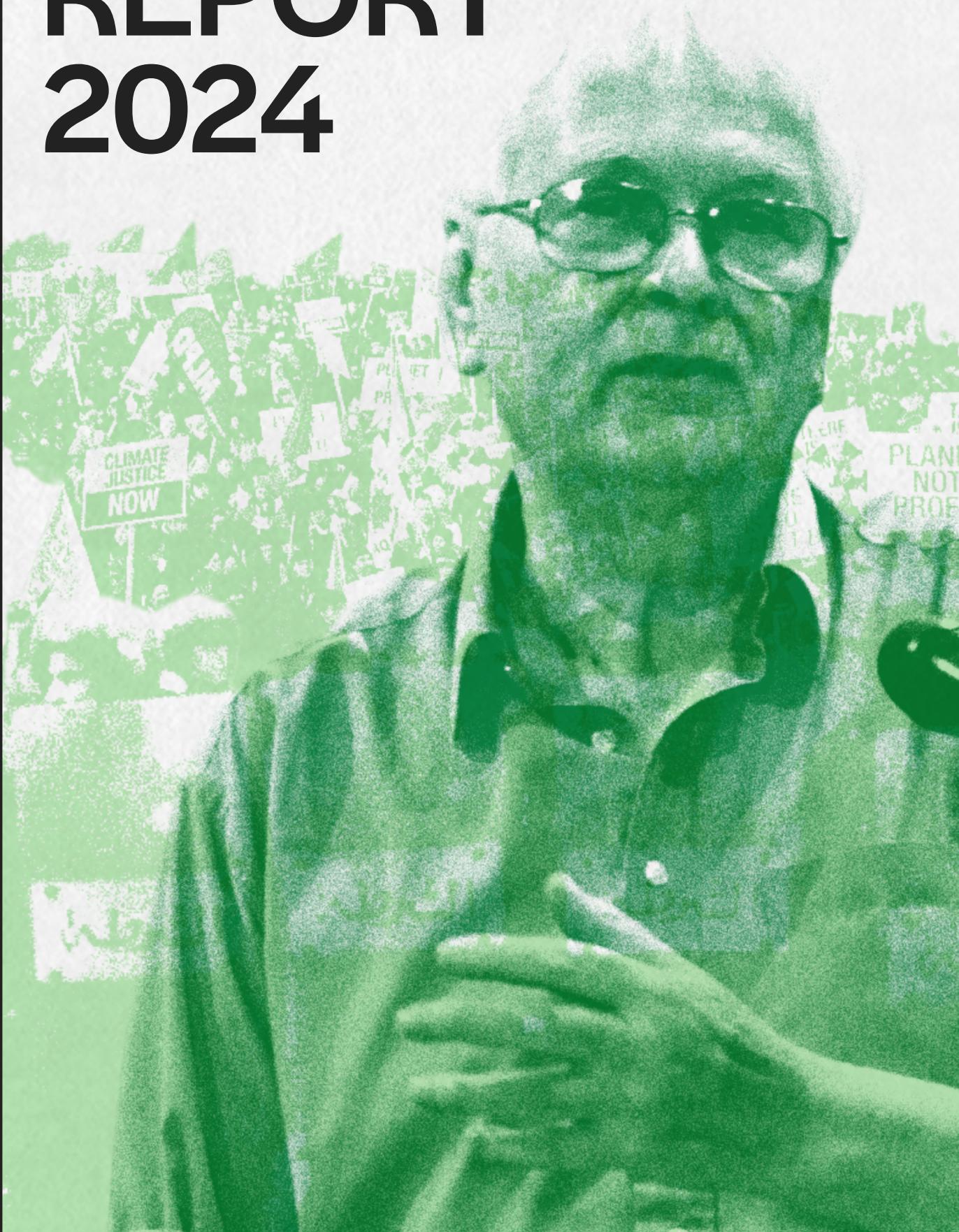


# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



2024

STATEWATCH

# Publication information

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## About Statewatch

Statewatch produces and promotes critical research, policy analysis and investigative journalism to inform debates, movements and campaigns for civil liberties, human rights and democratic standards.

[statewatch.org](http://statewatch.org)

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## Support our work

Support our work to expose state power and inform dissent by making a donation. And join our mailing list to stay informed and help spread our work.



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# Our vision

An open Europe of democracy, civil liberties, personal and political rights, free movement, freedom of information, equality and diversity.

# Our mission

To monitor, analyse and expose state activity that threatens civil liberties, human rights and democratic standards in order to inform and enable a culture of diversity, debate and dissent.

