

I don' t have anything to hide

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Dear friends,

I can' t evade the growing news of increasing government surveillance of citizens internet usage. In the US, UK, Germany and many others there have been moves towards enabling a 'man in the middle' on any encrypted message, website, or other activity online [c.f. 1]. This is also particularly targeted towards citizens, not corporations. The latter are offered more protections as, you guessed it, they are more financially valuable to the legislator' s government. Now in Australia there is a substantial interest in following suit, breaking encryption in the name of "thinking of the children" [1].

Much more technically minded humans than I have written up commentary on why inserting someone between encrypted internet traffic is a terrible idea. But it boils down to "its not encrypted any more" . And to be clear, for any luddites out there, encryption is not what people use to evade the law. It is a necessary part of free, open and democratic communication on the internet. Inserting the government between every message you send, every website you visit, and every social media post you read is a positive only for privacy invasion -not the protection of children.

But there' s something missing from recent commentary about global internet decryption movements -and it' s not about technology. Rather, what we have seen globally is an incredible surge in fascism, rising interest in regressive and punishing social policy, and the progressive overreach of surveillance capitalism. What, I ask at this juncture, might capital benefit from at first enabling a "backdoor" into everything done on computers, tablets, phones, fridges, and so on? We have already seen the deeply invasive and problematic grasp of internet advertisers. I do not believe it is a leap to assume that shortly after any government is successful in enforcing an MITM for encrypted traffic online that hackers, advertisers and capital will insert itself into the same relation.

I' m not sure about you, but with the proliferation of fascists not seen since Hitler, giving up my right to send private messages so the government can surveil me, allegedly to "protect children" , is a terribly good idea. In Australia we have already seen successive crack-downs on protest activism, what was previously considered a citizens right. Is it a far cry to think that a "child protecting" privacy fracture wouldn' t be used by the police to identify and arrest protest organisers? While just ten years ago I would have felt like a raving lunatic suggesting that government were even interested in the messaging of citizens, or the feverdream of a conspiracy theorist at best, we are facing a modernity of animal farm [2]. Yet even animal farm is banned [3] and yes, they can use this very method to arrest you for downloading it.

I don' t have a great deal more to say here, other than vote accordingly. And by that I mean, very seriously consider voting #1 the Greens and/or Socialists at the next election. The only serious political force on the left (and by that I really mean centre-left) are these parties. The labor party of 2024 is such a far right squaller that they simply eject dissenters at the centre [4] and notably who are on the side of peace -unlike Albanese who' s unyielding and deeply hypocritical support of genocide is against more than 80% of the populace [5].

Sometimes it feels like we' re in a living nightmare. Fascism has returned in full force. Privacy invasion is par for the course. The planet is burning, freezing, and dying. But, fuck it, line must go up. What the fuck is wrong with you, wake up?!

In solidarity,

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/article/2024/jul/02/porn-sites-and-meta-among-those-tasked-with-drafting-australias-online-child-safety-rules> <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/article/2024/jun/21/australia-esafety-commissioner-child-abuse-detection-online-safety>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2024/feb/22/apple-warns-australian-proposal-to-force-tech-companies-to-scan-cloud-services-could-lead-to-mass-surveillance>
3. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/books/2023/09/29/banned-books-read-these-books-now-and-why-in-defense-of-books/71008499007/>
4. <https://theconversation.com/fatima-payman-breached-caucus-solidarity-what-does-this-mean-and-why-is-it-so-significant-233660>
5. <https://www.crikey.com.au/2024/05/29/protester-prime-minister-anthony-albanese-israel-palestine/>