

23 April 2023

Mr Michael Murray  
CEO, Frasers Group  
By email only.

CC. Mr Mike Ashley

Dear Mr Murray,

We are writing to you as CEO of Frasers Group regarding the use of live facial recognition (LFR) cameras in Flannels, House of Fraser and Sports Direct stores across the UK.

The use of facial recognition technology for surveillance purposes is deeply divisive and threatens the privacy and data rights of your customers. As parliamentarians and NGOs committed to upholding and protecting human rights, we are writing to you to urge you to stop using live facial recognition cameras across your business network.

Live facial recognition technology has well-evidenced issues with privacy, inaccuracy, and race and gender discrimination. LFR inverts the vital democratic principle of suspicion preceding surveillance and treats everyone who passes the camera like a potential criminal.

The technology obtains the facial biometric data – information as sensitive as a fingerprint – of every customer entering the store to check them against your privately created watchlist. This is the equivalent of performing an identity check on every single customer. Data protection and human rights laws set a high bar for the processing of such sensitive data, in order to protect the privacy and security of everyone in the UK. Use of live facial recognition in a retail setting is a disproportionate infringement of shoppers' right to privacy.

Despite its invasive nature, LFR technology has been proven to be inaccurate and an ineffective tool in the fight against crime. To date, 87% of alerts generated by the Metropolitan Police's own live facial recognition system have been inaccurate.<sup>1</sup> The poor accuracy of LFR technology also disproportionately impacts people of colour and women. A study from US government body, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), found that facial recognition on average misidentified women and

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<sup>1</sup> Calculated from Metropolitan Police Force statistics. Of 173 total matches, 150 were false positives and 23 were true positives. See figures from each Metropolitan Police deployment of live facial recognition at <https://bigbrotherwatch.org.uk/campaigns/stop-facial-recognition/#facial-recognition-uk>

people of colour at higher rates than Caucasian people.<sup>2</sup> In a public setting, such misidentifications can be extremely distressing for the person involved and can have wider ramifications for their lives and livelihoods.

As you will know, as a private business, you have obligations when processing customers' data under data protection law. Despite asking your customer services department, campaigners have been unable to obtain the privacy policy for your use of facial recognition surveillance, although you are obliged to make this publicly available so that customers are able to ascertain how their data is being processed and for what purposes.

Whilst we recognise the need to operate security systems in your stores, live facial recognition technology is invasive and discriminatory. We urge you to end the use of these cameras in Flannels, House of Fraser and Sports Direct stores across the country.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Diane Abbott MP  
Apsana Begum MP  
Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle  
Baroness Blower  
Richard Burgon MP  
Dawn Butler MP  
Ian Byrne MP  
Rt Hon Alistair Carmichael MP  
Baroness Chakrabarti  
Wendy Chamberlain MP  
Lord Clement-Jones  
Daisy Cooper MP  
Rt Hon David Davis MP  
Lord Davies of Brixton  
Tim Farron MP  
Richard Foord MP  
Chris Green MP  
Sarah Green MP  
Lord Hendy KC

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<sup>2</sup> Facial recognition fails on race, government study says – BBC, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2019:  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-50865437>

Christine Jardine MP  
Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb  
Ian Lavery MP  
Clive Lewis MP  
Rebecca Long-Bailey MP  
Caroline Lucas MP  
Andy MacDonald MP  
Stuart McDonald MP  
John McDonnell MP  
Ian Mearns MP  
Helen Morgan MP  
Sarah Olney MP  
Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP  
Lord Sikka  
Jamie Stone MP  
Lord Strasburger  
Lord Strathcarron  
Zarah Sultana MP  
Sam Tarry MP  
Alison Thewliss MP  
Sir Charles Walker MP  
Mick Whitley MP  
Nadia Whittome MP

Silkie Carlo – Big Brother Watch  
Sam Grant – Liberty  
Dr. Ksenia Bakina – Privacy International