Magora app technology: helping one despot at a time

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London-based software developer Magora has caused outrage by allegedly assisting dictatorships in their repressive security infrastructures. The projects in question, which involve advanced computer applications, have been linked to methods of repressive state control by the governments of Saudi Arabia, Syria and Zimbabwe. Critics have questioned the legality of such relationships in light of international sanctions.

Controversial Relationships with Saudi Arabia

It has been revealed that in 2015, the Saudi Royal Family commissioned a specialist security app from the London based developers. Involving sophisticated face recognition technology, the app was to designed to maximize the security around the King of Saudi Arabia during public events. Sources close to the King confirm that his staff requested Magora build an app to be used by his security personnel and other Saudi dignitaries for use at public events. We can confirm that the app was deployed during the G20 summit in Turkey in November 2015. The app has been linked to the imprisonment of Omar Faruq, a Saudi Arabian G20 protester who was returned to Riyadh and detained without charge after routine security checks performed by the app. He still awaits trial.

Increasing controversy surrounding Saudi Arabia's human rights abuses has led to calls for Magora to cease its relationship with the Saudi government. Martin Donnelly, Labour backbencher and member of the House of Commons Human Rights Committee, commented, “In light of the repression faced by citizens every day in Saudi Arabia, we need to decide whether we want British companies reinforcing the tools of the Saudi state."

Software experts from the University of Glasgow say that the highly sophisticated app was designed to be used on tablets to take pictures of individuals coming into contact with Saudi officials, including King Salman. It is believed that the app uses face recognition software and cross-checks the unique facial dimensions of the individual with a terrorist database held by various security services across the world. The app is able to inform security personnel in real time whether the person scanned is found on any databases and alerts the user via a warning message.

The Parliamentary Security Committee has said that a parliamentary inquiry will be held concerning the relationship between British businesses and the Saudi government, though as of this writing no date has been set.

Magora's Mobile App Linked To Assad Regime

Other high profile clients benefiting from Magora app development include Syrian President, Bashar Al Assad. Responding to questions from this author, former Magora employees confirmed that the Syrian Security Directorate approached Magora about a custom built solution for their security surveillance systems. It is reported that they requested an app that could communicate data from GPS cameras to military mobile handsets. The app was developed around the regime's network of surveillance cameras located in shops, streets, parks and restaurants throughout the cities of Damascus, Homs and Aleppo. The surveillance network allows for monitoring of rebel activity. Speaking on condition of anonymity, ex-software developers at the London firm confirmed that the network feeds data back to a communication intelligence centre in central Damascus. The specially designed app then feeds data from the communications centre directly to army patrols in the area, allowing government forces to respond to threats immediately.

The app is credited with helping the regime maintain its grip on power. The head of Internal Affairs, Rafiq Shahadah, credited the app as “a crucial tool in the defeat of terrorists." Regarding the legality of providing such services in light of international sanctions against Syria, it is believed that Magora had sold the software via a subsidiary in Switzerland. If true, it is unlikely that any charges can be brought against the company.

From Assad to Mugabe

Upon further investigation, it has also been revealed that Magora is in the process of fulfilling a contract for Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe. The custom-built app allows local police departments to access a database of political activists managed and compiled by the country's central intelligence

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agency. If police departments apprehend a suspected political dissident, they can cross-check their details on the app, and if the individual is matched on the database, they can be legally disposed of. Robert Mugabe, who himself is believed to have commissioned the bespoke app, said at a recent press conference, “This is a great step in the democratic process of Zimbabwe. All my enemies will be liquidated. I am just waiting for police to pick up Morgan Tsvangirai and look him up on the app. Then they can shoot him. That will be a great day for Zimbabwe indeed."

Andrew Lobel, director of Magora, declined to comment.

Magora app development company specialises in the creation of secure business apps. They design bespoke solutions across a number of industries. Have you heard about their project for North Korea?

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