



Issue 02/23, 2 February

Special report: Spycops in Spain

EU asylum plans: unaccountability and failure

First draft of artificial intelligence convention published

UK government assault on basic freedoms continues

And: Draft European Council conclusions, Dutch police surveillance case, travel surveillance, and more.

Special report: Spycops in Spain

An undercover police officer who infiltrated social movements in Barcelona using sexual and emotional relationships to win trust and build his cover [has been unmasked](#). This is the second such case discovered in the last year. The most recent case involved an officer going under the name Daniel Hernández Pons as part of an operation ultimately falling under the responsibility of the Spanish interior ministry, currently headed by Fernando Grande-Marlaska of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE).

The report comes via the Catalan newspaper *La Directa*, who have also provided *Statewatch* with [a translation of an interview](#) with one of the women targeted by Pons. She told the paper:

"Nothing can justify the state and the police infiltrating my personal life. I feel like he raped me, I've been with someone who I now realise I didn't know at all, and that makes me genuinely afraid. What he has done to me as a woman is very serious, but I think it is equally serious how he embedded himself in the lives of his friends and the political activities of spaces like La Cinètica. I feel knocked for six, but our collective response gives me strength."

The parallels with [the activities of the UK's spycops](#) are as striking as they are disturbing.

EU asylum plans: unaccountability and failure

The Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR) is one of the key pieces of legislation in the EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum, and the latest version drafted by the Swedish Presidency of the Council introduces [an array of unaccountable new decision-making bodies](#). The plans build on a concept circulated by the Czech authorities last year and introduce the concept of "adaptable responsibility", aimed at letting member states derogate from the law when they consider it necessary.

The AMMR also includes plans for a permanent refugee relocation mechanism, but in the meantime a "voluntary solidarity mechanism" has been set up. Established last year, the aim is to move refugees from states of arrival in the Mediterranean to elsewhere in the bloc – albeit with the possibility of states offering [alternative forms of "solidarity"](#), or simply not participating at all. The minutes of a meeting in early December show that at the time, [just 207 people had been relocated since June](#).

First draft of artificial intelligence convention published

Should the first international legal instrument dealing with artificial intelligence be negotiated in secret? Unfortunately for the public, the government of the USA thinks so, and the institutions of the Council of Europe agree.

The instrument in question is the proposed Council of Europe Convention on Artificial Intelligence, Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law. An initial draft was circulated for comment amongst Council of Europe states and observers last summer, a "0.1" draft is currently doing the rounds. The USA has succeeded in getting civil society organisations excluded from the ongoing drafting process. The EU is also keen to stall the process [until its own AI Act is approved](#).

Statewatch obtained a copy of the "zero draft" of the Convention; the first round of comments from states, corporations and civil society groups; and the draft methodology for assessing the risks posed by AI systems. The submission from the Swiss government calls for the draft to be made public. [We are happy to oblige](#).

UK government assault on basic freedoms continues

The UK government is responding to discontent in time-honoured fashion: through repression. With living standards falling, working conditions worsening and incomes dropping, there has been a wave of strikes across the country, almost entirely in the public sector. The government's proposed solution? Forced labour, through the introduction of "work notices" that will oblige people to go to work during strikes, or lose their job. [We joined a wide array of groups in calling for the legislation to be dropped](#), although it has been rushed through the House of Commons and is [now in the House of Lords](#).

At the same time, a crackdown on protest is also being propelled through parliament. The Public Order Bill includes a range of anti-protest measures including "Serious Disruption Prevention Orders" that would it possible "to ban named individuals from protesting, associating with certain people at certain times, and even using the internet in certain ways." We added our name to [a briefing sent to members of the House of Lords](#) – a majority of whom have now [taken a stand against the worst of the measures](#), setting the stage for a standoff with MPs in the House of Commons.

We need your support!

Help us expose and oppose intrusive and unwarranted state powers!

If you appreciate our work, please support us by becoming a Friend of Statewatch.

