

**International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group
Coalition pour la surveillance internationale des libertés civiles**

**NEWS RELEASE
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**ICLMG, Global Coalition Launch
International Campaign Against Mass Surveillance**

OTTAWA – More than 35 Canadian organizations today joined well-known human rights groups from around the world in launching an International Campaign Against Mass Surveillance (ICAMS), which calls on governments to put an end to massive surveillance and global registration of entire populations.

“In the name of the so-called ‘war on terror’, we are witnessing what amounts to the construction of a global surveillance infrastructure. Citizens around the world are registered, travellers are tracked globally, electronic communications and financial transactions can be easily monitored, and all the information that is collected in public and private databases about individuals is stored, linked, data-mined, and made available to state security agents,” Gerry Barr of the Canadian Council on International Cooperation and Co-chair of the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (ICLMG) told a news conference on Parliament Hill.

“It is an unprecedented project of social control,” warned Martine Éloy speaking on behalf of the ICLMG and Quebec’s Ligue des droits et libertés. “What we are seeing today would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. Technological advances are now making it possible for states to gather, share, mine and exploit information with a view to crackdown on dissent, close borders to migrants, refugees and activists, and to seize and detain people without reasonable grounds.”

This unprecedented assault on the rights to privacy, freedom of expression and freedom of movement requires an equally unprecedented response by civil society around the world. Patterned in some respects after the international campaign to ban landmines, ICAMS is asking groups and individuals to endorse a declaration through a special Website www.i-cams.org. ICAMS also released a pioneering report on *The Emergence of a Global Infrastructure for Mass Registration and Surveillance*, an extensive study of the 10 signposts detailing the development of this new surveillance infrastructure.

Barr highlighted the relevance of this campaign for Canadians: “Who would have ever believed it possible that the U.S. would arrest and send a Canadian to be tortured in a Syrian jail for close to a year? Who would ever have predicted that the U.S. would require Canadians to carry biometric identification documents linking personal information to a wide array of databases managed and controlled in the U.S., where Canadian-style privacy laws don’t apply?”

“Would you have believed just a few years ago that basic information such as your meal preference on an airplane, your destination, the number of times you visit a friend or your shopping preference could be shared, mined, cross-referenced and be used to build profiles on all individuals as part of a risk assessment model?”

The current situation goes well beyond privacy issues and citizens the world over are facing intrusions that reach to the very nature of their relationship with the state.

“Did we ever think we would all become suspects and that the presumption of innocence would become obsolete? Why else would governments create files on each and everyone of us?” said Barr.

“Here in Canada, we are seeing the incremental adoption of several related measures that are eroding our rights to privacy.” He cited as examples the creation of an Airline Passenger Information and Passenger Name Reservation (API/PNR) databank; the sharing of information on airline passengers with foreign governments; plans for the introduction of identification documents relying on biometric features; projects to create no-fly lists; plans to implement passenger screening and profiling systems that rely on data-mining of government and private databases; and plans to integrate immigration and refugee data banks with the U.S..

The ICLMG calls for a moratorium on the implementation of these measures until the legal and ethical implications of new surveillance technologies are fully understood and debated by Canadians and their elected representatives. The current parliamentary review of Canada’s anti-terrorism legislation provides a unique opportunity to examine and debate the implications of these far-reaching and sophisticated new technologies. The moratorium should remain in place until the parliamentary committee completes its review, until the recommendations of the Arar Commission are made public, and until Canada’s Privacy Commissioner completes a full review of the implication of these measures on Canada’s privacy laws.

The ICAMS is being made public simultaneously in the U.S. by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), in Europe by Statewatch, and in the Philippines by Focus on the Global South. The campaign is endorsed by approximately 100 groups from around the world, including the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) and the International Federation of Journalists.

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The International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group is a coalition made up of more than 30 members: international development NGOs, churches, unions, environmental advocates, civil rights advocates, other faith groups and groups representing immigrant and refugee communities in Canada.