

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/german-oecd-national-contact-point-20-12-2013,45655.html>

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- Internet

Digital weapons

## German OECD National Contact Point unwilling to investigate role of German company in human rights abuse in Bahrain

20 December 2013

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A complaint filed with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) against Trovicor GmbH, a German company accused of selling surveillance technology to Bahrain, has been rejected on almost every count, the German National Contact Point (NCP) for the OECD announced.

In February 2013, Reporters Without Borders, the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), Privacy International, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and Bahrain Watch filed a complaint with the NCP which accused Trovicor of breaching the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, all of which concern human rights, by exporting surveillance technology. In Bahrain this technology has enabled grave human rights abuses, including the arrest, detention and torture of political opponents and dissidents by the government of the Arab Gulf state Bahrain.

The complainants criticise the decision of the NCP, which has suggested to accept the complaint for further investigation solely regarding Trovicor's due diligence procedures. The complainants consider the participation in a subsequent mediation process which would leave the most substantial allegations regarding Trovicor's involvement in Bahrain undiscussed, as suggested by the German NCP, an unacceptable outcome of the proceedings.

In their appeal against the decision, the complainants have maintained that their primary accusation, namely that Trovicor breached the OECD Guidelines by maintaining technology in Bahrain that assisted the Bahraini authorities in monitoring and even detention and torture of activists, has been sufficiently substantiated. Involvement in Bahrain was admitted by a spokesman for Trovicor's predecessor Nokia Siemens Networks, has been confirmed by employees in 2010 and has never been denied by Trovicor.

The German NCP, however, holds that the involvement of Trovicor in Bahrain were not sufficiently substantiated, and that an "in-depth examination is only possible in relation to the general risk management of Trovicor". "Especially for confidential areas such as the surveillance technology, it is unreasonable to expect the victims of serious human rights violations to submit the complete chain of evidence," said Miriam Saage-Maaß from ECCHR. "If one raises the bar to such a high level even for the decision of a complaint to be examined, then the OECD complaints procedure would be obsolete."

The decision of the German NCP stand in stark contrast with the response of the British NCP in a parallel complaint against UK-based company Gamma International regarding its involvement in Bahrain, which was accepted for further investigation by the NCP in June 2013.

"The de facto rejection of our complaint against Trovicor is a disappointment, but it will not stop the fight against digital weapons," said Christian Mihr, executive director of Reporters Without Borders Germany. „Internationally, the perspective is growing that the limitless use of digital surveillance technology constitutes a threat to press freedom and other human rights." Mihr referred to the recent agreement on including surveillance technologies in the Wassenaar Arrangement on export controls.

Eric King, Head of Research at Privacy International, said: "The NCP's unwillingness to examine Trovicor's role in human rights abuses in Bahrain is shameful. By failing to investigate the extent of the company's wrongdoing, the NCP is turning a blind eye to how German made surveillance technology is being used by the Bahraini government to target and suppress pro-democracy voices."

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**Other images**



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170 x 67 píxels

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