[Donate £](#)

[Donate €](#)

News and analysis

EU: Tracking the Pact: Only 207 refugees relocated so far via “voluntary solidarity mechanism”

"Increased external action" against migration: draft European Council conclusions

Public hearing at Dutch court over police surveillance of activist

UK: Draconian anti-strike legislation is unnecessary and gives vast power to government ministers

UK: Police and intelligence agencies to increase joint work, with reduced privacy safeguards

EU: Travel surveillance: member state comments on "improving compliance" with court ruling

Council of Europe Convention on Artificial Intelligence: zero draft and member state submissions

UK: Stop the Public Order Bill

Tracking the Pact: Unaccountable new decision-making bodies and "adaptable responsibility"

Submission for the EU Rule of Law Report 2023

Frontex and deportations, 2006-21

News

31 January

[EU: Tracking the Pact: Only 207 refugees relocated so far via “voluntary solidarity mechanism”](#)

The solidarity is voluntary, and there's not enough of it to go around. Six months ago the EU established a “voluntary solidarity mechanism” for relocating refugees from states such as Italy, Greece and Malta. Now an internal Commission paper states that the entire scheme could be in jeopardy due to a failure by other EU member states to actually accept people for relocation. So far, only 207 people have benefited from the scheme.

31 January

[“Increased external action” against migration: draft European Council conclusions](#)

On 9 and 10 February the European Council will meet to approve conclusions on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the economy and migration. A draft version of the conclusions, published here, reinforces longstanding calls to increase the externalisation of migration controls.

30 January

[Public hearing at Dutch court over police surveillance of activist](#)

Frank van der Linde is a Dutch political activist who has spent five years trying to find out exactly what information the police hold on him and why. On 30 March, he will ask the Court of Amsterdam to order an external independent institution to carry out a forensic examination of the Dutch police database, with the aim of guaranteeing his right to access his personal data. The ruling will have an impact not just in the Netherlands but across the EU.

30 January

[UK: Draconian anti-strike legislation is unnecessary and gives vast power to government ministers](#)

The UK government's proposed Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill is being rushed through parliament. It will allow the government to force employees in certain public roles to go to work through the imposition of “work notices” when faced with strike action. A letter to the Minister for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Grant Schapps, calls for a halt to the “plans for an unwarranted curtailment of freedom of assembly and association.” Coordinated by Liberty, it has been signed by 50 organisations, including Statewatch.

30 January

[UK: Police and intelligence agencies to increase joint work, with reduced privacy safeguards](#)

The Data Protection and Digital Information Bill will degrade privacy and data protection safeguards in policing. Under certain conditions, law enforcement agencies (LEAs) will be able to circumvent rights protections by acting with the same powers as intelligence agencies. Laws safeguarding personal data during transfers will be diluted and the means for oversight will be significantly reduced.

25 January

[EU: Travel surveillance: member state comments on “improving compliance” with court ruling](#)

Last June the EU's Court of Justice massively restricted the scope of the Passenger Name Record (PNR) Directive, which allows the mass surveillance and profiling of air passengers. According to the ruling, member states should make substantial changes to their practices in order to uphold fundamental rights. Instead, they would like to find ways to maintain maximum

data collection to continue the hunt for "persons of interest" - yet such practices are incompatible with the rule of law.

24 January

[Council of Europe Convention on Artificial Intelligence: zero draft and member state submissions](#)

The Council of Europe is working on a Convention on Artificial Intelligence, Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law. Drafting is ongoing on what will be the first international convention on the issue of AI. Civil society organisations have been excluded from the process at the behest of the USA. We are publishing the "zero draft" of the Convention, the draft risk assessment methodology and comments on the draft from a number of member states, Council of Europe committees, corporations and civil society groups.

24 January

[UK: Stop the Public Order Bill](#)

Having failed to get through a number of anti-protest measures in last year's Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act, the government is now seeking to put them on the books through the Public Order Bill, which is being discussed in the House of Lords. A new briefing drafted by Liberty and signed by 74 civil society organisations, including Statewatch, calls on peers "to defend protest rights and support amendments to mitigate the Public Order Bill's worst effects." These include "Serious Disruption Prevention Orders" that would make it possible "to ban named individuals from protesting, associating with certain people at certain times, and even using the internet in certain ways."

