statewatch’s observatory on “terrorist lists” documents the UK, EU, UN and US “proscription” regimes, challenging Executive and politically motivated decisions to ban or freeze assets of groups and individuals branded as “terrorists”. Another observatory monitors CIA “renditions” from Europe.

“ASBOwatch” monitors the increasing use of “anti-social behaviour” orders (ASBOs) and legislation as a catch-all tool for criminalising individuals, while avoiding due process.
Making the news

Investigative journalism, critical analysis

Statewatch's investigative journalism, exposure of secret policy-making and critical analysis of state practices regularly make the news, putting issues on the agenda and encouraging critical debate. Examples include:

Global telephone interception plans
In 1997 Statewatch revealed that the EU had secretly adopted standards drawn-up by the FBI for requirements on service providers to facilitate the interception of telecommunications. With the USA, the EU then pushed other countries around the world to adopt the same requirements.

Racist stop-and-search
In 1998 Statewatch sparked widespread debate with the first critical analysis of the first Home Office statistics on race and ethnicity in "stop-and-search". Statewatch cross-referenced the raw data provided by police forces with that of the census, finding that black people were almost eight times more likely to be stopped by police than white people.

Policing reform in Northern Ireland
In 2000 Statewatch produced a point-by-point analysis of the extent to which the government's draft policing Bill for Northern Ireland met each of the Patten Commission's 175 recommendations for reform (one of the terms of the Good Friday agreement).

EU-NATO secrecy deal spikes FOI laws
In 2000 Statewatch exposed an agreement between the EU and NATO, adopted in secret, on the exchange of classified information. This "summer-time coup" had completely undermined EU freedom of information rules, prompting the European Parliament and the Dutch government to sue the EU Council at the Court of Justice.

The G8 summit in Genoa
482 people injured, 280 arrests, 2,093 people turned back at the borders, Carlo Giuliani shot dead by police ... Statewatch produced a series of timely reports on the demonstrations in Genoa, Italy in 2001.

Mandatory telecommunications surveillance
In 2002 Statewatch published a confidential EU proposal to impose an obligation on phone and internet companies to retain all customer usage records for 12-24 months for police access. As a result the proposal was shelved until 2004.

One-sided UK-US extradition treaty
Statewatch published the first analysis, together with the full-text, of a new extradition agreement between the UK and US. It showed that the UK had dropped the prima facie evidence requirement on the US but that the US-side had retained it. Statewatch was first again with the news that a Statutory Instrument had been used to implement the Treaty in the UK during the Christmas holidays.

Fingerprinting Europe
In 2003 Statewatch published EU proposals to fingerprint all applicants for visas and residence permits as part of a system modelled on the “US Visit” scheme. Statewatch then exposed the EU's intention to go much further than the US by fingerprinting all of its citizens as well.

"Nothing is true, nor is it a lie?"
In the summer of 2003 Statewatch translated and published a powerful and moving essay by Nieves Garcia Benito on the indifference of Europe to migrants who die trying to make the crossing from Morocco to Spain. The essay addressed a debate in Spain sparked by a photograph of two tourists sunbathing near the corpse of a man washed up onto the beach.

Authoritarian EU counter-terrorism plans
In the wake of the bombing of the Madrid transport system on 11 March 2004 the EU rushed through a far-reaching 57 point counter-terrorism plan with no democratic debate. In the few days that passed between the drafting and adoption of the plans Statewatch produced a 42 page analysis of the proposals, showing that 27 of them bore little or no relation to the events in Spain. The “Statewatch Scoreboard” has been downloaded more than 75,000 times.

Illegal CIA "rendition" flights
In 2006, following the establishment of committee of inquiry by the European Parliament into the CIA's "rendition" programme, Statewatch published 200 documents submitted to the inquiry. Most of the material was unpublished. It documented illegal US activities and European collusion in them.
A key source of information

Documenting EU Justice and Home Affairs policy

The Statewatch European Monitoring and Documentation Centre (SEMDOC) was launched at the London offices of the European Parliament in 1997 with the support of over 50 groups and individuals from across Europe. Its aim is to encourage critical research and debate on EU justice and home affairs policies. These measures have increasingly impacted on laws and practices in the member states, undermining the rights of everyone in Europe.

SEMDOC’s website contains full-text documentation and analysis. The Statewatch “legislative observatory” was created in 1999, following the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty, and has documented every piece of EU legislation to be adopted and proposed in the field of justice and home affairs, together with relevant international treaties, case-law and EU “communications”. More than 500 specific measures are now detailed.

The SEMDOC website also covers the period leading-up to the creation of the EU’s “Third Pillar” (including the “TREVI”, Maastricht and Schengen frameworks) and includes a searchable bibliographic database of hard-copy documents produced between 1976 and 2000. This collection of 7,000 documents pre-dates the EU’s public register of Council documents (established in 1999), providing a unique historical archive.

