



European Civil Liberties Network

LAUNCH OF THE EUROPEAN CIVIL LIBERTIES NETWORK AIMS TO PUT PEOPLES' RIGHTS FIRST

For release Wednesday 19 October 2005 at 11.30 hours *

The struggle for civil liberties in Europe took a step forward with the launching of a new network in Brussels to defend peoples' rights. Campaigners say the new group is urgently needed to counter unprecedented attacks on democratic freedoms.

The European Civil Liberties Network (ECLN) brings together groups and individuals who share the common objectives of seeking to create a European society based on freedom and equality, of fundamental civil liberties and personal and political freedoms, of free movement and freedom of information, and equal rights for minorities.

Tony Bunyan, Director of *Statewatch* and joint coordinator of the ECLN, said *"We are living at a moment in history when civil liberties and democracy are under attack as never before and the need for a collective response to counter these threats has never been greater"*.

Bunyan called on groups and individuals to support the ECLN: *"if the ever-increasing demands of law enforcement continue to go unchallenged in the name of the "war on terror", the face of liberty and democracy in Europe will be changed for ever"*, he said.

"With policies on the surveillance of all telecommunications, the wholesale surveillance and restriction of movement, mandatory population registers and security files, the European Union is starting to display some of the worst excesses of the Cold War era", said Ben Hayes, joint coordinator of the ECLN. *"We want the people of Europe to understand and question what is being decided and done in their name"*, he added.

The enormity of the task ahead is indicated in a collection of fourteen essays published today to mark the launch of the ECLN. The collection deals with a range of issues - contemporary racism and "Islamaphobia", the "war on terror" and human rights, "speech crime" and deportation, EU policy-making, the politics and technologies of surveillance, immigration and asylum, freedom of information, the criminal justice system and the rights of children.

*** The press conference is at 10:30 hours in:
Maalbeek room, Residence Palace, Block C, 155 Rue de la Loi, Brussels**

The ECLN website: <http://www.ecln.org/>

The ECLN has a dedicated website which will include:

- details of all participating organisations;
- a “noticeboard” for civil liberties groups detailing new research, campaigns, conferences and demonstrations;
- RSS feeds containing the latest civil liberties news headlines;
- a searchable database;
- a fully automated e-mail “alerts” system;
- and background information on the ECLN.

Essays: <http://www.ecln.org/essays.html>

The full collection of essays published to mark the launch of the ECLN is also available (free of charge) on the ECLN website.

The ECLN launch is supported by Garden Court Chambers (London)



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