23 January

[Tracking the Pact: Unaccountable new decision-making bodies and "adaptable responsibility"](#)

The latest Council draft of the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR) includes a substantial number of changes, including the introduction of the concept of "adaptable responsibility" and an array of new bodies dominated by the member states intended to govern the implementation of EU migration policy.

Analysis

23 January

[Submission for the EU Rule of Law Report 2023](#)

On 20 January, we filed a submission to the European Commission's public consultation for its Rule of Law Report 2023, which will cover developments in 2022. Our submission highlights a number of topics - in particular regarding rule of law issues at EU level, surveillance, access to an effective remedy and the criminalisation of the press - that have not received sufficient attention in previous iterations of the report.

12 January

[Frontex and deportations, 2006-21](#)

Data covering 16 years of Frontex's deportation operations shows the expanding role of the agency. We have produced a series of data visualisations to show the number of people deported in Frontex-coordinated operations, the member states involved, the destination states, and the costs.

New material

- [Asylum, immigration and borders](#)
- [Civil liberties](#)
- [Law](#)
- [Military](#)
- [Policing](#)
- [Privacy and data protection](#)
- [Racism and discrimination](#)
- [Secrecy and transparency](#)
- [Security and intelligence](#)
- [Surveillance](#)

Asylum, immigration and borders

Council of Europe, 2 February

[The Italian government should consider withdrawing Decree Law which could hamper NGO search and rescue operations at sea](#)

“Commissioner Mijatović calls on the government to consider withdrawing or revise the Decree Law No. 1/2023. The Decree’s provisions could hamper NGO search and rescue operations and, therefore, be at variance with Italy’s obligations under human rights and international law. The Commissioner also notes that, in practice, NGO vessels have been assigned distant places of safety to disembark persons rescued at sea, such as ports in Central and Northern Italy.”

Human Rights Watch, 1 February

[Italy Reups Funding to Force Migrants Back to Libya](#)

“In its obsession to keep migrants and asylum seekers away from its shores, Italy is paying for tens of thousands of people to be intercepted and returned to Libya, where they face abuses that the UN describes as possible crimes against humanity.

Italy’s Memorandum of Understanding on Migration with Libya will be automatically renewed on February 2 for three years, after the November 22 date for making changes passed.”

See: [Appeal to the Italian Government, to UNHCR and IOM for the immediate withdrawal of the Italy-Libya Memorandum](#) (February 2022)

La Cimade, 1 February

[Traité de Le Touquet: 20 ans d’accords meurtriers à la frontière franco-britannique](#) Le Touquet treaty: 20 years of deadly agreements at the French-British border]

Public statement by 60 associations on the agreement’s 20th anniversary.

Intro (translated): “On occasion of the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Le Touquet agreements on French-British cooperation on the externalised management of the Channel

and North Sea borders, 60 associations publish a joint manifesto to demand alternative policies at this border that are respectful of human rights.”

EUobserver, 1 February

[**EU Commission wants drones for Bulgaria on Turkey border**](#)

“The European Commission wants to shore up the land border between Bulgaria and Turkey with drones.

“We can strengthen the border with management capabilities,” European Commission president Von der Leyen told MEPs on Wednesday (1 February).

“We can also provide infrastructure and equipment like drones and radar and other means of surveillance,” she said.

The statement comes after Austria's chancellor said he would lobby the European Union for €2bn in funding for Bulgaria to fortify its border with Turkey.”

Council of Europe Expert Council on NGO Law, 31 January

[**Opinion on the compatibility with European standards of Italian Decree Law No. 1 of 2 January 2023 on the management of migratory flows**](#)

Includes legal and substantive criticism of law decree 1/2023, including violations of the law of the sea, an intention to create a “chilling effect” for sea rescue NGOs through the risk of legal sanctions, delaying rescues, causing additional costs and trying to assign crews role that state officials should undertake. Asks for the decree to be revoked until after due consultations and debate have taken place, to be replaced by measures that comply with European standards.