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**I am always in awe (and somewhat baffled) at the quantity, quality, visibility and impact of your work being such a small team.**

**Where I did see some room for improvement was in the comms department, but the recent revamp has gone above and beyond in that sense.**

**Cesar Manso, Legal Officer**  
*Digital Freedom Fund*

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# Introduction

2024 made even clear what many of us have been saying for some time: authoritarianism and racism are firmly on the rise, and despite many brave and important struggles against it, definitive responses are yet to be found. Our work throughout the year reflected this ongoing tension, while showing reasons for optimism.

We exposed, reported on and analysed ongoing attempts to undermine the rule of law, basic rights and liberties, and democratic safeguards. This included:

- plans to offshore asylum processing;
- the influencing of police and internal security officials over new laws;
- increased surveillance powers; and
- crackdowns on protest and free speech.

In doing so, we continued to provide a vital resource for activists, advocates, journalists and others.

That reporting and analysis is a form of opposition to these nefarious developments.

Within the terms of our charitable status, we also gave our support to

movements and campaigns seeking to oppose them more directly. Amongst others, this included those demanding such actions as:

- upholding the rights of refugees and the right to asylum;
- halting new measures for ethnic profiling;
- ensuring democratic scrutiny of border externalisation policies;
- banning invasive and authoritarian surveillance technologies; and
- halting European governments' complicity in breaches of international law in Palestine.

At the time of writing, we are still awaiting action.

Governments' complicity in Israel's genocide has helped to further derail and undermine the international norms and institutions created to halt military violence against civilians and civil infrastructure. This has had horrifying consequences for those subject to displacement, attacks on the ground and from the air. Faced with widespread popular protest against these positions, many European governments have resorted to unjustifiable restrictions on protest and freedom of speech, including through the use of criminal and anti-terrorism laws.

**Facing these tactics is by no means an entirely new situation. Foreign policy has always been linked to domestic repression and rights abuses.**

It was demonstrations against the Vietnam War in 1968 that led to the formation of Britain's Special Demonstration Squad, an undercover police unit tasked with infiltrating and undermining left-wing and progressive movements. Europe's strategic alliance with Turkey means supporters of Kurdish autonomy and independence continue to face suspicion (at the very least) from European authorities. The 'war on terror' was and is animated by racism and criminalisation, in particular against Muslims – but it was prefigured by history, such as the British response to campaigns for self-determination in Ireland and other colonies.

As Tony Bunyan, Statewatch's founder, Director (1991-2020) and Director Emeritus (2020-24) wrote in 2006:

*Five years on we know that the 'war on terrorism' is going to be permanent, not temporary. This is not just because of 11 March 2004 (Madrid), 7 and 21 July 2005 (London) and terrible terrorist bombings elsewhere. It is*

*also because the pre-conditions for further attacks persist and show no signs of abating – Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, US militarism, Guantanamo Bay, rendition and global free market economics which perpetuate poverty and gross inequality.*

In September last year, Tony passed away. Though age slowed him towards the end of his life, his commitment to the cause never wavered: he was constantly planning, plotting and proposing. He was born in 1941, and his early experiences and involvement in political activism in the 1960s and 1970s profoundly influenced his outlook on the world for the rest of his remarkable life. He made profound contributions to the struggle against state secrecy and for civil liberties, and while he himself never set foot outside Europe, he was deeply-aware of and informed by political events and struggles elsewhere in the world.

He took this view with him when he founded Statewatch, together with a similar-minded group of other activists, journalists and lawyers in 1991. We have always been primarily concerned with the state of civil liberties in the European Union and the UK, but Europe is not an isolated island – the very reason it remains one of the richest parts of the world is because plunder, exploitation and expropriation carried out elsewhere.

This history, the present it has created, and the implications of both are becoming increasingly well-known – though there remains legions of people doggedly opposed to honest discussion and dissection of the legacies of racism, colonialism and empire.

It is this latter group that have been in the political ascendancy for some time now. Halting their ongoing attacks on rights and liberties is no small task, but it is increasingly urgent. It would be simple to say that the results of failing to do so do not bear thinking about – but, in fact, the results of failure can already be seen, from Los Angeles, to the Mediterranean Sea, to Palestine.

With that in mind, it might seem difficult to be optimistic. Yet there are still many reasons for optimism. They can be seen throughout the campaigns and movements we worked alongside throughout 2024, and will continue to provide information and analysis to in the future. And they can be seen in the growing number of groups and organisations that, regardless of growing state repression, continue to stand up for the rights of themselves and others.