Statewatch's independent monitoring and analysis of EU justice and home affairs policy is the most comprehensive on the internet.

Working for openness and democracy in the EU

In the course of its work Statewatch has constantly challenged the culture of secrecy in EU decision-making. It began applying for EU documents concerning justice and home affairs policy in 1994, going on to lodge eight cases with the European Ombudsman against excessive secrecy in the Council of the EU. All were successful, establishing new rights for all those applying for EU documents.

As a result of Statewatch’s cases, the right of the European Ombudsman to investigate secrecy complaints was written into the Amsterdam Treaty together with a commitment to “enshrine” the public’s right of access to information in an EC Regulation. During the negotiation of the Regulation Statewatch led a coalition of NGOs in a campaign for openness and citizens’ rights.

Statewatch continues to apply for documents and challenge the excessive secrecy of the EU institutions as part of its ongoing campaign for freedom of information in Europe.

Through its publications and analysis, Statewatch has always challenged EU powers where they threaten rights and liberties or undermine accountability and democratic standards. During the drafting of the EU Constitution, Statewatch provided timely access to documents and analysis of debates. With other civil liberties groups and NGOs, Statewatch also produced several joint submissions to publicise and place their concerns on record.

On Statewatch’s work

“Globalisation with its trademark dominant neoliberal economic, political and social thinking has thrown up in Europe a counterbalance in Statewatch. Through its rigorous attention to detail and indefatigable monitoring of a myriad of committees in Brussels, it helps to unravel and make palatable for ordinary consumption the workings of intergovernmental decision-making which impacts so much on all our lives.”- Courtenay Griffiths QC

“Statewatch’s work is the vital link between new laws and policies and the reality of policing of our communities. It provides us with the framework to locate, identify and challenge the draconian legislation which undermines our fundamental rights.”– Asad Rehman, Newham Monitoring Project

“Awards for Statewatch

In 2002 and 2004 Tony Bunyan, Statewatch Director, was named as one of the European Voice’s 50 most influential people in Europe (the EV50). The awards recognised Statewatch’s campaign for openness in the EU (2002) and its work on the “war on terror” and civil liberties (2004).

In 2001 the European Information Association gave Statewatch the Chadwick Healy award for Achievement in European Information.

In 2000 Statewatch received a “Champion of Privacy” award from Privacy International.

In 1998 the Campaign for Freedom of Information gave “Statewatch an award for challenging EU secrecy.”
Working across borders

The European Civil Liberties Network (ECLN)

The ECLN was set up by Statewatch and eight partner organisations in October 2005. It is a long term project to develop a platform for groups working on civil liberties issues across Europe. Fifty groups have now joined the ECLN and the network continues to grow.

A collection of "Essays in Defence of Civil Liberties and Democracy" was produced to mark the launch of the ECLN. The essays are available on the ECLN website and will be published in paperback by Spokesman books in 2006/7.

The ECLN website includes a civil liberties action "noticeboard" that publicises events and conferences, new research, campaigns and demonstrations. It also includes news feeds, a searchable database, links and a free e-mail list.

www.ecln.org

Research and campaigns

Statewatch works with a broad range of groups and individuals to promote civil liberties, social justice and democratic standards in Europe and beyond. It campaigned for openness in the EU with the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), European Environmental Bureau (EEB), European Citizens’ Advisory Service (ECAS) and the Meijers Committee.

An "International Campaign Against Mass Surveillance" was launched in 2005 by Statewatch, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Focus on the Global South, the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group and the Friends Service Committee on National Legislation. More than 200 organisations around the world signed-up to support the campaign.

The "Policy Laundering Project" was launched by the ACLU, Privacy International and Statewatch in 2005. "Policy laundering" means the use of foreign and international fora to push for the adoption of policies that would not win direct approval in the domestic political process. In a rapidly globalising world, this technique is becoming a central means by which states and governments seek to overcome civil liberties objections to privacy-invading policies.

In conjunction with the Campaign Against Criminalising Communities (CAMPACC) and the Human Rights and Social Justice Institute (London Metropolitan University) Statewatch monitors the UK, EU and UN "terrorist lists" and the proscription of groups and individuals said to be connected to terrorism.

Research by Statewatch has been commissioned by the Transnational Institute ("Militarism and Globalisation" project), the Open Society Justice Initiative (project on monitoring racial profiling), Democratic Audit (project on counter-terrorism policy, forthcoming) and the European Parliament (on the impact of the Amsterdam treaty on justice and home affairs policy).

Statewatch is represented on or affiliated to a number of organisations including the European Network on Peace and Human Rights, the Privacy International Advisory Board, the Migreurop Network, the Freedom of Information Advocates Network and NO2ID (UK).