UK Home Office, 31 January

[**Leadership of small boats operation returns to the Home Office**](#)

“The newly created Small Boats Operational Command (SBOC), which is part of Border Force, brings together the government’s response to small boats under a single integrated structure, enhancing the work conducted alongside the military last year.

To support this, 730 additional staff will be recruited, with 100 of these located inside its UK headquarters, while the remainder will bolster operations.

New air and maritime capabilities including new drones, boats, land-based radar and cameras, will also be introduced under SBOC. This will aid our ability to track vessels on the water, identify pilots and help to bring those responsible to justice.

The SBOC, which will be led in the interim by director Duncan Capps, will strengthen existing capabilities to oversee operations with the French to disrupt crossings, save lives at sea and ensure the effective processing of arrivals in the UK.”

Le Monde, 30 January

[**Le Danemark va systématiquement accorder l’asile aux Afghanes**](#)

Denmark will systematically grant Afghan females asylum due to the deterioration of the living standards of women and girls in Afghanistan since the Taliban came to power.

RFI, 30 January

[French cabinet to table new, 'balanced' immigration legislation](#)

“With plans for the expulsion of "delinquent foreigners," the overhaul of France's asylum system, and an effort to bring some undocumented workers in from the cold, the French government's latest immigration bill will be presented to the cabinet this week.”

We Are Solomon, 27 January

[Exclusive: 'Whistleblowers' Pile Pressure on EU Asylum Agency Chief After Dramatic Reshuffle](#)

“Anonymous employees from the EU's Asylum Agency (EUAA) have accused the agency's Executive Director, Nina Gregori, of giving “misleading” information to a committee of the European Parliament, days after she announced a sweeping reshuffle that left a swathe of top managerial posts vacant.”

Swedish presidency of the Council of the EU, 26 January

[Presidency statement: Reducing the pressure of irregular migration and ensuring effective return](#)

An 8-point plan that begins with the following:

“1. The migratory situation in the EU is strained. Some Member States are under strong pressure at the moment. There is an urgent need to strengthen the external borders, increase returns, and prevent irregular migration.”

[Sara Creta](#), 26 January

“The new Italian proposal to speed up the process of returning undocumented migrants to their country of origin is called “accompanied forced return”. It was presented today by @Viminale during the EU interior ministers in Sweden.”

EU Agency for Asylum, 25 January **[Afghanistan: Taliban restrictions on women and girls amount to persecution](#)**

“The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) has published an updated joint assessment of the situation in Afghanistan. In newly published Country Guidance, it concludes that women and girls are at risk of persecution under the Taliban and, therefore, are in general eligible for refugee status in Europe.”

The Guardian, 25 January

[Asylum-seeking families with children could face removal from UK to Rwanda](#)

“Families with children seeking asylum in the UK are being considered for forced removal to Rwanda, according to a Home Office minister.

Immigration minister Robert Jenrick told an evidence session at parliament's women and equalities committee on Wednesday that, while there were no plans to remove unaccompanied child asylum seekers to the east African country, families with children are being considered for removal.”

euronews, 25 January

['There are bodies in the forest': Missing migrants worry activists on Lithuania-Belarus border](#)

"The Lithuanian-Belarusian border is littered with the bodies of migrants, who have died trying to enter the EU, human rights groups have alleged.

Sienos Grupe, a Lithuanian humanitarian organisation, has collected a list of around 30 people, whose families lost contact with them on Europe's eastern frontier."

euronews, 25 January

[Brussels unveils plan to boost returns of irregular migrants](#)

"The European Commission presented "a new operation strategy" on Tuesday to increase the return of irregular migrants."

