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WORLD PRACTICE

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24 July 2015

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France passes new surveillance law in wake of Charlie Hebdo attack French parliament approves 'intrusive' surveillance laws after Charlie Hebdo attack

On 23rd July 2015, The French parliament has overwhelmingly approved sweeping new surveillance powers in the wake of the terrorist attacks in Paris in January that killed 17 people at the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo and a kosher grocery in Paris.

The new bill, which allows intelligence agencies to tap phones and emails without seeking permission from a judge, sparked protests from rights groups who claimed it would legalize highly intrusive surveillance methods without guarantees for individual freedom and privacy.

Protesters for civil liberties groups launched a last-ditch campaign against the bill under the banner "24 hours before 1984" in reference to George Orwell's dystopian novel about life under an all-knowing dictatorship. Groups including Amnesty International warned of "extremely large and intrusive powers" without judicial controls. Current surveillance laws have not been updated since 1991 and proponents say the new bill will bring them up to date and properly govern methods that are already being used.

Despite opposition from green and hard-left MPs, the bill won the overwhelming backing of the majority of MPs from the Socialist and rightwing UMP parties, which said it was necessary to tackle the terrorist risk. The bill was passed in the national assembly by 438 votes to 86, with a handful of no votes from Socialist MPs.

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Germany passes strict cyber-security law to protect 'critical infrastructure'

In the wake of ever-increasing cyber-security threats, on 13th July 2015, Germany has passed legislation ordering that over 2,000 essential service providers implement new minimum information security standards or face penalties if they fail to do so within two years.

The law passed its final hurdle in the upper house of the German parliament, the Bundesrat, on Friday after having passed the lower house in June.

The law will affect institutions listed as "critical infrastructure," such as transportation, health, water utilities, telecommunications providers, as well as finance and insurance firms.

The new set of rules also obliges telecommunications providers to warn customers when their connection was abused, for example in a botnet attack, and store the traffic data for up

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to six months for investigative purposes, thus potentially violating privacy rights.

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The planned measures are an “important step” as IT security is “a central component of the public and internal security,” said Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière as cited by Der Spiegel.

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