

June 4, 2002

Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on the Judiciary  
2138 Rayburn HOB, Washington, DC 20515

Representative John Conyers  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on the Judiciary  
2138 Rayburn HOB, Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Sensenbrenner and Representative Conyers:

We write to you on behalf of a broad range of organizations across the country about the decision of the Attorney General to loosen the guidelines that restrict the surveillance of religious and political organizations in the United States. This decision raises matters of Constitutional authority that require immediate Congressional attention. We do not believe that the Attorney General has the legal authority to pursue domestic spying. We urge you to conduct oversight hearings on the new guidelines.

We are particularly concerned about elements of the guidelines that appear to give the FBI the authority to search through electronic databases without satisfying any legal standard or requiring any judicial review. Such an approach to police authority in the United States is directly contrary to the First and Fourth Amendment and the system of checks and balances established by our form of government.

We are also concerned that the changes authorize unchecked surveillance of lawful religious and political activity, and that such surveillance will be targeted against Arab-Americans, Muslim and immigrants among others.

We urge you to convene a public hearing with the Attorney General so that the following issues may be addressed:

- How will the changes proposed by the Attorney General impact the First Amendment freedoms of political and religious organizations in the United States?
- What is the legal basis for the Attorney General's decision and how does this decision compare with his current authority?
- What means of Congressional oversight will be created to prevent abuse and what means of public reporting will be established to ensure that the public is fully informed about these activities?
- For what period of time does the Attorney General anticipate the FBI will operate with this authority?

We would be pleased to work with you and your staff on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Marc Rotenberg  
Executive Director  
Electronic Privacy Information Center

Nan Aron  
President  
Alliance for Justice

Kareem Shora  
Legal Advisor  
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

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Director Washington Office  
American Civil Liberties Union

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Emily Sheketoff, Executive Director  
American Library Association Washington Office

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[through June 4, 2002]