

Geneva, July 16 (AP) - The United Nations' top human rights official says her office sees strong evidence that governments on every continent are hiding their increasing reliance on private companies to snoop on citizens' digital lives.

U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay says the lack of transparency extends to governments' "de facto coercion" of companies to gain broad access to information and data on citizens without them knowing about it.

Her report Wednesday to the U.N. General Assembly says her office's concerns about the erosion in privacy have increased since last year's revelations of U.S. and British mass surveillance, and stricter laws are needed to prevent violations and ensure accountability when digital technology and surveillance is misused.

It warns that mass surveillance is becoming "a dangerous habit rather than an exceptional measure."