

International Campaign Against Mass Surveillance (ICAMS)

Campaign Declaration

Global security and the “war on terror” now dominate the global political agenda. Driven largely by the United States, a growing web of anti-terrorism and security measures are being adopted by nations around the world. This new “security” paradigm is being used to roll back freedom and increase police powers in order to exercise increasing control over individuals and populations.

Within this context, governments have begun to construct, through numerous initiatives, what amounts to a global registration and surveillance infrastructure. This infrastructure would ensure that populations around the world are registered, that travel is tracked globally, that electronic communications and transactions can be easily monitored, and that all the information that is collected in public and private databases about individuals is stored, linked, data-mined, and made available to state security agents.

The object of the infrastructure is not ordinary police work, but mass surveillance of entire populations. In its technological capacity and global reach, it is an unprecedented project of social control. Already, the United States and other countries are aggressively using information gathered and shared through this infrastructure to crack down on dissent, close borders to refugees and activists, and seize and detain people without reasonable grounds.

And, all of this is taking place at a time when the U.S. and its allies are maintaining a system of secret and extraterritorial prisons around the world, in which unknown numbers of prisoners are facing indefinite, arbitrary detention and torture.

The current situation reaches beyond the issue of privacy as it is often encountered in everyday life. What we are confronting are intrusions that reach to the very nature of the relationship between the individual and the state. Basic justice and human rights are at stake, and this will affect us all.

Governments around the world must abandon the intrusive and discriminatory measures inherent in the practice of mass registration and surveillance, and put the genuine protection and development of citizens – in the fullest sense, including the protection of our rights – at the centre of any approach to “security”:

- All data collection, storage, use, analysis, data mining and sharing practices that erode or are contrary to existing data protection, privacy and other human rights laws and standards must stop immediately. Governments must resist efforts by the United States and other countries to pressure them into weakening their existing privacy standards.
- Mechanisms must be put in place to allow individuals to correct personal data and challenge misuse (including placement on a “watch list”).
- International transfers of personal data between states should occur only within the context of formal agreements and under internationally recognized data-protection principles.
- Governments must stop the wholesale, indiscriminate collection and retention of information on citizens, including the acquisition of databanks from private companies.
- Governments must halt implementation of a universal biometric passport and the creation of “sharing standards” for passenger name record (PNR) information until the issue has been openly debated at the national level and privacy and other human rights protections are established.

Inter-governmental bodies must commit to operating with greater openness and accountability. They must not become a means of circumventing civil liberties and democratic processes at the national level. Any initiatives must respect existing data protection, privacy and other human rights laws and standards.

The United Nations – particularly the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights – must use all available mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights to urgently address the threat posed by the development of the global surveillance infrastructure.

We invite individuals and organizations around the world to endorse this Declaration, and to circulate it as widely as possible. Your voice is needed to strengthen the International Campaign Against Mass Surveillance!

For more information and analysis about these issues, please visit our web site <http://www.i-cams.org>

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
Focus on the Global South
Friends Committee on National Legislation
International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (ICLMG)
Statewatch