European Commission wants "significant increased returns to third countries where there are no major political obstacles" and deportations to "defined third countries... in the next weeks"

See: [Towards an operational strategy for more effective returns](#)

Home Office, 23 January

UK: **[Immigration enforcement surge since pledge to tackle illegal working](#)**

"A total of 1,152 immigration enforcement visits have taken place across the UK to identify illegal working since 11 December, marking an almost 10% rise on visits completed in the previous 5 weeks."

The Guardian, 21 January

UK: **[Revealed: scores of child asylum seekers kidnapped from Home Office hotel](#)**

"Dozens of asylum-seeking children have been kidnapped by gangs from a Brighton hotel run by the Home Office in a pattern apparently being repeated across the south coast, an Observer investigation can reveal."

ECRE, 20 January

[EU Eastern Borders: MSF Closes Operations in Latvia and Lithuania over Violent Pushbacks as Polish Border with Belarus Sees More Deaths](#)

"Latvia initiates criminal cases against NGO activists and Lithuania seeks to formalise prevention of entry as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) suspends operations in both countries due to violent pushbacks. Meanwhile, four bodies have been recovered at Poland's border with Belarus."

ECRE, 20 January

[Atlantic Route and Spain: EU's Strategic Partner Toughens Prison Sentences of 13 Migrants, Border & Migration Policies Blamed for Loss of Lives on Migratory Routes, Vulnerable Migrants Exposed to "Levels of Exploitation Close to Slavery" in Canary Islands](#)

"Morocco increases the prison sentences of 13 migrants from two years and a half to three years after Melilla massacre. Meanwhile, people continue to take life-threatening journeys to

reach Spain despite the death of 11,286 people at the Spanish borders in the last five years. Migrants, in particular those without papers, are exposed to “levels of exploitation close to slavery” in different Spanish regions including the Canary Islands.”

CCMA, 19 January

France/Spain: [Retorns en calent a Port Bou: migrants deixats enmig del no-res](#)

At the Spanish-French border between Portbou and Cerbere, refugees are regularly subject to 'hot returns' by French police: an estimated 5,000 people last year.

euronews, 19 January

[New Frontex chief vows to end illegal pushbacks of migrants at border](#)

“The new head of the EU’s border agency vowed on Thursday to end the practice of illegal pushbacks and ensure respect of fundamental rights as Frontex is being called upon to boost the number of returns.”

Civil liberties

The Guardian, 30 January

UK: [Peers deliver several blows to government’s anti-protest bill](#)

“A government bill aimed at cracking down on protest has suffered a number of setbacks in the House of Lords, setting the stage for a tense showdown between parliament’s two chambers.

Peers inflicted a number of defeats on the wide-ranging public order bill, which is aimed at curbing guerrilla tactics used by protest groups.”

See: [UK: Stop the Public Order Bill](#)

The Independent, 29 January

[UK strikes: Government’s new bill will lead to more walk outs, 50 leading rights groups warn](#)

The Bill would hand ministers ‘vast powers’ to curb strike action, as well as permitting them to amend current and future laws with little scrutiny from Parliament, groups have warned.

See: [UK: Draconian anti-strike legislation is unnecessary and gives vast power to government ministers](#)

Investigate Europe, 26 January

[EU court forces access to files of Europe’s most important lawmaker](#)

“Judges at the European Court of Justice have once again rejected secrecy in legislative negotiations in the Council of the EU. Their ruling reads like a lesson in democracy.

EU governments must give citizens and journalists access to all related documents during negotiations on upcoming EU laws. This must include individual government’s opinion on the respective draft law. In a decision made on Wednesday, the judges of the General Court at the

European Court of Justice, clearly rejected the previous secrecy of negotiations by Europe's most powerful legislator."

Access-info, 26 January

[Malta: Access Info wins Court of Appeal ruling that all EU citizens have a right to submit information requests](#)

"Malta's Court of Appeal has ruled in favour of Access Info that the Maltese government was discriminatory and violated the rights of EU citizens when it refused to register an information request by a non-Maltese citizen."

The Guardian, 25 January

[UK placed in third tier in global index of free expression](#)

"The UK has been ranked only in the third tier of a new global index of freedom of expression due to what was described as the "chilling effect" of government policies, policing and intimidation of journalists in the legal system."

