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The EU Provides Authoritarian Regimes with Malicious Software for Hacking Phones and Social Media Accounts

The EU (CEPOL) Agency Provides Training to These Regimes on the Use of This Malicious Software

Official Investigations Must Be Opened to Expose the Damage Caused by This Funding and To Hold Those Responsible Accountable

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK) strongly condemns the flagrant violation of international law by the European Union (EU). The report of the Privacy International Organisation (PI) revealed that police officers in Europe and Africa receive special training programs by the European Union Law Enforcement Training Agency (CEPOL) on how to use malicious software to hack the phones and social media accounts of citizens.

PI stated that to support the EU policies in the neighboring countries, CEPOL sends experts and officials affiliated with the organisation to train their counterparts in the Balkans, North Africa and the Middle East.

The authoritarian regimes in the Middle East use these trainings to spy on their citizens and use the social media as a monitoring tool to spy on activists, arrest and abuse them, given that organizers of protest have been mainly relying on digital platforms, added PI.

For example, Saudi Arabia, tracks the location of devices using SS7 protocol - allowing phone networks to exchange the information needed for passing calls and



text messages between each other – and by exploiting this protocol, law enforcement agencies are able to locate the device.

Saudi Arabia used the SS7 in tracking individual locations in the United States.

The EU assistance programs include protocols and technologies enabling the authoritarian regimes to penetrate "CDR and IPDR", which are metadata obtained from telecommunications networks and operators providing details of the caller and the receiver, internet usage, source and destination, and IP address.

The CEPOL's "Second Partnership for Counter-Terrorism Training" between the EU and the Middle East and North Africa which is worth 6.5 million euros. The CEPOL takes part officially with the authorities in Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia , allegedly, in solving 'important' issues such as cybersecurity, combating violent extremism and funding of terrorism.

However, according to documents obtained by PI, these programs are being used for dangerous purposes entrenching repression in those countries.

The PI's report discloses information about courses that focus mainly on promoting digital surveillance tools and malicious software to enable security systems hack smartphones, get access to the data on it, and spy on its owners. It also encourages governments to spy on internet users and breach policies of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, added AOHR.

The disclosure of these serious breaches oddly coincided with the European Parliament's announcement of plans to limit the export of electronic surveillance tools to oppressive regimes which seeks to pursue activists on social media platforms.

AOHR UK called the EU to immediately stop funding these programs, and to make serious efforts to prohibit unauthorized access to personal data, in accordance with the international law which guarantees the right to privacy.



Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK
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It also called the European Parliament to form an official investigation commission to reveal the damage caused by this funding and hold all those responsible accountable.

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