

**FROM: International Working Group on Video Surveillance
Press Release
EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01AM 8th JUNE 2013**

Attn: News Desks

-- BEGINS --

**INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP ON VIDEO SURVEILLANCE CONDEMNS
FACEWATCH “SPOT THE CRIMINAL” WANTED POSTER SYSTEM**

The International Working Group on Video Surveillance (IWGVS) has today issued a statement condemning Facewatch [1], the electronic wanted poster system used by UK businesses and police. Facewatch has also been launched in Australia and the United States.

The statement was issued to coincide with 1984 Action Day commemorating the publication of George Orwell's novel '1984', which was first published 8th June 1949.

The IWGVS statement is as follows:

We, as concerned individuals and civil rights groups from around the world, call upon all those connected with the creation, promotion and use of the Facewatch crime reporting and image sharing system to cease and desist.

We believe that:

When evaluating a technology such as Facewatch, which allows for the creation and distribution of wanted posters, consideration must be given to the wider impact on society as a whole, not simply to legal compliance within narrowly defined, regulatory frameworks.

Facewatch and its associated App present images of suspects out of context, treat hearsay as fact and threaten the concepts of due process and innocent until proved guilty. Distributing images over the internet through such an App is using these images as entertainment and invites users to play “spot the criminal”.

Such a system will lead to cases of mistaken identity and defamation of character.

Facewatch forms part of a ubiquitous surveillance culture that spreads fear and distrust and is undermining an already weakened sense of community.

A healthy society requires people to work together, to stand up for their beliefs and the beliefs of others, and to interact freely without being under constant surveillance.

People must be given the freedom to understand that it is only through the interactions between human beings that crime and other societal problems can be alleviated. Undermining these interactions, distancing people from communities, asking people to place blind trust in surveillance technology, wanted posters and pseudo-crime fighting Apps is rotting our communities.

For UK Media enquiries contact Charles Farrier at pressuk@iwgvs.org , for international media enquiries contact press@iwgvs.org

Facewatch was recently launched in the West Midlands [2] and today in Birmingham

campaigners will be raising awareness of this and other surveillance issues in the city centre via human CCTV street theatre, readings from '1984' and music.

Photos of the human CCTV street theatre are available at:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/no-cctv/sets/72157633948273944/>



To arrange an interview/photo shoot in Birmingham on 8th June contact Steve Jolly at steve_jolly@no-cctv.org.uk

-- ENDS --

References:

- [1] <https://www.facewatch.co.uk>
- [2] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-22656258>

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Facewatch and the associated mobile phone App 'Facewatch id' is a CCTV image sharing system. Facewatch calls on members of the public to identify people in CCTV images relating to low level crimes. Images are also shared within corporate and local "groups" to alert members of the group of "potential criminal activity". Facewatch is essentially a wanted poster social network, that trivialises crime fighting and asks the user to spend no more time identifying a person accused of a crime than "liking" a news story about their favourite celebrity.

2. In the past wanted posters were an extraordinary measure, used to highlight the most dangerous, prolific or otherwise notorious known criminals. Such practices date back to the wild west, where lynch mobs often hunted down such fugitives. More recently in the United States the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Ten Most Wanted List and associated posters have been used to draw attention to the most sought after fugitives since 1950. Facewatch reverses this practice and uses wanted poster for suspects of low level crime.

3. The International Working Group on Video Surveillance is a group of individuals and civil liberties groups concerned about the impact of surveillance cameras on society. It was created at the Freedom Not Fear 2011 event in Brussels. Their homepage is at www.iwgvs.org

4. For further information contact press@iwgvs.org

5. 1984 Action Day is an annual event on 8th June, the date of the publication of '1984'. See <http://1984actionday.wordpress.com> for more information