Police Professional, 24 January

UK: **[Plans to restrict ownership of bespoke encrypted mobile phones](#)**

"Proposals being put out for public consultation on Tuesday (January 24) include a new offence of the making, modification, supply, offer to supply and possession of articles where there is strong suspicion they are being used for serious crime."

European Court of Human Rights, 23 January

Lithuania: **[Labelling a book of fairy tales as harmful to children solely because of LGBTI content breached the Convention](#)**

"The Court found that the measures against the applicant's book had intended to limit children's access to information depicting same-sex relationships as essentially equivalent to different-sex relationships.

In particular it could not see how, according to the national courts and the Government, certain passages – a princess and a shoemaker's daughter sleeping in one another's arms after their wedding – had been sexually explicit. Nor was it convinced by the Government's argument that the book had promoted same-sex families over others. To the contrary, the fairy tales had advocated respect for and acceptance of all members of society in a fundamental aspect of their lives, namely a committed relationship.

As a result, it concluded that restricting children's access to such information had not pursued any aims that it could accept as legitimate."

London Review of Books, 19 January

[At the Deportation Tribunal](#), Luke de Noronha

First-hand accounts of experiences at deportation tribunals, with a special focus on Jamaicans. "Deportation policies make much of the idea that law-abiding citizens are threatened by outsiders and interlopers. This doesn't correspond to reality."

Byline Times, 16 January

UK: [**Millions Could Lose Right to Vote as Vast Majority Still in Dark Over Voter ID Change**](#)

“Up to two million people could be denied a vote unless they apply for ID – with public awareness about the new rules worryingly low, polling for Byline Times has found.

Just a third of voters are aware that they will have to bring photo ID in order to vote in the May local elections – with less than 100 days to go until people must apply for the Government’s free form of ID”.

International Press Institute, 13 January

UK: [**IPI joins global media freedom concern about National Security Bill**](#)

“We write as a group of global journalism and media freedom organisations, to express our serious concerns about the National Security Bill currently before the UK Parliament, and the risk it poses to whistleblowing and public interest journalism.”

Law

Euractiv, 1 February

[**MEPs to discuss regulatory dialogue on 'high risk' AI classification**](#)

“EU lawmakers are due to deliberate on how artificial intelligence (AI) systems should be classified in terms of the actual or potential risks they pose under the auspices of the new AI Act.

The AI Act is a flagship EU proposal to regulate AI technology based on its potential risks. At the proposal’s core is the ‘high-risk’ category, which implies stricter requirements in terms of robustness and risk management on the side of the AI developer.

... the provision defining the AI risk classification process will be at the centre of the debate.”

EurActiv, 1 February

[**Fact-checkers call out Commission on anti-child abuse material proposal**](#)

“The Commission made some false or contradictory statements in promoting the initiative to combat Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), according to researchers at TU Delft, a leading Dutch technical university.”

UK Parliament, 31 January 2023

UK: [**Lords debate landmark reports from Committees tasked with scrutinising primary and secondary legislation**](#)

“On 12 January 2023, Members of the House of Lords debated two hard-hitting cross-party Select committee reports which expressed considerable alarm over the increasing tendency of all governments in recent years to adopt procedures which have greatly reduced Parliament’s role in the legislative process.”

ELENA weekly legal update, 27 January

[The Netherlands: Italy's Circular letter requesting a suspension of Dublin transfers due to unavailability of reception facilities may be a sign of potential structural deficiencies](#)

“On the 18th of January 2023, the District Court of Ten Hague ruled in its judgement, NL22.23286. In the present case, the State Secretary did not assess the applicant's asylum claim because it stated that Italy was responsible to consider the application under the Dublin Regulation III. The Netherlands submitted a take back request that was not responded to, hence Italy became the responsible MS. The applicant contested as his father, who has a residence permit in the Netherlands, depends on his care.”

