

Hywel Francis
Chair, Joint Human Rights Select Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

2 December 2014

Dear Hywel,

Surveillance of Journalists

I write in my capacity as Secretary of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) Parliamentary Group regarding our concerns about the potential threats to article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights posed by the growing use of surveillance powers to monitor the lawful activity of journalists and undermine the confidentiality of sources, an essential element of a free press.

The Parliamentary Group has been informed that NUJ members are extremely concerned at the emerging picture regarding the extent of the police's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) (2000), where the Met along with other police forces have applied for journalists' communications data, without their knowledge or assent, in order to identify confidential sources (currently under review by Sir Paul Kennedy, the Interception of Communications Commissioner).

As may also be aware, the NUJ has recently instructed Bhatt Murphy Solicitors to bring a legal claim on behalf of six members – including high profile names such as the TV broadcaster and journalists Mark Thomas - who have been subject to surveillance by the Met Police and have obtained data about themselves held by the 'National Domestic Extremism and Disorder Intelligence Unit' (NDEDIU). We understand that the legal claim challenges the surveillance and retention of data on the basis that it is unnecessary, disproportionate and not in accordance with the law. Journalists and union members have no way of knowing the circumstances in which their activities are monitored, retained, disclosed and systematically stored on secret police 'domestic extremism' databases.

In light of this, we would therefore urge you to further your Committee's investigations into the extent of police surveillance of journalists, and to consider inviting the Commissioner to give evidence to your Committee in the light of the NUJ's legal action.

If you would be interested in reading the full written claim regarding the evidence to be brought forward in the legal claim against the Met, we would happily put you in touch with the NUJ's legal representatives. We would also urge your Committee to invite Mark Thomas and other claimants to give oral evidence on their experience regarding police surveillance of journalists and the inappropriate retention of their data. We would be happy to facilitate contact in this regard.

I would be grateful if you could direct any correspondence on this matter to Simeon Andrews, Parliamentary Co-ordinator at simeonl.andrews@parliament.uk or call 0207 801 2731.

Yours sincerely,



John McDonnell MP
Secretary, NUJ Parliamentary Group