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New technology has created a dramatic shift. Two negative tendencies are now making individual privacy a rarity. However, there is also a positive trend.

The first negative tendency is the commercial one. For example, the new proposal for an EU Data Directive accommodates to the wishes of companies to reach potential new customers.

The other tendency is based on government power. Citizens are collectively watched by their own states. That also effects civil society organizations. Fundamental rights are in danger.

Under the pretext of fighting terrorism mass surveillance has become a plague of societies of today.

The whistle blower Edward Snowden disclosed the mass surveillance of the Unites States and its cooperation in the Five Eyes Alliance, including Sweden. But we all know that other big powers, as Russia and China, are pursuing the same policy.

To stop terrorism governments all over the world have focused on control and surveillance. That constitutes a severe dilemma for democracies.

For example for the United States with its famous First Amendment to the Constitution. Or for the United Kingdom where civil liberties were first guaranteed 800 years ago, in the Magna Charta. Nevertheless they both use mass surveillance without strong restrictions.

The US Ambassador said earlier that privacy is at the heart of democratic governments – and that we need to respect it now more than ever. I fully agree with that statement – but it is not upheld in the US surveillance.

A more promising example comes from Europe: the EU Data Retention Directive, adopted in 2006, was declared invalid by the European Court of Justice in 2014. It simply lacked protection of privacy. A remarkable victory for privacy!

Several countries, however, are nevertheless hesitating to comply with the European Court. Among them is Sweden.

The positive trend is the free internet. It must be preserved – as stated in two important Human Right Council resolutions, proposed by Sweden among other countries and unanimously adopted. We shall not accept a nationally restricted internet. That would severely damage a vivid civil society!