Impediments reported by Italy were deemed temporary in Dublin transfer case by a Dutch court. “However, the Court declared that the Secretary will need to assess the asylum application if the temporary impediment last longer than the transfer deadline under the Dublin Regulation.”

Verfassungsblog, 24 January

[The Council of Europe Creates a Black Box for AI Policy](#)

“The Council of Europe (CoE) Committee on AI has made a startling decision to carry forward future work on the development of an international convention on AI behind closed doors, despite the Council's call for the Democratic Governance of Artificial Intelligence in a 2020 resolution. It is a surprising move from an international organization that has been at the forefront of efforts to promote greater transparency and accountability for the technology that is transforming the world. The decision is at odds with the Terms of Reference for the Committee on AI (CAI) and it is of particular concern to those who are closely following the impact of AI policy on democratic institutions.”

Euractiv, 17 January

[US obtains exclusion of NGOs from drafting AI Treaty](#)

Civil society organisations have been excluded from the drafting process of the first international treaty on Artificial Intelligence based on a request of the US to avoid countries' positions becoming public.

The Guardian, 17 January

[Donelan confirms stiffer online safety measures after backbench pressure](#)

“Tech executives who “connive” in ignoring regulatory warnings to protect children from online harms face up to two years in jail under changes to landmark legislation announced by the government.

The culture secretary, Michelle Donelan, confirmed that the online safety bill would be amended after pressure from Conservative backbenchers.

(...)

Under a further change to the bill, video footage that shows people crossing the Channel in small boats in a “positive light” will be added to a list of illegal content that all tech platforms must proactively prevent from reaching users.”

Military

Politico, 24 January

[Finland may need to join NATO without Sweden, foreign minister says](#)

“Finland could reconsider its joint NATO bid with Sweden if Stockholm’s application is delayed further, Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto said Tuesday, a day after Turkey said it would not support the Swedish candidacy.”

The Telegraph, 14 January

UK: [Female soldiers raped by colleagues were ‘misdiagnosed’ with personality disorder](#)

“Hundreds of female members of the Armed Forces who accused their colleagues of rape were “misdiagnosed” with having a personality disorder, The Telegraph can reveal.”

Policing

The Guardian, 1 February

USA: [California police kill double amputee who was fleeing: ‘Scared for his life’](#)

“A southern California police department is facing national backlash after footage revealed that officers fatally shot a double amputee and wheelchair user who appeared to be hobbling away on the ground before he was killed.

Anthony Lowe, 36, was killed by officers in Huntington Park, a city in southern Los Angeles county, last Thursday. Cellphone footage captured part of the incident, showing Lowe on a sidewalk next to his wheelchair appearing to try to flee as two officers approach him with weapons drawn. More police cars arrived as the officers followed Lowe, who seemed to be limping away, but the video did not capture the shooting.”

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, 31 January

[Sprawozdanie z działań antyrepresyjnych realizowanych od początku trwania kryzysu humanitarnego na granicy polsko-białoruskiej](#) [New report on repression against humanitarian aid workers at Polish-Belarusian border.

Abuses "include detention in the forest for hours in an atmosphere of intimidation and lack of information, verbal aggression and physical violence."

The Guardian, 31 January

UK: [Met officers did not examine if spying was justified, inquiry finds](#)

“None of the senior police officers in charge of long-term operations to infiltrate leftwing groups in the 1960s and 1970s examined whether the intrusive surveillance was justified, a public inquiry has found.”

Northern Police Monitoring Project/Kids of Colour, 25 January

UK: [Statement after news that a ‘safer schools officer’ has been charged with child sex offences](#)

“Every day that Mayors and Head Teachers are happy for police to be in our schools, our children could be harmed and traumatised. We’re calling on you to protect children and young

people by removing school-based, linked, or affiliated police officers immediately and instead use any council tax increases to fund education.”

Security Architectures in the EU, 24 January

[**Another police unit for French-German migration defence**](#)

“A joint Franco-German police force will be deployed to sporting events, protests and against „migration flows“. Another unit undermines Germany’s principle of separation between the police and the military.”

