

SpyGate

Greetings Media Delegates and welcome to North Berwick High School's first ever Model United Nations event. I am Adam Whiteside and I shall be chairing media committee alongside Guy Roper. Although I have taken part in other MUN events, this is my first time chairing. I'm sure we can make this a great conference and, more importantly, a very enjoyable one!

This year we shall be looking at government spying. It's a controversial issue with many governments being accused of invading the privacy of their citizens. Although it's unpopular and a clear breach of privacy some see it as an effective way to monitor and protect national security. However there are other cases which show some governments using internet surveillance to censor political opponents or the media within their country.

Governments and Private companies

There have been many cases of private companies being pressured to release online data about their users in the past few years. One of the main being multinational technology company Yahoo, which has been under continuous pressure to hand over customer details. Businesses often have little choice in keeping data from governments and therefore user information passes hands. Information can include web searches, emails and texts.

Government Surveillance and Censorship

A number of countries have been accused of using online surveillance and collected data as a way of censoring their citizens. In fact the fear of being watched and having your data recorded by the government can lead to self-censorship. This is when someone censors their own belief, for example within a blog. In 2013, a non-government and non-profit organisation called Reporters without Borders released a report which showed a number of countries using internet surveillance to arrest journalists and others opposed to their government.

Surveillance and National Security

One argument for more internet surveillance by the government is that it could help better protect national security. With access to people's data, government officials will have the ability to monitor what individuals search, which groups they converse with and for how long. This is considered a vital step in preventing terrorist attacks and other threats to national security as it allows the government to monitor suspects and decide if they are a threat or not, allowing them to intervene before any attack.

Next Step

Now it's up to you to look at this issue and to go and do some research: find out about your country and the government's position on internet surveillance.

Points to consider:

- Where the line between national security and privacy should lie.
- Who your data should be shared with.
- Should there be more transparency in how and when our data is shared?
- Is it the place of the UN to monitor censorship?

You will be asked to submit a country position paper to me. Position papers are a 50 word account of your country's position on each of the topics up for debate. You can send it to me at: nbawhit11@edubuzz.org

To find out more about this issue

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/DigitalAge/Pages/DigitalAgeIndex.aspx>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-22749824>

<http://thenextweb.com/insider/2015/08/15/how-the-government-can-spy-on-you-and-what-you-can-do-about-it/#gref>

To find out more about your country

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/country_profiles/default.stm