

Academics Against Mass Surveillance

This summer it was revealed, largely thanks to Edward Snowden, that American and European intelligence services are engaging in mass surveillance of hundreds of millions of people.

Intelligence agencies monitor people's Internet use, obtain their phone calls, email messages, Facebook entries, financial details, and much more. Agencies have also gathered personal information by accessing the internal data flows of firms such as Google and Yahoo. Skype calls are "readily available" for interception. Agencies have purposefully weakened encryption standards – the same techniques that should protect our online banking and our medical files. These are just a few examples from recent press reports. In sum: the world is under an unprecedented level of surveillance.

This has to stop.

The right to privacy is a fundamental right. It is protected by international treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights. Without privacy people cannot freely express their opinions or seek and receive information. Moreover, mass surveillance turns the presumption of innocence into a presumption of guilt. Nobody denies the importance of protecting national security, public safety, or the detection of crime. But current secret and unfettered surveillance practices violate fundamental rights and the rule of law, and undermine democracy.

The signatories of this declaration call upon national states to take action. Intelligence agencies must be subjected to transparency and accountability. People must be free from blanket mass surveillance conducted by intelligence agencies from their own or foreign countries. States must *effectively* protect everyone's fundamental rights and freedoms, and particularly everyone's privacy.

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