



**statewatch**

**UK artificial intelligence rules must protect rights**

**UK: Call for "serious, meaningful protection" from police facial recognition technology**

**UK: National Oversight Mechanism needed for state-related deaths**

**Swedish government: give police "more say in the EU policy-making process"**

Just under a month ago, the British electorate put the Labour Party in government. After 14 years of disaster for human rights and civil liberties under the Conservative Party rule (including five years in coalition with the Liberal Democrats), it appears there is little chance of any substantial change in direction from the new government.

One of the first acts of the new Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, was to [announce](#) a new "Border Security Command" that will bring together officials from the National Crime Agency, police forces, the intelligence agencies and the border guard. The new unit will be equipped with "substantial additional resources" and "counter terror style powers".

The aim, as ever, is "to break the business model of the criminal smuggling gangs." The announcement appears, however, to be a case of putting old wine in new bottles: there have been [numerous other](#) such initiatives, which appear to have had little effect other than shifting the departure point for peoples' journeys, placing them in greater danger during the crossing.

Meanwhile, in the wake of [racist riots](#) in various towns and cities across the country, fuelled by [lies and disinformation](#) spread after [three children were killed and eight injured](#) by a teenager wielding a knife at a summer camp, Keir Starmer, the prime minister, has [announced](#) "a new National Violent Disorder Programme." Amongst other things, this may see the deployment of facial recognition technology "more widely across the country."

Opposing the increasing use of police facial recognition technology is crucial to upholding basic rights and preventing the exacerbation of racial profiling and discrimination, as we long argued with others in the negotiations for [the EU's Artificial Intelligence Act](#). The need for a ban in the UK is the subject of [two letters](#) featured in this edition of the newsletter, to both the Westminster and the Scottish governments.

We have also joined [a call](#) for the new government to take meaningful action to ban the most harmful uses of artificial intelligence technology, and to meet the demands of the No More Deaths campaign for [a new National Oversight Mechanism](#) that would ensure the findings and recommendations of investigations into state-related deaths are followed up.

With a government that is more concerned with symptoms than causes, and which does not appear to have any meaningful concern for civil liberties, there is much more to be done to see these demands put into practice – not to mention undoing the many other attacks on basic rights and freedoms introduced in recent decades. This is the case for both the UK and the EU – where, as we [reported last week](#), the Swedish government wants to give the police a greater role in making law and policy.

We will continue to report on our work on these topics, and our advocacy efforts with other organisations, after a summer break. The bulletin will return in September, but don't forget that you can browse all the reports, articles, documents and other material we have published over the last three decades on our [website](#) – and if you would like to see that work continue, [please become a Friend of Statewatch](#).

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## **UK artificial intelligence rules must protect rights, prevent worsening of structural power imbalances**

A letter from the #SafetyNotSurveillance coalition, of which Statewatch is a member, calls on the new Labour government to "protect people's rights and prevent uses of AI which exacerbate structural power imbalances."

The government has announced that it will establishment legislation on AI, and the letter calls for that law to prohibit predictive policing and biometric surveillance, and to ensure sufficient safeguards, transparency and accountability for all other uses of AI technologies.

Full article [here](#).

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## **UK: Call for "serious, meaningful protection" from police facial recognition technology**

The UK's new Labour government must ensure "proper regulation of biometric surveillance in the UK," says a letter signed by nine human rights, racial justice and civil liberties groups, including Statewatch. "No laws in the UK mention facial recognition, and the use of this technology has never even been debated by MPs," the letter highlights.

It calls on the new home secretary, Yvette Cooper, and the science, technology and innovation minister, Peter Kyle, to meet the signatory groups "to discuss the need to take action and learn from our European partners in regulating the use of biometric surveillance in the UK more broadly."

A separate letter to Scotland's cabinet secretary for justice and home affairs raises similar points, and calls on the Scottish government "to stop the proposed use of live facial recognition surveillance by Police Scotland."