It is these struggles that Statewatch has always sought to support with its work. Into 2025 and beyond we will build upon our legacy and past achievements, to increase our role in the struggle against state secrecy and repression, for rights and freedoms, and, ultimately, for a better world.

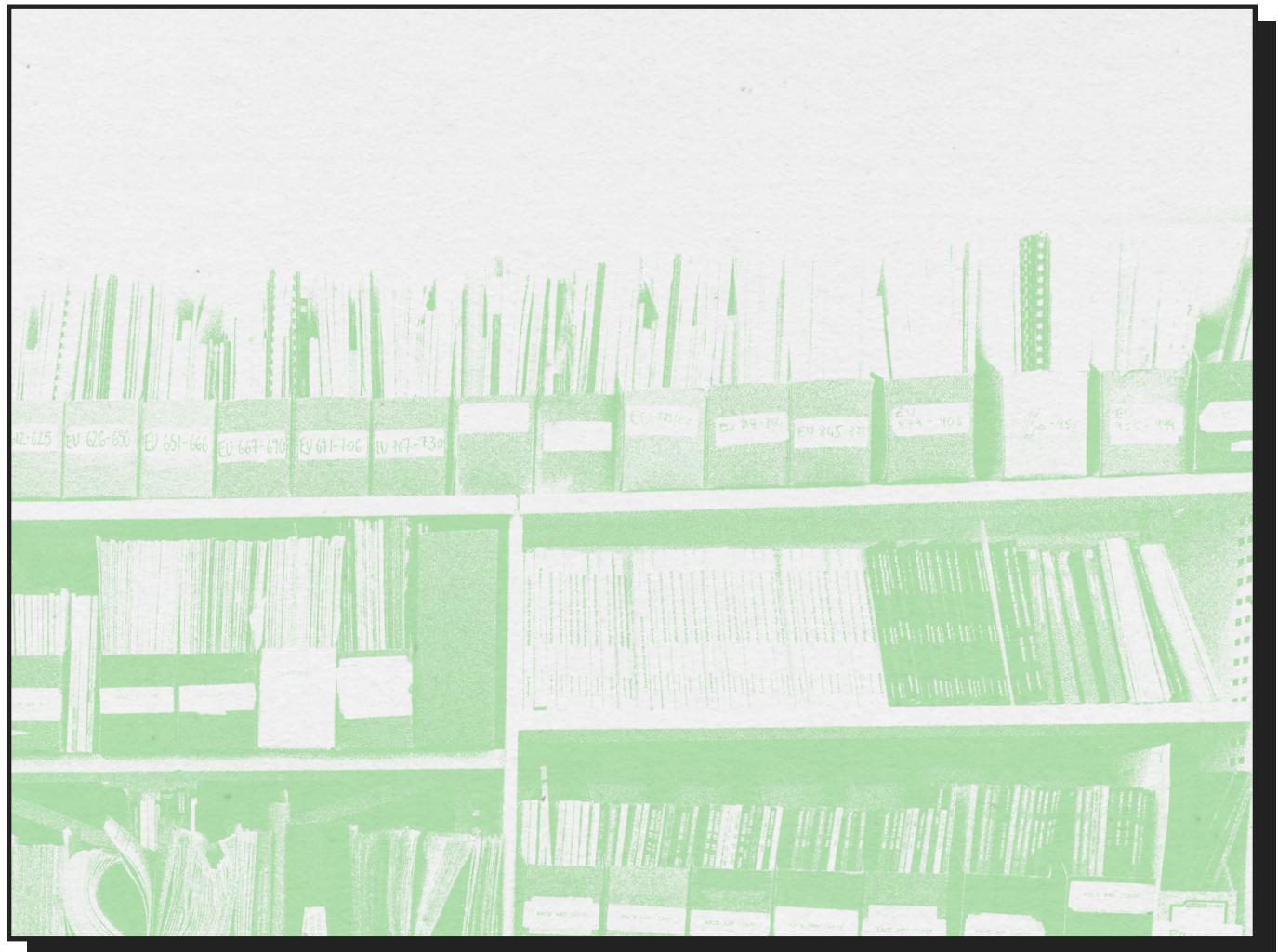
*This report is a truncated version of our formal annual report and accounts.*

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## Keep up the work! it's vitally important!!!

Chloé Berthélémy, Senior Policy Advisor  
European Digital Rights

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# Strengthen civil society's access to information

States use secrecy to protect their interests and avoid scrutiny. Increasingly, this is exacerbated by the involvement of powerful economic actors in the development and implementation of law and policy. The resulting lack of transparency prevents accountability for wrongdoing and limits people's ability to exercise their rights.

