

How Democracies Spy on Their Citizens | The New Yorker

By Ronan Farrow

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The parliament of Catalonia, the autonomous region in Spain, sits on the edge of Barcelona's Old City, in the remains of a fortified citadel constructed by King Philip V to monitor the restive local population. The citadel was built with forced labor from hundreds of Catalans, and its remaining structures and gardens are for many a reminder of oppression. Today, a majority of Catalan parliamentarians support independence for the region, which the Spanish government has deemed unconstitutional. In 2017, as Catalonia prepared for a referendum on independence, Spanish police arrested at least twelve separatist politicians. On the day of the referendum, which received the support of ninety per cent of voters despite low turnout, police raids of polling stations injured hundreds of civilians. Leaders of the independence movement, some of whom live in exile across Europe, now meet in private and communicate through encrypted messaging platforms.

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