

Bangladesh to Deploy Israeli Mass Wiretapping System

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Palestinians in Gaza shopping for the latest smartphone. Technology Bangladesh is set to buy from Verint was developed using systemic spying on ordinary Palestinians. Majdi Fathi/APA images

The Israeli-American firm [Verint Systems](#) looks set to win another mass public surveillance contract in South Asia, this time in Bangladesh.

The Dhaka-based [newspaper The Daily Star reported](#) last week that Verint is one of several firms set to share a Ministry of Home Affairs contract for the mass wiretapping of Bangladeshi phone and internet communications.

This is the latest example of technology Israel developed to intercept Palestinian telecommunications being exported for governments abroad to monitor their citizenry.

Bangladesh formed the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC) [in 2010](#) to expand its surveillance capabilities. The Bangladeshi government at the time could monitor and record no more than [5,000 devices](#) at one time. Later technology expanded that reach to 50,000 devices in 2013.

According to *The Daily Star*, the “present NTMC monitoring system is old and lacks the capacity to control the modern information technology.” The paper explains that “more modern equipment is required to assume more control over obstructing or recording users’ telephonic or online communications so that intelligence activities could be conducted more smoothly.”

To enhance its capabilities the NTMC is buying a series of monitoring systems from seven firms including Verint Systems.

Selling anti-Palestinian expertise

[Unit 8200](#) is the technology division of the Israeli military’s Intelligence Corps. Former Unit 8200 member [Idan Tandler explained in March](#) that “instead of relying on outside research and development, the 8200’s technologists work directly with their ‘customers’ (the intelligence officers). All of the unit’s technology systems, from analytics to data mining, intercept, and intelligence management, are designed and built in-house. Technologists sit side by side with their users on a daily basis to ensure that their ‘products’ meet the intelligence officers’ specific requirements.”

Another former Unit 8200 officer, Gil Kerbs, [wrote in 2007](#) how Verint’s then most popular

system the Logger “is based on the Unit’s technology.”

Unit 8200 and other elite Israeli [military units are](#) “the nation’s equivalent of Harvard, Princeton and Yale” and their “graduates, after leaving service, can parlay their cutting-edge snooping and hacking skills into jobs in Israel, Silicon Valley or Boston’s high-tech corridor.”

As *The Financial Times* reports, the education comes from, “snoop[ing] on Palestinians living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank or naval and air blockade in the Gaza Strip, according to a whistle-blowing leak that created a stir last year. In an open letter in September 2014, published by Israel’s *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper and broadcast on Channel 10, a group of 43 serving and former 8200 reservists revealed what they said were coercive spying tactics being used on innocent Palestinians, including the collection of embarrassing sexual, financial or other information.”

That data collection and surveillance of Palestinians is the basis for the technological expertise ex-Israeli military personnel bring to Verint and other Israeli security and surveillance firms. This is what is now sought by the Bangladeshi government.

The Bangladeshi government says the system will be deployed to surveil “criminals” and those that threaten national security. The government has been repressing Bangladesh’s ongoing labor insurgency raising concerns about what populations the government is defining as criminal.

Verint has sold similar mass telecom surveillance systems to [India](#), [Mexico](#) and most famously, to the United States where Verint [was implicated](#) with another Israeli firm in the National Security Agency wiretapping scandal.

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