Full article [here](#).

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## **Police should have "more say in the EU policy-making process," says Swedish government**

A "non-paper" circulated in the Council of the EU by the Swedish government in early June calls for "a fundamental change in perspective" in the fight against terrorism and organised crime, arguing that too many proposals are "watered down" by fundamental rights considerations.

Full article [here](#).

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## **UK: National Oversight Mechanism would allow "learning, transparency and accountability" over state-related deaths**

The new Labour prime minister, Keir Starmer, has been called on by a broad coalition of organisations - including Statewatch - to set up a National Oversight Mechanism to collate the findings of investigations into state-related deaths.

A letter from the coalition says that inquiries, inquests and investigations - for example, into deaths in police custody or medical facilities - "can pinpoint learning for the future to stop the same thing happening again." However, there is currently no central mechanism to collate those findings or ensure recommendations are implemented.

"This is a disservice to bereaved families who look to investigations for the truth, answers, and assurance that future deaths will be prevented," says the letter, which calls for the establishment of a National Oversight Mechanism: "a new, independent body with the responsibility to collate, analyse and follow up on recommendations made during inquests, public inquiries, investigations and official reviews."

Full article [here](#).

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## **New material**

'Offshoring' asylum—time to reject a disastrous model ----- 20 years Frontex – Stop counting candles, start counting lives: Abolish Frontex! ----- New EU commission seeks bigger Frontex and more cash-for-migrant deals ----- UK: Longest ever sentences for nonviolent climate action ----- Military support to Israel from the European Investment Bank ----- Council of the EU adds neo-Nazi group to terrorist list ---- UK: Former undercover police officer: it was MI5's job to "smear" targets

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## New material

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## Asylum, immigration and borders

[PACE committee, setting out new ways to tackle migrant smuggling, proposes a Council of Europe instrument](#)

“In line with the priorities set in the Reykjavík Declaration calling for reinforced action against the smuggling of migrants and as the European Committee on Crime Problems is exploring avenues towards reinforced co-operation between member States, a PACE committee has urged a dual approach to tackling migrant smuggling which focuses on international co-operation to ensure safe and legal migration pathways – and protect the rights of people on the move – while also cracking down on cross-border criminal groups.”

UK: [Hostile Office Report: The Home Office and Immigration System are Racist by Design](#)

“Racism and exclusion are the basis of immigration policies in 2024. They stem from a long history of targeting ‘unwelcome’ groups of migrants based on colonial constructions of race, deservingness or who can be economically ‘useful’ to Britain. Racialised people from Britain’s former colonies being the most affected by raids, detention, deportation and deprivation and deprivation of citizenship.”

[‘Offshoring’ asylum—time to reject a disastrous model](#)

“Governments have long attempted to deny protection to people reaching their borders and shift the responsibility to other countries. Proposals to ‘offshore’ or ‘externalise’ the processing of asylum claims outside the European Union have long been criticised, condemned and discarded—for good reason.”

And see: [Out of sight, out of mind: EU planning to offshore asylum applications?](#)

### **La Unión Europea usará inteligencia artificial para controlar los flujos migratorios en las fronteras**

“La ley europea que regulará la inteligencia artificial (IA), en vigor desde este jueves, tiene dos caras. Una, celebrada desde Bruselas como una “victoria de la democracia”, es la que prohíbe los usos más peligrosos de estas tecnologías y dicta obligaciones para garantizar que no perjudican a los ciudadanos de la Unión Europea (UE).”

And see: [\*\*EU has spent over €340 million on border AI technology that new law fails to regulate\*\*](#)

### **20 years Frontex – Stop counting candles, start counting lives: Abolish Frontex!**

“October 2024 marks the 20th anniversary of the EU border guard agency Frontex. For these 20 long years it has spread death and insecurity. We count and mourn more than 60,620 deaths caused by the EU border regime since 1993. Frontex is a key actor in the war against people on the move and a symbol for its certain failure.”

