

Spanish Government Moves Forward on Hypervigilance Project. Towards a Surveillance Police State

By [Lucas Leiroz de Almeida](#)

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Several experts suggest that the post-pandemic world will be very different from the world we know. It is speculated that a new order, based on the prevention of the spread of diseases, will be put in place and that, for this purpose, governments and intelligence organizations in all countries will use advanced control and surveillance systems, in order to track infected people and keep them in quarantine, preventing the circulation of infections. Despite possible benefits, such as preventing a new pandemic, this model of organization also has some problems, as it sacrifices several civil liberties in the name of disease prevention, annihilating the right to privacy and the right to come and go.

In several countries, the tests for a post-coronavirus order has already begun. Israel is one of the most advanced nations in this regard, already having complex control and surveillance systems and exporting its technology to other countries, such as India. Now, another country that is gaining notoriety on this issue is Spain, which is advancing more and more in surveillance and hypercontrol projects.

Recently, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation proposed a pilot project to test a control model on the Spanish island of La Gomera, where a cell phone application will be used to control private health data. The goal is to create a large infection and control simulation to test the model before implanting it in the rest of the country. The Council of Ministers has already approved the project, which will start soon. Although several countries are already testing similar systems, Spain is the first nation to simulate contagions for better data capture. The company responsible for the technology is the Spanish multinational Indra, which Works in military industry, mainly in the field of telecommunications and strategic technology. The contract signed between the company and the Spanish government is valued at more than 330,000 euros.

The application operates via Bluetooth and emits signals to other cell phones with the same technology installed, watching them constantly. When two users physically approach each other, a contagion alert is issued in the event of an approach of less than 2 meters for more than 15 minutes. If one of the users is tested positive for COVID-19, he will receive an alert informing him of the risks and those who approached him will receive tips on how to avoid contagion. While this whole process takes place, user data is constantly captured and analyzed by remote monitoring centers – and here lies the danger of misuse of this technology.

Formally, the application follows rules of respect for privacy to the individual rights of users, who will not be obliged to use it or accept to receive notifications, however there are several

unclear points about the project, as informed by the Spanish Data Protection Agency, who complains about the lack of transparency on the part of the Indra company and the government. The Agency published an official [note](#) severely criticizing the lack of details in the elaboration of the project, which prevents a more rigorous evaluation by the Agency. In its note, the criticisms were particularly directed to the Spanish Secretariat of State, which said that the Agency participated in the entire process of evaluating and reviewing the project, which the Agency vehemently denies, saying it needs more information and that it prioritizes the protection of data above all issues.

In fact, it is clear that even within the Spanish government there is a disagreement regarding the nature of the project, which reveals the controversy surrounding the issue. Indeed, what the ministers who approved the system and the company that developed it are planning is to move forward on a very dangerous global agenda, which prioritizes the violation of all personal rights in order to prevent a contagion. It is necessary to take into account a series of issues and rigorously evaluate the benefits and costs of the project, taking into account that this type of technology can be used for absolutely any purpose, including espionage and hypervigilance.

The coronavirus seems to have opened a new Overton Window, in which the control of personal information data and total monitoring have entered the sphere of public debate. The so-called “western democracies”, based on liberal values such as the individual freedom, increasingly admit totalitarian speeches in the name of “public health”. It remains to be seen, however, whether it is really only in the name of collective health that Western governments want to violate the rights of their citizens. It is very likely that there are much deeper and more obscure interests behind the disease prevention discourse, and all of this should be taken into account when discussing projects as bold as this one.

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Lucas Leiroz is a research fellow in international law at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

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