



**INQUEST**   
Truth Justice Accountability

**NET POL** The Network for  
Police Monitoring



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11 February 2025

Dear Secretary and Minister of State,

We the undersigned human rights and equality organisations write to you to express our profound concern about your plans to give the police unaccountable powers to snoop on our lives and use our personal data in the Data (Use and Access) Bill.

As you will be aware, there have been several high-profile incidents of the police unlawfully violating the rights of victims of crime, activists, and other members of the public by spying on them or otherwise unlawfully using their personal data – some of whom are signatories to this letter. There are also serious, evidence-based allegations of misogyny, racism and homophobia among UK police – allegations that have yet to be addressed through systemic change.

We are therefore surprised that, by proposing clauses 87-89 of the Data (Use and Access) Bill, your government has decided that now is the right time to give the police unaccountable powers to use our personal data in the name of ‘national security’.

In recent months, the ongoing Undercover Policing Inquiry has heard evidence about the police’s systematic spying on activist movements and trade unions, deceiving some human rights activists into long-term sexual relationships and fathering children with them.<sup>1</sup>

Other recent examples show how accountability is essential to ensuring that the police, both collectively and individually, cannot misuse their powers. For example, a recent Metropolitan Police internal investigation found that four serving and three former police officers had accessed and shared personal data about Sarah Everard – who was murdered by a serving p

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/dec/11/undercover-policing-inquiry-lies-destroyed-lives-spy-cop>

lice officer in March 2021 – ‘without proper reason’. These offers stated that they had acted ‘out of curiosity’.<sup>2</sup>

These scandals show the dangers of granting police further powers to act outside of data protection law, and granting them immunity when they use personal data illegally: what’s to stop more police officers from intruding into our private lives or unlawfully accessing and sharing our data, simply because they are ‘curious’? Or, worse, because they want to stalk their current or former romantic partners, or blackmail someone with whom they have a personal dispute?

Clauses 87-89 have been replicated almost verbatim from the prior government’s Data Protection and Digital Information (No. 2) Bill, which were the subject of significant parliamentary and civil society criticism, including from the former Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, Lord Anderson of Ipswich KBE KC.<sup>3</sup> Despite numerous requests from civil society, MPs and peers, the former government was unable to explain to Parliament why the new and unaccountable powers you are planning to introduce were necessary.

Clauses 87-89 of the Data (Use and Access) Bill have the potential to cause serious harm, by allowing the police to avoid scrutiny and even commit crimes – with immunity – when they use our sensitive personal information. We request you remove these clauses from the Bill.

Yours sincerely,

Rights & Security International

INQUEST

Network for Police Monitoring (Netpol)

Police Spies Out Of Lies

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/oct/28/met-police-sensitive-files-sarah-everard-curiosity>

<sup>3</sup> <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2024-04-15/debates/84830FA4-3B3D-4934-A8D8-869516B0C0CE/details>; <https://www.rightsandsecurity.org/impact/entry/rsis-briefing-on-clauses-26-28-of-the-data-protection-and-digital-information-no-2-bill>; <https://www.rightsandsecurity.org/impact/entry/peers-raise-rsis-concerns-about-unnecessary-and-unaccountable-policing-powers-data-protection-and-digital-information-no-2-bill>