



Defending human rights, strengthening **INTERPOL**

Police and prosecutors across the world need to work together to fight serious and organised crime. INTERPOL, the world's largest international police cooperation organisation, provides valuable tools to help them do so.

Unfortunately, some countries are misusing INTERPOL's systems to target exiled dissidents and refugees beyond their frontiers. This can have a devastating impact on the people concerned, whose reputations are undermined and live in fear, at risk of arrest.

Fair Trials International is campaigning for simple reforms which will help INTERPOL detect and prevent these abuses, enhancing confidence in its systems, and which will enable people who are wrongly targeted to achieve justice quickly and fairly.

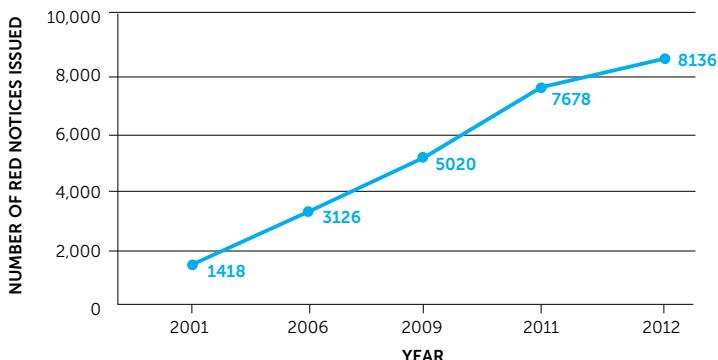
What is INTERPOL?

INTERPOL is the world's largest international police organisation, with 190 member countries and an annual budget of €70 million. One of INTERPOL's key functions is the circulation of wanted alerts ("alerts") including "Red Notices" and "Diffusions", by which a country can seek a person's arrest with a view to extradition.

Over the past decade, there has been a steady rise in the use of these alerts. In 2012 alone, over 8,000 new Red Notices were issued. These alerts show up on police databases all over the world, identifying the person as a "wanted criminal" and asking for them to be arrested. Some are also published on INTERPOL's website.

A fast-track system, introduced in 2009, allows countries to post alerts directly onto INTERPOL's database, with review by INTERPOL taking place only after the information is made available to police forces across the globe.

Rise in the use of the Red Notice between 2001 and 2012



In 2012 alone, over 8,000 new Red Notices were issued



Benny Wenda

A refugee from Indonesia, Benny is the leader-in-exile of the West Papuan independence movement.

Benny had been prosecuted for political reasons, and, after receiving death threats, managed to escape from prison and was swiftly granted asylum by the UK.

He continued campaigning for West Papua and developed an international profile. In February 2011, he discovered a page on INTERPOL's website stating that he was wanted in Indonesia for violent crimes.

In August 2012, following an intervention from Fair Trials International, INTERPOL agreed to remove Benny's Red Notice acknowledging that it was 'predominantly political in nature' and an abuse of the Red Notice system.

What is the problem?

INTERPOL has almost complete global coverage allowing police across the world to share information, but amongst its members are many which are known human rights abusers and notoriously corrupt (Syria, Russia and Venezuela, to name just three). Despite this, INTERPOL does not have the effective mechanisms it needs to prevent countries abusing its systems.

Over the past two years, Fair Trials International has been contacted by dozens of people from countries all over the globe, who believe they have been victims of this abuse. Many of the thousands of alerts issued by INTERPOL each year will, no doubt, be perfectly legitimate, but our own cases have shown that INTERPOL's channels are currently being misused by countries to track down political refugees or to silence peaceful campaigners.

What is the impact?

INTERPOL alerts have the potential to devastate people's livelihoods and deprive them of their liberty. When alerts are misused this harm is unjustified. The case of Petr Silaev (below) shows how this can happen.

Once an alert has been disseminated, it is for each country to decide how it will respond to this information. Many countries will automatically arrest anyone with an alert against them. In some cases, there is little by way of a fair legal process before the person is then extradited.

People subject to these alerts are often unable to travel for fear of arrest. Many people do not know they have an INTERPOL alert against them, until they are arrested at a border point.

Many alerts are publicly available on the internet, labelling a named individual as a wanted criminal or terrorist. People can lose their jobs and visas, have their bank accounts closed or suffer serious damage to their reputations, because of INTERPOL alerts.



Petr Silaev

A Russian refugee, anti-fascist activist and journalist

In 2010, Petr was involved in a demonstration in Moscow which opposed the construction of a high speed road through the nearby Khimki forest. Following the protest, activists across the city were arrested by Russian police. Fearing arrest, Petr fled Russia and was recognised as a political refugee in Finland.

Russia used INTERPOL to pursue Petr under vague "hooliganism" charges, which led to his arrest in Spain months later. He was detained in a Spanish jail and waited months before a Spanish court finally rejected Russia's extradition request due to its politically-motivated nature.

See Petr discuss the impact of the arrest at our YouTube channel:
www.youtube.com/fairtrialsint

Effective remedies

INTERPOL should do more to stop countries misusing alerts against journalists, human rights campaigners and political opponents, but no system is perfect. If an abusive alert does slip through the net, victims need to be able to challenge the alert through a fair and transparent process.

At present, the only realistic avenue to seek a remedy is the Commission for the Control of INTERPOL's Files (CCF), a review panel within INTERPOL. INTERPOL has agreed legal immunity in the countries where it is based, meaning its actions cannot be challenged in court.

Fair Trials International has made a number of applications to the CCF and has concerns about its review mechanism: proceedings are not adversarial, no reasons are given for the decision reached, its decisions are not binding on INTERPOL and there is no process by which to challenge a decision.

Our work

- We provide advice, assistance and information to people who believe they are the victim of abuses of INTERPOL. The number of cases, involving countries across the globe, continues to rise.
- We have highlighted the devastating human impact of abusive INTERPOL alerts. To date, our cases have been covered on the BBC and CNN news networks and in the mainstream print and online media, reaching audiences in countries including Finland, Indonesia, Brazil, Russia and Australia.
- We will research and recommend concrete improvements to the use of INTERPOL's systems, including our detailed policy report.



INTERPOL recognized the central importance of respect for fundamental human rights and neutrality to its work and welcomed Fair Trials International's constructive contribution.

INTERPOL responds to a meeting with Fair Trials

Support Us

At Fair Trials International, we rely on the generosity of our supporters to continue our work. With your support we will continue to fight individual cases of injustice and to campaign for fair trials across the globe.

To find out more about how to support us and to how get involved visit www.fairtrials.org

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