By strengthening access to information, we are working against this secrecy. In doing so, we are improving civil society's ability to meaningfully influence policy and inform people about what governments and states are doing in their name.

## Key developments and impact

### ***1 training workshop on access to information***

We trained volunteers and staff of the Border Violence Monitoring Network on how to access EU information and documents, to support their work documenting and challenging violence against people seeking safety at Europe's borders.

### ***2 workshops on data protection, immigration and asylum***

We held the first two in a series of workshops on using data protection law to uphold the rights of migrants and refugees. Feedback from participants – immigration lawyers, support workers and others – was overwhelmingly positive.

## ***1 online panel on digitalisation and the security state***

We worked with Fundación Karisma in Colombia to produce materials for the Transnational Institute's online course on digitalisation and the security state, and moderated an online panel with some 90 attendees.

## ***80 news articles and 20 in-depth analyses***

Our news and analyses continued to provide a vital resource for journalists, researchers and campaigners working on civil liberties, human rights and democratic standards in Europe and beyond.

## ***50 official documents made public***

Alongside our news and analysis, we made public 50 official EU documents that would have otherwise remained secret.

## ***9 publications in collaboration with other groups and individuals***

We worked with organisations in Belgium, France, Germany, Greece and Sweden to produce articles on EU funding for Israeli drone companies, Frontex's collaboration with the so-called Libyan coast guard, police attempts to access encrypted data, reception condition for refugees on the Greek islands, and more.

## ***Visits to the Statewatch Library & Archive from students, lawyers and researchers***

Visitors to the Library & Archive included solicitors, students, researchers and filmmakers.

# Expose and challenge new means of surveillance, coercion and control

Governing institutions are increasingly curtailing basic rights and freedoms in an effort to maintain control, rather than confront the dysfunctional social and economic models at the root of societal unrest. Propelled by xenophobia, nativism, capitalism and the possibilities offered by new technologies, they are deploying new laws, spaces and tools of surveillance and coercion.

By exposing and challenging states' attempts to increase their power, we can increase the possibilities for the social, political, and economic change that is needed to develop a more just, equal, and peaceful society.

## Key developments and impact

### ***1 in-depth report***

We worked with exiled Turkish lawyers to publish a report on the Turkish authorities' use and abuse of encrypted messaging app data, and an important European Court of Human Rights judgement that should change their practices.

### ***1 public event***

In cooperation with Privacy International, we organised an event at Privacy Camp in Brussels on the growing infrastructure and business model behind immigration and surveillance technologies.

## ***1 evidence submission to the UN***

We also used our research for a submission to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' call for input on Use of Administrative Measures in Counter-Terrorism.

## ***At least 27 references in the press***

Our work was referenced by media outlets around the globe, from Germany to Indonesia.

## ***At least 17 public citations by other civil society organisations***

Our work continued to be referenced by our allies in civil society, by groups including the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, AlgorithmWatch, Salud por Derecho and Amnesty.

## ***2 sets of parliamentary questions***

Our work led to questions from MEPs on EU funding for Tunisian security forces, and Europol's work on migrant smuggling.

## ***1 event bringing together migrant and refugee rights organisations facing state repression***

We helped to organise an event in Albania bringing together migrant and refugee rights organisations from Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and the Americas who have faced state surveillance and repression in their work.

## ***4 events bringing together researchers, campaigners, activists, elected officials and others working on border externalisation***

As part of our regular bulletin on European border externalisation policies, we brought together dozens of people to share information and strategise.

## ***Working with and supporting 10+ other organisations***

We worked with journalists, activists and researchers from across Europe to support their campaigns, research and investigations.

# Build a more sustainable and more effective organisation

In recent years, our lack of core and multi-annual funding has made it difficult to pursue our own objectives and makes us reliant on project work. This limits our ability to expand the scope of our work, reach wider audiences, engage our contributors, and fully participate in our membership of many formal and informal networks.

By continually improving our financial position and resource management, we will increase our impact and that of our networks, build our reputation and profile, and contribute to the development of more effective transnational solidarity and action.

## Key developments and impact

***Expenditure of £197370 and income of £153002***

***New communications strategy***

A communications strategy – the first for the organisation – was approved in May and implemented from that point onwards.

***Development of a visual rebrand for the organisation***

Staff and the board agreed upon a visual rebrand for Statewatch in autumn, to be implemented for public outputs in 2025.

## ***5 new funding partners***

In 2024 we received support from five new partners: the European AI & Society Fund (for work on ‘security AI’ and predictive policing), and Brot für die Welt, Misereor, medico international and Pro Asyl (for our bulletin on border externalisation).