### **EU: Commission confirms Ireland's participation in the Pact on Migration and Asylum**

“The Commission welcomes Ireland's decision to opt-in to seven legal acts under the Pact on Migration and Asylum, as notified on 27 June 2024. As stated by President von der Leyen, the Pact will help to protect people, to secure our borders, to ensure fair and efficient procedures and to manage migration in an orderly way with solidarity at its heart. Ireland's decision to opt-in demonstrates the country's dedication to shared European values and its willingness to contribute to improved migration management across the EU.”

### **UK: Home Secretary launches new Border Security Command**

“Reporting directly to the Home Secretary, the Border Security Commander will provide strategic direction to work across agencies, drawing together the work of the National Crime Agency (NCA), intelligence agencies, police, Immigration Enforcement and Border Force, to better protect our borders and go after the smuggling gangs facilitating small boat crossings.”

### **Extraterritorial State Obligations in Migration Contexts**

“The proliferation of migratory movements has given rise to border and migration policies of states intended at keeping migrants away from their national territory, and thus the corresponding human rights obligations and responsibility – generally called ‘externalisation’ policies. This Symposium explores both existing and novel legal approaches that can counteract this evasion of obligations and responsibility.”

## Civil liberties

### EU: [EUROPE'S CHOICE: POLITICAL GUIDELINES FOR THE NEXT EUROPEAN COMMISSION 2024–2029 - Ursula von der Leyen](#)

Includes proposals to increase the number of Frontex officers from 10,000 to 30,000, and to turn Europol into an operational police force.

See: [New EU commission seeks bigger Frontex and more cash-for-migrant deals; Von der Leyen to propose new approach for border management and migrants return](#)

### UK: [Whole Truth Five sentenced to 4-5 years at Southwark Crown Court in longest ever sentences for nonviolent climate action](#)

“In an obscene perversion of justice, five Just Stop Oil supporters were handed multi-year prison sentences today for nothing more than attending a Zoom call.

At Southwark Crown Court, Judge Christopher Hehir jailed Roger Hallam (57, from Wales) for five years, whilst Daniel Shaw (38, from Northampton), Lucia Whittaker De Abreu (34, from Derby), Louise Lancaster (58, from Cambridge) and Cressida Gethin (22, from Hereford) were each sentenced to four years.

They were convicted last week of conspiracy to cause a public nuisance in relation to the M25 motorway disruption in November 2022.”

## Law

### UK: [European Scrutiny Committee discontinued](#)

“On 30 July 2024, the House of Commons decided not to re-establish the European Scrutiny Committee after the general election.

While the UK was a member of the European Union, the Committee examined new and proposed EU laws that would automatically become UK law. However, the number of documents submitted to the Committee for scrutiny declined following Brexit.

EU schemes, laws and proposals that could have an impact on the UK will now fall under the remit of the relevant departmental or other committees.”

## Military

### [Military support to Israel from the European Investment Bank](#)

“In the latest Board of Governors meeting, the EIB approved its Strategic Roadmap 2024–2027, including an expansion into financing the defence industry. This decision, made without consulting civil society, labour unions, or parliaments, sidelines pressing global challenges like climate change and public sector underinvestment.”

## Policing

UK: [Extension of facial recognition and new “National Violent Disorder Programme”](#)

“Criminals intent on causing violence and unrest on our streets will be stopped in their tracks thanks to a new National Violent Disorder Programme, the Prime Minister has announced today.

(...)

Local insight and data will be used to gain a national understanding of where these criminals are operating, including the British Transport Police alerting where they see a spike in train ticket sales that could be linked to organised violent disorder.

It will also consider how we can deploy facial recognition technology, which is already used by some forces, more widely across the country. This will mean criminals can be targeted, found and brought to justice quickly.”

