



Vote today, to stop a future of biometric mass surveillance in Europe!

Brussels, 4 October 2021

Dear colleagues,

Today, you will vote on [amendments](#) to the [Vitanov report on Artificial Intelligence in criminal law and its use by the police and judicial authorities in criminal matters \(A9-0232/2021\)](#). **These amendments would, most importantly, effectively remove the call for a ban on biometric mass surveillance from the LIBE report**, showing implicit support for the deployment of real-time facial recognition in public spaces, and explicitly allowing for such mass surveillance, even though indiscriminate surveillance of innocent citizens is a severe violation of Fundamental Rights. In view of the negotiations on the proposed EU AI Act these amendments would set a terrible precedent.

Earlier this year the **European Data Protection Board** and European Data Protection Supervisor [called](#) for a “general ban on any use of AI for an automated recognition of human features in publicly accessible spaces” due to it “resulting in a direct negative effect on the exercise of freedom of expression, of assembly, of association as well as freedom of movement”.

More than 200 civil society organizations, activists, tech specialists, and other experts around the world are [advocating](#) a global ban on biometric recognition technologies that enable mass and discriminatory surveillance, arguing that “[t]hese tools have the capacity to identify, follow, **single out, and track people everywhere they go**, undermining our human rights and civil liberties”. Yesterday civil society [published](#) a call to reject amendments and uphold the call for a ban.

The **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights** is also [speaking out](#) against the use of remote biometric recognition technologies in public spaces, referring to a “lack of compliance with privacy and data protection standards”, “significant accuracy issues” and “discriminatory impacts”. Indeed facial recognition technology has been [found](#) to be significantly less accurate where certain groups of people, such as African American women, are concerned.

After more than a year of negotiations, LIBE members acknowledged these calls and recommend that the EU **follow the example of a number of US cities and states** in banning the use of these technologies by law enforcement authorities in publicly accessible spaces. Unsurprisingly, the **only country to comprehensively embrace biometric mass surveillance of the entire population is authoritarian China**.

Contrary to what one of the amendments suggests, there is **not a single example of real-time biometric surveillance preventing a terrorist attack** or other such events. With false alarm rates of up to [99%](#) these technologies are not nearly reliable enough to be of value. The routine deployment of such algorithms, even with a small false positive rate, would result in false alerts outnumbering correct alerts by far. The procedural requirements proposed by the EPP are a mere smokescreen and “fig leaf” for mass surveillance. Furthermore, indiscriminate bulk processing of personal data has consistently been [annulled](#) by the European Court of Justice due to its non-compliance with fundamental rights.

Dear Colleagues, let us stand up for citizen’s fundamental rights and ban biometric mass surveillance of public spaces! People who constantly feel watched and under surveillance cannot freely and courageously stand up for their rights and for a just society.

Join us in opposing the amendments to the LIBE report and in bringing technological developments in line with our rights and values!

Best regards,

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