## ***20% increase in website visits***

The total number of visits to our website grew by 20% in 2024, to a total of 201,177.

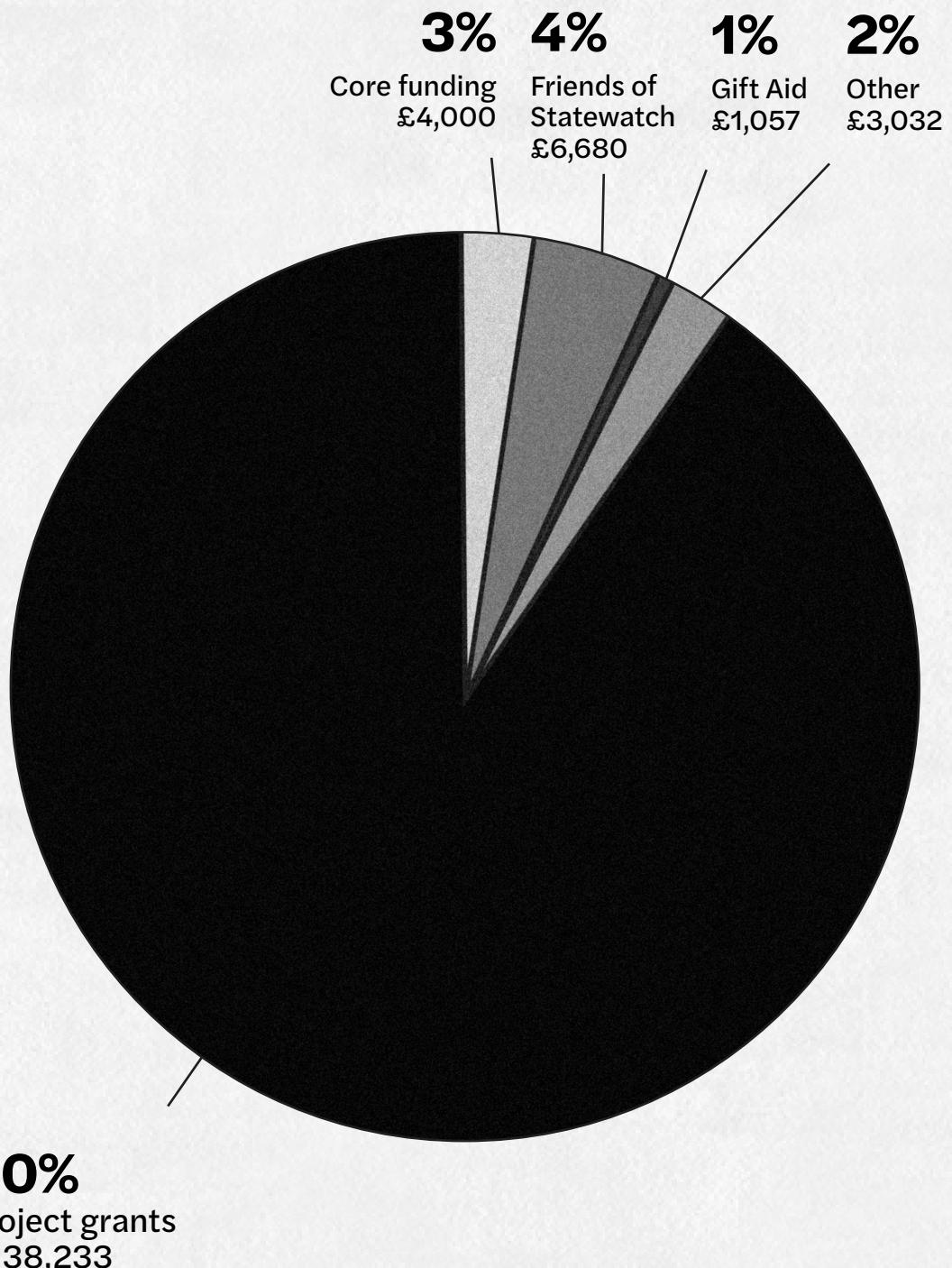
## ***32% increase in website visitors***

The total number of individual visitors grew substantially: by 32%, to 176,041.

## ***Ongoing cooperation with our networks***

In 2024, 18 articles were written by contributors from our contributors group, or from our wider network. We also continued to work closely with Burgerrechte & Polizei, European Digital Rights, Migreurop, #ProtectNotSurveil, and This Is What Police Tech Looks Like, amongst others.

# Income



# Expenditure

