



MASS SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGIES AND THE FUTURE OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

An Age Old Debate Revisited: The “Freedom vs. Security” Dilemma
in the 21st Century

On September 28, the European Liberal Forum (ELF) organized a Ralf Dahrendorf Roundtable Event with the support of Friedrich Naumann Foundation Turkey office, Freedom Research Association and International Democratic Institute on mass surveillance technologies and the future of liberal democracy.

The event was opened by the Executive Director of Freedom research Association Medeni Sungur who illustrated the dystopia represented by the mass surveillance theme by referring to Georges Orwell and his 1984 novel published in 1949.

Head of FNF Turkey Office Dr. Hans-Georg Fleck then joined with his welcome notes, by first thanking the ELF and briefly recalling the central aspect of the ELF's work. Preceding the Ralf Dahrendorf Roundtable, Dr. Fleck recalled the role of Prof. Dahrendorf as a leading liberal figure in the 1970s and 1980s.

The panel discussion titled “Ralf Dahrendorf Roundtable: An Age-Old Debate Revisited: Freedom vs. Security Dilemma in the 21st Century by European Liberal Forum” was moderated by Nevşin Mengü from Deutsche Welle. The panelists were Dr. Salih Bıçakçı, Assoc. Prof. of International Relations at Kadir Has University in Istanbul, Andreas Haggman from the Information Security Group at the Royal Holloway University of London and Dr. Demir Murat Seyrek, Senior Policy Advisor of the European Foundation for Democracy in Brussel. Ms. Mengü introduced the discussion by mentioning the control in Turkey of all media by the political authorities through the Supreme Board of Radio and Television which supervises traditional media such as television and newspapers but also online media such as YouTube and Netflix.

Dr. Salih Bıçakçı then took the floor by announcing that we live in risk society and that it is easy to follow someone with the traces s/he leaves on the internet. According to him, we face a new age of technological authoritarianism in which each information is being used



RALF DAHRENDORF **ROUND**TABLES

to influence individuals. Dr. Bıçakçı mentioned the existence of intrusive ads, and while he underlined the use of smartphones as helpful tools.

Adopting a different stance, Dr. Demir Murat Seyrek stressed that radical organizations are using advanced technologies and that many attacks were prevented thanks to the use of advanced technologies by secret services. He also pointed out that the use of high technology was very accessible and thus warned that banning high tech would lead to a vast black market.

Taking the discussion from a different perspective, Andreas Haggman informed that rather than trying to look for answers, he preferred to look for the right questions and first wondered whether freedom was only a matter of privacy. Turning the conversation around completely, Mr. Haggman asked: "Who is the threat and who is free?"

The event continued with group discussions where participants discussed several sub-topics.