

Mass surveillance: EU citizens' rights still in danger, says Parliament

Plenary sessions [29-10-2015 - 12:48]

Too little has been done to safeguard citizens' fundamental rights following revelations of electronic mass surveillance, say MEPs in a resolution voted on Thursday. They urge the EU Commission to ensure that all data transfers to the US are subject to an "effective level of protection" and ask EU member states to grant protection to Edward Snowden, as a "human rights defender". Parliament also raises concerns about surveillance laws in several EU countries.

This resolution, approved by 342 votes to 274, with 29 abstentions, takes stock of the (lack of) action taken by the European Commission, other EU institutions and member states on the recommendations set out by Parliament in its [resolution of 12 March 2014 on the electronic mass surveillance of EU citizens](#), drawn up in the wake of Edward Snowden's revelations.

By 285 votes to 281, MEPs decided to call on EU member states to "drop any criminal charges against Edward Snowden, grant him protection and consequently prevent extradition or rendition by third parties, in recognition of his status as whistle-blower and international human rights defender".

Data transfers to the US

MEPs welcome the 6 October [ruling by the EU Court of Justice](#) (ECJ) in the Schrems case, which invalidated the Commission's decision on the Safe Harbour scheme for data transfers to the US. "This ruling has confirmed the long-standing position of Parliament regarding the lack of an adequate level of protection under this instrument", they say.

Parliament calls on the Commission to "immediately take the necessary measures to ensure that all personal data transferred to the US are subject to an effective level of protection that is essentially equivalent to that guaranteed in the EU". It invites the Commission to reflect immediately on alternatives to Safe Harbour and on the "impact of the judgment on any other instruments for the transfer of personal data to the US, and to report on the matter by the end of 2015". The resolution also reiterates a call to suspend the Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme (TFTP) agreement with the US.

In general, MEPs consider the Commission's response so far to Parliament's 2014 resolution "highly inadequate" given the extent of the revelations of mass surveillance. "EU citizens' fundamental rights remain in danger" and "too little has been done to ensure their full protection," they say.

Concerns over surveillance laws in several EU countries

Parliament is concerned about "recent laws in some member states that extend surveillance capabilities of intelligence bodies", including in France, the UK and the Netherlands. It is also worried by revelations of mass surveillance of telecommunications and internet traffic inside the EU by the German foreign intelligence agency BND in cooperation with the US National Security Agency (NSA).

The resolution also calls for an EU strategy for greater IT independence and online privacy, stresses the need to ensure meaningful democratic oversight of intelligence activities and to rebuild trust with the US.

Press release

Procedure: non-legislative resolution

Further information

- Adopted text will be available here (click on 29.10.2015)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html>
- Video recording of debate (click on 28.10.2015)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/search-by-date>
- Video statement by Claude Moraes (S&D, UK), Chair of the Civil Liberties Committee and rapporteur on mass surveillance
: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/Assetdetail.aspx?ref=1110344>
- Press release of 12 March 2014 - US NSA: stop mass surveillance now or face consequences, MEPs say
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20140307IPR38203/html/US-NSA-stop-mass-surveillance-now-or-face-consequences-MEPs-say>
- EP resolution of 12 March 2014 on the US NSA surveillance programme, surveillance bodies in various member states and their impact on EU citizens' fundamental rights and on transatlantic cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2014-0230+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>
- Q&A on Parliament's inquiry into mass surveillance of EU citizens
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20140310BKG38512/html/QA-on-Parliament%27s-inquiry-into-mass-surveillance-of-EU-citizens>

Political groups

- News pages of the EPP group: <http://www.eppgroup.eu/press>
- Press release by the S&D group: <http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/sd-meps-mass-surveillance-we-have-find-better-balance-between-privacy-and-security>
- News pages of the ECR group: <http://ecrgroup.eu/news/>
- Press release by the ALDE group: <http://www.alde.eu/nc/press/press-and-release-news/press-release/article/national-governments-fail-to-protect-citizens-against-mass-surveillance-46224/>
- News pages of the GUE/NGL group: <http://www.guengl.eu/news/archives/category/gue-ntl-news>
- News pages of the Greens/EFA group: <http://www.greens-efa.eu/press/70-press-releases.html>
- News pages of the EFDD group: <http://www.efddgroup.eu/newsroom/press-releases>

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