

The Impact of Digital Surveillance on Journalists, Lawyers, and Human Rights Defenders

**Wednesday,
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15:00-16:30**

**Room XXIV
Palais des Nations
Geneva, Switzerland**



In July 2014, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a joint report documenting the impact of mass surveillance on the practice of journalism and law in the United States. Journalists and lawyers were chosen as the subject-matter of the study because of the integral role they play in a democratic society. The right to counsel stands as a pillar of procedural justice in a democratic society, while the press delivers crucial information on what our governments are doing on a daily basis. Without the essential work of journalists and lawyers, it is much harder to hold governments to account when they misstep or overreach, especially in the areas of national security and intelligence.

In a landmark report, published in June 2014, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights explicitly notes that surveillance may implicate other rights, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression. The report also mentions the possible chilling impact surveillance can have on the work of human rights defenders. Increasingly, we are seeing that civil society actors throughout the world are being threatened, and their activities hindered, by digital technologies used by intelligence agencies. As the ACLU/HRW report documents, and the speakers on the panel will discuss, the right to freedom of expression, and in particular the work of journalists, lawyers, and human rights defenders in the United States, South America, Africa, and other UN Member States, is being seriously undermined by digital surveillance.

Panelists:

Carly Nyst,
Legal Director,
Privacy International

Jimena Reyes,
Head of Americas Desk,
FIDH

Alex Sinha,
Aryeh Neier Fellow,
ACLU

Arthur Gwagwa,
Democracy Fellow,
National Endowment for
Democracy

Moderator:

Steven Watt,
Senior Staff Attorney,
ACLU



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