"We consider it an obligation not just to research and analyse but also to present and defend our views and learn from the experience of others" - Tony Bunyan
Critical research

Arming Big Brother: the EU’s Security Research Programme
Documents EU expenditure on “homeland security” research and the role played by arms company lobbyists in securing billions of euros in funding. Warns that the EU is fostering the expansion of an unaccountable security-industrial complex with far-reaching implications for civil liberties.
Published in 2006 by TNI and Statewatch.

Journalism, Civil Liberties and the "War on Terrorism"
A sixty page assessment of how states are sacrificing civil liberties and free expression in the name of an all too often illusory security.
Published on “World Press Freedom day” 2005 by the International Federation of Journalists and Statewatch.

Data Protection in the Police Sector in Europe: a Failure to Regulate
Looks at debates on so-called racial profiling and the fact that despite condemnation, European states continue to collect data on ethnicity and religion and use it prejudicially in their policing, immigration and counter-terrorism policies.
Published in 2005 by the Open Society Justice Initiative.

Secrecy and Openness in the European Union
An “online book” on the history and struggle for freedom of information in the EU. With hundreds of live “links” this book documents the roles played by the EU institutions, the member states and civil society in the adoption of the 2001 EC Regulation on public access to EU documents.
Published in 2002 (and updated in 2003) by “freedominfo.org” and the National Security Archive.

On Globalisation of Control: Towards an Integrated Surveillance System in Europe
The first in-depth analysis of the databases and surveillance mechanisms being put in place by the EU. Examines “Europol”, the “Schengen Information System” and a plethora of additional systems in the dual context of globalisation and social control.
Published in 1999 by Statewatch.

Statewatching the new Europe: a handbook on the European state
A 208 page paperback covering the pre-Maastricht development of the EU’s “Third Pillar”, a country-by-country analysis of EU police and security services, immigration and asylum policy, racism and anti-terrorism in the north of Ireland.
Published in 1993 by Statewatch.

On Globalisation of Control: Towards an Integrated Surveillance System in Europe
The first in-depth analysis of the databases and surveillance mechanisms being put in place by the EU. Examines “Europol”, the “Schengen Information System” and a plethora of additional systems in the dual context of globalisation and social control.
Published in 1999 by Statewatch.

Statewatch bulletin
The first Statewatch bulletin was published in 1991. The bulletin contains news and feature articles and a round-up of new material on policing, law, civil liberties, prisons, immigration, Europe and the far right.
The bulletin is published by Statewatch and printed by Russell Press.
Support Statewatch’s work

Statewatch is not a “lobby group”, it is an independent research an education trust operated by a registered charity. Statewatch is not aligned to any political party or political agenda, it is dedicated to the preservation of civil liberties and democratic standards in Europe.

Sustained and substantial output hides the fact that Statewatch only has a small staff and is dependent upon time given free of charge by contributors and volunteers. It works on a small annual budget and is funded entirely through grants, donations and subscriptions. Its core funding comes from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.

Funding is needed to retain and recruit new staff and contributors and to secure Statewatch’s long-term future. Additional funding will enable Statewatch to extend its coverage, to share all of its resources online and free-of-charge, and to continue to produce high-quality investigative journalism and critical research into the ongoing attack on liberties and democracy.

A message from our chair, Gareth Peirce

"In routinely placing complex policies and increased state powers in the public domain, Statewatch performs a function that no other organisation fulfils. One is driven to wonder what it could have accomplished, and could accomplish in the future, were it to have even a tiny percentage of the resources enjoyed by other organisations.

It is clear that Statewatch’s only and continuing priority is to remain faithful to its raison d’etre, namely to be principled, proactive and honest. In this age of heightened and increasingly repressive consolidation of state powers, there is no alternative than to have in place an experienced organisation which regards its duty to monitor and to give voice, constantly, to what it observes.”

Become a friend of Statewatch

Your support is crucial. By becoming a Friend of Statewatch and donating just £10 a month or more you can support future monitoring of the state and civil liberties. As a registered charity, Statewatch can claim an additional 28 pence on every pound you give through the UK Gift Aid scheme. A monthly donation of £10, for example, means Statewatch receives £153.60 year.

As a Friend of Statewatch you will receive all Statewatch publications (the quarterly bulletin, planned yearbook and research findings) as well as access to Statewatch’s subscriber websites (SEMDOC and the Statewatch database).

You can also support Statewatch by making a donation online using our secure payment facility.

Standing order mandate

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*Statewatch* is the operating name of registered UK charity no. 282624

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Thank you!

Please complete and return to Statewatch, PO Box 1516, London, N16 0EW. UK. We will forward it to your branch.