Argentina's record on privacy and surveillance under scrutiny at the United Nations

27 June 2016

This week in Geneva, the UN Human Rights Committee will examine the Argentina's compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), an international treaty which places obligations on signatories to guarantee human rights such as the right to privacy.

This review, by a body of independent experts charged with monitoring compliance with the ICCPR, comes at a critical time for Argentina laws and policies on privacy and surveillance.

Recent years have seen significant changes in the organisation of the intelligence services in Argentina, while concerns remain that surveillance is carried in ways that violate individuals' right to privacy, including reports of targeting of politicians, journalists and other activists.

Meanwhile, the risks to privacy and protection of personal data arising from poor implementation of the Argentinian data protection legislation have come to the fore particularly in relation to the growing use of biometrics technology. Poor oversight of the intelligence and law enforcement agencies and the fact that a wide range of governmental institutions can access database of personal information such as Sibios (the Integrated System of Biometric identification – Sistema Integrado de Identificación Biométrica) mean that the system could facilitate mass surveillance. Poor data security has also put the personal data of individuals at risk of exploitation and non-authorised access.

The review by the Human Rights Committee will offer an independent assessment of the compliance of the current Argentinian laws, policies and practices with the ICCPR and could provide useful guidance to inform the Argentinian authorities on the measures needed to effectively protect the right to privacy.

Notes for editors

The periodic report of Argentina will be reviewed by the Human Rights Committee at its 117th ordinary session in Geneva. The public debate is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 29th June (15:00 to 18:00 Geneva time; 10:00 to 13:00 Buenos Aires time) and Thursday 30 June (10:00 to 13:00 Geneva time; 05:00 to 08:00 Buenos Aires time).

Information on the session (including all reports submitted) is available on Human Rights Committee's website:

http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=1031&Lang=en

The session will be webcasted live at: http://www.treatybodywebcast.org

Asociación por los Derechos Civiles (ADC) and Privacy International's submission in advance of the consideration of the report by Argentina is available at the following links:

English: https://www.privacyinternational.org/node/877

Spanish: https://www.privacyinternational.org/node/878