

Israel gives green light to Google Street View

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The decision was taken last week by Israel's data protection watchdog, ILITA, which gave [Google Street View](#) the green light to send its cars to begin the process of collecting images, a statement from the ministry said.

Street View, which was launched in 2006, lets users view panoramic street scenes on [Google Maps](#) and take a virtual "walk" through cities such as New York, Paris or Hong Kong.

Panoramic images are taken by cars equipped with special cameras which photograph an area while driving through the streets; the images are then processed in the US, where details such as faces and registration plates are automatically blurred before being published on Google Maps.

But the service has raised hackles in many countries over the [privacy issues](#) raised by the images randomly captured by the cars.

In its decision, ILITA asked that Street View provide the public with a reliable way to request that further details be blurred before the images are published online.

It also asked that Street View clearly inform the public of the planned route to be taken by its cars -- and that those cars be clearly marked.

The decision came six months after ministers met to address concerns that the online mapping tool, which can be used to get a close-up three-dimensional view of locations across the country, could be used by militants bent on carrying out attacks in the Jewish state.

But the Association for [Civil Rights](#) in Israel (ACRI) expressed concern over the decision, warning it would lead to "an additional erosion" of people's right to privacy.

"It is a shame the justice ministry failed to learn from the bad experiences in Europe with this service: there, they learned that the authorities are not capable of protecting citizens from large international corporations," it said in a statement.

"In 2010, it emerged that technicians in Google's cars in Europe accessed unsecured WiFi networks and collected information from them; and images of people's faces were only blurred after lengthy legal battles by individuals against the company," it said.

Last year, the Internet giant admitted that its Street View cars, which have been driving around taking photographs in more than 30 cities across the world, had inadvertently gathered a huge quantity of data sent over unsecured wireless networks, including entire emails and passwords.

Google has since stopped the collection of WiFi data, used to provide location-based services such as directions in Google Maps, by Street View cars.

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