

Canada probe concludes Clearview AI breached privacy laws

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US facial recognition technology firm Clearview AI illegally conducted mass surveillance in breach of Canadians' privacy rights, Canada's privacy commissioner said Wednesday following an investigation.

"What Clearview does is [mass surveillance](#) and it is illegal," Privacy Commissioner Daniel Therrien told a teleconference.

An investigation by the watchdog found the New York-based firm, whose technology allows [law enforcement](#) and others to match photographs of unknown people against its databank of more than 3 billion images, had violated Canadian privacy laws.

It found that Clearview AI had collected highly sensitive biometric data scraped from websites and [social media platforms](#) without users' knowledge or consent, and disclosed personal information "for inappropriate purposes," creating risks of significant harm to individuals.

Police forces, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and other organizations across Canada had created 48 accounts with the company.

The [privacy commissioner](#) recommended that Clearview AI stop offering its facial recognition services to Canadian clients, stop collecting images of people in Canada and delete those already in its database.

The company pulled out of the Canadian market in 2020, but rejected the other guidance.

"In disagreeing with our findings, Clearview alleged an absence of harms to individuals flowing from its activities," said the report.

Company founder Hoan Ton-That has said the technology has been made available to more than 600 law enforcement agencies globally, raising concerns about police surveillance.

Social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube (Google) and LinkedIn (Microsoft) have protested against the unsanctioned use of their users' photos, but Clearview has reportedly declined to delete them.

Officials in Britain and Australia have launched similar investigations of the company's practices, which is also the subject of a complaint in France.

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