Home Office, 19 January

UK: [**HM Government Counter-Terrorism Disruptive Powers report 2021**](#)

Exercise of Schedule 7 powers for detention and questioning at ports: “Of those individuals that were detained (excluding those who did not state their ethnicity), 34% categorised themselves as ‘Asian or Asian British’. The next most prominent ethnic groups were: ‘Chinese or Other’ at 32% and ‘White’ at 18%. The proportion of those that categorised their ethnicity as ‘Black or Black British’ or ‘Mixed’ made up 8% and 7% respectively.

...the proportion of those examined should correlate not to the ethnic breakdown of the general population, or even the travelling population, but to the ethnic breakdown of the terrorist population.”

Ideal, 12 January

[**El Gobierno reconoce por primera vez a las víctimas del 'Caso Almería'**](#) [The government recognises the victims of the Almería case for the first time]

On 8 May 1981, three youths who lived in Santander (Luis Cobo Mier, 29 years old; Juan Mañas Morales, 24, and Luis Montero García, 33) were mistaken for members of a terrorist commando group and arrested by the Guardia Civil. Their bodies were found in the vehicle in which they were travelling the next day.

Human Rights Solidarity and London Advocacy (LA), December 2022

[**Human Rights Solidarity and LA published 'Turkey Torture Report'**](#)

“The report on Politically Motivated Systemic Torture in Turkey and Its Survivors by HRS analyses the international and national legal frameworks of TIDT with support from recent documentation of torture and inhuman treatment in Turkey in order to put forward London Advocacy’s Torture or Inhumane or Degrading Treatment Victims Support Project.

The victim support project gathered information through a questionnaire to 30 victims of torture and additional interviews with 10 of the 30 original participants.”

Privacy and data protection

Euractiv, 27 January

[Privacy and data protection too often suspended at EU borders](#)

European Data protection Supervisor Wojciech Wiewiorowski points out that the treatment of migration as a “problem” is leading to human rights being too often suspended at EU borders, compromising fundamental rights including privacy and data protection.

ITPro, 26 January

[Dutch hacker steals data from virtually the whole population of Austria](#)

“A Dutch hacker has been arrested after reportedly stealing data belonging to 9 million Austrian citizens through a misconfigured cloud database.

The attack was initially discovered in May 2020 and concerned the Fees Info Service (GIS) - the organisation responsible for collecting TV and radio licence fees in the country.”

Luxembourg Justice Ministry, 25 January

[Sam Tanson a présenté le projet de loi relatif à la rétention des données à caractère personnel](#) [Sam Tanson presents the bill concerning the retention of personal data]

Undifferentiated and generalised retention of traffic and localisation data will be strictly limited to: data on civil identity for purposes of fighting crime, safeguarding public and national security; IP addresses assigned to the source of the connection, for purposes of fighting serious crime and safeguarding public and national security; and traffic data and localisation data in case there is a serious threat for national security which is real, present or foreseeable.

Racism and discrimination

USA: [The #NoFly list is a #MuslimBan list](#)

“The lists found by maia and shared with journalists and researchers confirm the TSA’s (1) Islamophobia, (2) overconfidence in the certainty of its pre-crime predictions, and (3) mission creep.”

Secrecy and transparency

Il Fatto Quotidiano, 1 February

[Revealed: Sweden destroyed a substantial part of its documents on Julian Assange](#)

“Exclusive - Almost six years after we unearthed that the British authorities at the Crown Prosecution Service destroyed key emails on the WikiLeaks founder, we can now report that the Swedish Prosecution Authority also destroyed a large part of the documentation. As Assange's life hangs in the balance, will Britain and Sweden finally open an investigation into the destruction of documents?”

Surveillance

The Guardian, 31 January

[France under fire over fast-track plan for AI video surveillance at Paris Olympics](#)

French government fast-tracking special legislation for 2024 Paris Olympics to allow the use of video surveillance assisted by artificial intelligence (AI) systems.

Donate £

Donate €