**Should the privacy of Convicted criminals and terrorists be protected?**

This article provides a reflective summary of the debate that was held on 23rd February 2018 12 pm at the Mill Studio building. Five students participated in the debate and they were divided into two teams. The two teams argued their points with one supporting the motion and one opposing it. The chosen topic that was debated on was whether the privacy entitlement for suspect terrorism and major crime offenders should be reduced. The debated ended with an opportunity for the audience to ask questions.

The debate started by the team speakers supporting the motion and they began by providing some facts about terrorist’s attacks and criminal crime that occur worldwide with some examples being given. Every time on the TV, there is news about terrorism, people getting hurt and attacking. The fact is that these atrocities occur in the real world and people will get arrested and convicted. These are people who have made a conscious decision to remove other people’s rights so why do the people need to protect them? This is the reason why the supporting team proposed a reduce privacy entitlement for suspect terrorism and major crime offenders. The against speakers argued that although these people may have committed these crimes, the individuals right to privacy is violated and if they are only a suspect, it may have a negative effect on them. Some people can be discriminated or identified as a suspect depending on their religion and minority group. For this reason, the against team think that the privacy rights of individual should be protected because it not only affects them but also people around them such as their family members and friends.

The starting speaker for the supporting the motion gave examples of attacks that have occurred. Some examples mentioned were the Manchester attacks where 22 peoples were killed including an 8-year-old girl. In the London bridge attack, 8 people were killed and in Finsbury park 1 person was killed and 11 people were injured. The attack on the London underground was mentioned. Some statistic of crime was provided which included 23000 cases of paedophilia reported in England and Wales alone. That’s a lot of people for it to be an issue. Every day more than 3000 people die and £24million is laundered because of fraud and illegal activities. The speaker said “I have had enough. That’s it, Stop”. She thinks it is important you address it because the crime rate is increasing every day.

They defined a convicted terrorist or offenders as someone who has already committed a crime. For example, somebody who downloaded pornography material about children. These are the people who have made a conscious decision to remove other people human rights. She said, “I am not going to respect these people’s right and their privacy and I am going to invade it. They deserve to have their privacy taken and they deserve to be watched”.

The speaker gave an example of 7-year-old Megan Kanka. She was brutally raped, murdered and her body chucked in the forest. The crimes were committed by Jesse Timmendequas who was a paedophile already convicted of similar crimes on a 5-year-old and 7-year-old. In the US, if you are a sex offender or convicted criminal, your information would be registered in the database and the information made public. The speaker showed how such information can be view by visiting Megan’s las website and searching for people in Los Angeles in California. Information such as what they look like, what crime they committed, height, weight and date of birth are available.

If America has such a law so why does the UK not have one? The speaker said that a similar law needs to be passed in the UK which will enable people to find out about convicted criminals. The team supporting the proposed motion argued that such a surveillance method will help reduce such a risk but not eliminate it. They raised a question on why the UK protected the privacy of such criminals.

The team opposing the motion argued that setting up a criminal database like this does not change what has happened. The speaker argued that if such information was available online, it would bring a lot of shame on the person. The speaker said, “shame on the name does not change anything”. For people who are only suspects in a crime, this may have negative effects on their life. The speaker suggested that such information would make it easy to discriminate against people based on their religious and minority groups. Because of such discrimination, people would have to go through more checks in the airport. It would also make finding jobs difficult and they would feel stigmatised. It makes it difficult to rehabilitate such individuals which defeat the purpose of a justice system.

The speaker said in the UK, 5 million cameras reported cost a lot of money to this democracy. This money can be used to rehabilitate suspects to turn them into better individuals. He said, “privacy has been recognised as a fundamental aspect of human rights”.

The second speaker from the supporting team said, “if you go back to the question, why suspect criminals not saying Asian, Chinese, Muslim whatever”. We are saying people who already done a crime and have done something wrong. The speaker suggested that in 1800 and early 1900 when the Irish bombed the UK, the government’s MI5 and MI6 scrutinised the Irish people to find who was doing the bombing.

Some questions were asked to the supporting speakers regarding the safety of suspected criminals and potentially the public attacking them if the database containing the information was made available publicly. Is it alright to give a person human rights if they have violated other people’s human rights? The speaker suggested that it depends on the situation. There could be a degree of regret in their actions. The law has already predefined punishments for such acts and has punished them accordingly. The justice system should decide. It depends if the person is a suspect or is a convicted criminal.

There was also a question about whether such a system of recording individual information would stop terrorism and criminal activities? The speakers responded by saying that it would not stop but help reduce criminal activities. We live in a world where such crime cannot be completely avoided and are bound to occur.

There was also a question asked about what a serious crime is and how it is defined? The speaker said that serious crimes are got from NCA (National Crime Agency) website and included cases that are being investigated.

Someone asked the speaker about surveillance on normal people. She responded by saying that they proposed reducing the privacy rights of people who are already convicted. She said, “We are focusing here on criminal and yes I agree the surveillance on normal people is not good. I am talking about people who already made a decision to do something wrong so why we are protecting them. I don’t understand”.

The debate concluded by the speakers of both teams giving their conclusions. The supporting team speaker said that she is not saying that these people should not have human rights or rights to privacy but should have reduced right to protect the people who are not doing wrong things. If there is a chance to stop a terrorist attack, why not take it? If there is a chance to stop a child being abused, then why can we not take it? The speaker thinks that we need to take a more active approach to seeing a crime.

The speaker for the against team gave his conclusion and said “Let’s not give the government the chance to discriminate between people. We are all equal because we live in a democracy, once we start discriminating between people, then we are not a democracy anymore”.

After the debate ended, an opportunity was given to the audience to vote by raising their hands. The first vote was for the supporting team and the second vote was for the team against who seemed to have got more votes.