

FROM: **NO CCTV**
and **PRIVACY INTERNATIONAL**



**PRIVACY
INTERNATIONAL**

Press Release

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Attn: News Desks

-- BEGINS --

PRIVACY ADVOCATES CALL FOR URGENT INQUIRY INTO SURVEILLANCE ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The global watchdog organization Privacy International (PI) along with campaign group No CCTV have called on UK surveillance regulators to launch an urgent inquiry into the levels of surveillance on public transport.

In an open letter to the Information Commissioner, the Chief Surveillance Commissioner and the Interim CCTV Regulator, No CCTV and PI express deep concern about the blanket use of surveillance, pointing out that its use to constantly record both images and sound is creating a "just in case" mentality that treats everyone as suspects.

Their letter warns that if such blanket surveillance is permitted then it signals the creation of a society where the only privacy will be the thoughts in your head. If a line is not drawn here then what is to prevent employers, parents, cinemas and retail outlets from doing the same.

Many bus companies now equip their buses with more surveillance cameras than would once have been found in a city centre and many UK councils are introducing compulsory taxi CCTV cameras.

PI and No CCTV ask the UK surveillance regulators to launch a joint inquiry, urging that the use of intrusive surveillance should only be considered when all other options have been tried, there is a proven case that such a measure would be effective, and if it will not significantly impact the freedoms of drivers and passengers.

In November 2011 surveillance in taxis hit the headlines when Big Brother Watch launched a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office regarding a decision by Oxford City Council to introduce compulsory taxi cameras, that record images and sound, as a condition of license. Taxi cameras that record both images and sound were in fact first trialled in Bolton in 2001. Many UK councils launched similar trials throughout the following decade, encouraged by camera manufacturers eager to create a new market.

In Southampton CCTV in taxi cabs became a condition of license in 2009. In November 2010 this condition was challenged by local taxi firm owner Kevin May. In April 2011 the court found in May's favour and in December 2011 Southampton City Council won its appeal against that decision on the basis that the court had no jurisdiction to overturn the licensing condition. However the appeal court did agree with the April 2011 judgment that the cameras were unlawful and Mr May now intends to judicially review the council.

Charles Farrier of No CCTV said: "The issue of the creation of a total surveillance society goes beyond the Data Protection Act, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) or the so-called Protection of Freedoms Bill. There are societal values that are being discarded in what is presented as the following of the letter of the many regulatory statutes, whilst the spirit and the Rule of our Common Law are ignored. A wrong is a wrong."

-- ENDS --

References:

The full text of the No CCTV / Privacy International open letter to the Information Commissioner, the Chief Surveillance Commissioner, the Interim CCTV Regulator is available at http://www.no-cctv.org.uk/materials/docs/2012_open_letter_to_surveillance_regulators.pdf

The Information Commissioner is the UK regulator whose task is to oversee the Data Protection Act.

The Chief Surveillance Commissioner is the UK regulator whose task is to oversee the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA).

The role of Interim CCTV Regulator was created by the previous Labour government as part of the National CCTV Strategy. The position is soon to be given statutory powers as the Surveillance Camera Commissioner as part of the Protection of Freedoms Bill currently making its way through Parliament.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. No CCTV is a UK group campaigning against the excessive use of surveillance cameras in the UK. Their homepage is at www.no-cctv.org.uk
2. For further information contact Charles Farrier at press@no-cctv.org.uk
3. Privacy International is the oldest surviving privacy advocacy group in the world, and was the first organisation to campaign at an international level on privacy issues. Their homepage is at www.privacyinternational.org. All media contact on this issue is to be handled by No CCTV as detailed above.