

Citizenfour



Jimena Reyes

Jimena Reyes, a lawyer from the Paris Bar, has been FIDH's director for the Americas since June 2003. Since then, she has investigated human rights violations and public policies of 17 countries in the Americas, and she has also contributed to the drafting of more than 30 human rights reports. In 2009, she investigated the scandal of illegal activities of the Colombian secret services that eventually led to its closing in 2011. Ms. Reyes has also coordinated a case related to illegal interception of NGO communication in Belgium. She has been very active in the promotion of a new UN mandate on the right to privacy following the events of the Edward Snowden scandal.



Ferran Josep Lloveras

Ferran J. Lloveras, political scientist and international development expert, joined OHCHR in August 2014, where he works on external relations and cooperation, as well as focussing on civil and political rights. Previously he worked for the European Commission, on Education in development cooperation. Before that he held several positions in UNESCO, where he worked on Education in Emergencies in Palestine (2011-2012), and on Strategic Planning, Education and UN reform at the Headquarters in Paris and on several field assignments (2005-2011). He also worked for the General Secretariat for Youth of the government of Catalonia (2002-2005), and for the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection, to defend the human right to conscientious objection to military service (1999-2002).



Afsané Bassir-Pour

Director of the United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe (UNRIC) in Brussels since 2006, Ms Bassir-Pour was the diplomatic correspondent of the French daily Le Monde from 1988 to 2006. She was based in New York until 2003 where she covered UN matters. Ms. Bassir-Pour co-created the CNN's weekly International Affairs program.

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Mass surveillance: exceptional measure or dangerous habit?

The digital communication revolution has led to “perhaps the greatest liberation movement the world has ever known,” the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Flavia Pansieri suggested when addressing a special discussion at the Human Rights Council in Geneva in November 2014. Yet digital communication platforms are vulnerable to surveillance, interception and data collection, putting at risk a range of human rights, particularly the right to privacy and the rights to freedom of opinion and expression.

The Council discussion referred to the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on “The right to privacy in the digital age” which was prepared at the request of the UN General Assembly, following global concern at the negative impact of certain surveillance practices on human rights.

While recognizing that surveillance of electronic communications data can be necessary for legitimate law enforcement or intelligence reasons, when conducted in compliance with the law, the report also cautions that governmental mass surveillance programs “raise questions around the extent to which such measures are consistent with international legal standards and whether stronger surveillance safeguards are needed.” In the report, the High Commissioner expresses concern that “overt and covert digital surveillance in jurisdictions around the world have proliferated, with governmental mass surveillance emerging as a dangerous habit rather than an exceptional measure.”

According to DHC Pansieri, “information collected through digital surveillance has been used to target dissidents. There are also credible reports suggesting that digital technologies have been used to gather information that has then led to torture and other forms of ill-treatment”.

Pansieri further stated that States must demonstrate that any interference with an individual’s privacy is both necessary and proportionate to address the specific identified security risk. The report observes that States are obliged to ensure that individuals’ privacy is protected by law against unlawful or arbitrary interference. Laws protecting privacy must be clear and publicly accessible: secret rules and secret interpretations of the law, even if issued by judges, are not legally adequate. Neither are laws or rules that give excessive discretion to executive authorities such as security and intelligence services.



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