Finland: [Project launched to prepare legislative amendments on using passenger name record data in crime prevention](#)

“The Ministry of the Interior has set up a project to prepare legislative amendments on the use of air carriers’ passenger name record (PNR) data in the prevention of terrorist offences and serious crime.

The project will assess and prepare the necessary legislative amendments in relation to EU regulation and the demands of the operating environment of the public authorities. PNR data is information provided by passengers when booking a flight.”

Spain: [L'Audiència de Barcelona rebutja investigar el cas del policia infiltrat en moviments socials de Barcelona](#)

“Després de la tercera inadmissió de la querella, que segueix les passes de la Fiscalia i el jutjat d’instrucció 21 de Barcelona, les advocades de l’acusació, en nom de les entitats Irídia i CGT, recorreran al Tribunal Suprem. Aquest és l’últim pas abans d’esgotar les vies jurisdiccionals internes, tot i que, si és necessari, no serà l’últim intent d’obtenir rendició de comptes i reparació per les afectades, i elevaran el cas a instàncies internacionals”

And see: [Second undercover police officer spying on Barcelona activists unmasked](#)

Italy: [The Green Bible](#)

“The Green Bible is the single-most important document in the Italian government’s war against an alleged Nigerian mafia. Bloomberg Investigates shows both how this handbook isn’t what it claims to be, and how that still hasn’t kept innocent people out of prison.”

## Prisons

[El periodista Pablo González es liberado después de más de dos años preso en Polonia](#)

“Pablo González, periodista español detenido en febrero de 2022 y desde esa fecha encarcelado en Polonia, ha sido puesto en libertad el 1 de agosto, dentro de un intercambio de prisioneros que ha afectado a 24 personas, dieciséis de ellas encarceladas en Rusia y ocho en distintos países de Occidente. El intercambio ha tenido lugar en Ankara (Turquía).”

## Racism and discrimination

### [UK rocked by far-right riots fueled by online disinformation about Southport stabbings](#)

“Far-right demonstrations turned violent for a second night across England Wednesday, in the wake of this week’s mass stabbing in Southport – the worst attack on children in the country in recent history.

While a community continues to grieve the murder of three young girls, far-right agitators have mobilized around online misinformation and hateful, anti-migrant and anti-Muslim narratives – fueling disorder in London, Manchester and the northeastern town of Hartlepool.”

### EU: [Sanctions against terrorism: Council renews the EU Terrorist List and designates a new entity](#)

“The Council decided today to add the entity “The Base” to the EU Terrorist List. The Base is an organisation of right-wing extremists involved in terrorist acts, which was founded by Rinaldo Nazzaro in 2018.

The sanctions are effective as of today.

Following its listing, The Base is subject to the freezing of its funds and other financial assets or economic resources in EU member states. It is also prohibited for EU operators to make funds and economic resources available to the organisation.”

## Security and intelligence

### UK: [Former undercover police officer: it was MI5’s job to “smear” targets](#)

““We gathered intelligence. It was the job of the security services to smear people”

Undercover police officer Trevor Morris, who used the identity of a dead child, Anthony Lewis, to spy on anti-racists including the #StephenLawrence campaign, giving evidence at #spycops inquiry.”

## Surveillance

### [EU pushes for new surveillance technology against migration, German police union asks for €35 million](#)

“A new EU regulation on the introduction of border controls came into force in June. Unwanted entries are to be prevented using drones, motion sensors and other technologies.”

### [Alle Olimpiadi del 2024 uso senza precedenti di droni e algoritmi di sorveglianza](#)

“Da diversi giorni, gli algoritmi di sorveglianza sono utilizzati dalla RATP (metrò) e dalla SNCF (Ferrovie dello stato) in più di cinquanta stazioni dell’Île-de-France. I droni sono autorizzati a sorvolare alcune località della Seine-Saint-Denis per più di un mese. Un utilizzo di queste tecnologie mai visto prima nella sua quantità e durata.”

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