

## **Protection of civil rights while countering terrorism**

The question of how to counter terrorism has become one of the most eminent questions in the world of today. The world is very aware of the threat of terrorism nowadays, especially after the terrorist attacks in New York in 2001, the train-bombings in Madrid in March 2004 and also the tube-bombings in London in July 2005. Enormous safety precautions were implemented to make airports and public places less vulnerable to possible terrorist attacks. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 especially the USA gave intelligence agencies broad powers with few restrictions and regulations. The aim was on finding people responsible for the terrorist attacks and on finding those ones who planned future attacks. The question of the protection of human rights in the process of the accomplishment of this goal took the back seat.

In the process of fighting terrorism there have been several violations to the right of privacy and the principle of non-discrimination. Furthermore there is evidence of torture and inhuman treatment, particularly performed in Abu Graib and Guantanamo Bay by American intelligence agencies.

The main function of intelligence agencies is the detection of potential threats to a country's security by gathering data and important information, secret surveillance of individuals, secret raids of houses and flats and the monitoring of electronic communication, such as mobile phones and internet accounts.

The focus should now lie on minimizing or even eradicating violations to the human rights in the processing of these intelligence agencies in the future.

This will demand for more oversight and political and legal accountability of individual states. Consistent elucidation and transparency of intelligence agencies will be needed to guarantee a functioning of these agencies compliant to the human rights.

The whole topic has been exposed to a huge controversy on the globe. On the one hand the definite need for more safety for countries which have been declared an explicit target of terrorist organizations such as Al –Quaida, and on the other hand the striving for privacy of individuals, without having to fear to be under surveillance at all times, losing the feeling of freedom in their home country.

Especially the policy of the USA with their unrestricted intelligence agencies has been part of the discussion.

In Germany the full body scanner which is to be introduced soon makes big waves in the nation. The development to the glassy human without privacy totally controlled by the state is feared by the most. Finding the balance between following the human rights and providing safety for one's country will be the crucial point of this discussion.