

# Ensuring security technology doesn't become a weapon against human rights

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Europe's growing security industry needs stricter controls to ensure its technology isn't used as a weapon against citizens, a Newcastle University expert has warned.

While surveillance technologies are increasingly used to counter crime and terrorism and to control borders, they have significant potential for misuse.

In a report published today (Friday, 22 February), Dr Jocelyn Mawdsley said events during the Arab Spring have already demonstrated what can happen when regimes use such technologies to suppress protest. Deep packet inspection technologies - which examine and can re-route data - were used to filter the information available to citizens on the internet, while surveillance technologies were used to track and capture activists through social media use.

Dr Mawdsley, an expert in European politics wrote the report: A European Agenda for [Security Technology](#): From Innovation to Policy Controls - for the Flemish Peace Institute.

In the report, she examines the [ethical issues](#) created by the [security industry](#), which has proliferated around the world since the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre, including the delicate balance between civil rights, economic interests and security.

"There is now a huge emphasis on homeland security," said Dr

Mawdsley. "And what this has meant is that we now have a new security industrial sector worth billions of euros. The European Commission considers exports to be important for the economic success of these firms, but also to enable EU policies on the control of immigration and countering transnational crime and terrorism. However, these exports are often ethically problematic."

Tomas Baum, Director of the Flemish Peace Institute, said: "Our research demonstrates that it is time for the EU to rethink the tense triangle between legitimate security needs, economic interests and the ethical aspirations of the EU."

"European [control mechanisms](#) are provided for exports of weapons and for civil products with a potential military application. This is much less clear for security technology."

Provided by Newcastle University

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