

Introduction of Glenn Greenwald

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Last night, a few hours after having arrived in Amsterdam and just before heading to a dinner party in his honor, Glenn Greenwald had some journalistic business to attend to. As his Dutch publisher told me, before running off to that dinner party Greenwald was putting the finishing touch to another remarkable news story, that was about to be published on *The Intercept*, the new online publication of which Greenwald is one of the editors.

The story was based, once again, on the huge archive of NSA-documents that whistleblower Edward Snowden leaked to him and Laura Poitras last year. The first sentence of this article, by Glenn Greenwald and his two co-authors Ryan Devereaux and Poitras, reads:

The National Security Agency is secretly intercepting, recording, and archiving the audio of virtually every cell phone conversation on the island nation of the Bahamas.

And it continues:

According to documents provided by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden, the surveillance is part of a top-secret system – (...) - that was implemented without the knowledge or consent of the Bahamian government.

Think of that: every cell phone conversation of an entire country. Recorded word for word. Now The Bahamas may not be a very big country, it has not even 400.000 inhabitants. But some of them might still be pretty unhappy about this – not to speak of the many tourists who visit every year - among them, by the way, Bill Gates and Oprah Winfrey.

This article, under the headline *Data Pirates of the Caribbean*, gives us another fascinating and in-depth look into the kind of surveillance that seems to have become routine at the NSA. Glenn Greenwald has been in the forefront of exposing these secret activities of the NSA and other intelligence agencies to the world - and he probably will be for some time to come.

And so it is a great pleasure for me, and an honor, to introduce this important journalist and author to you tonight. As you probably know, Glenn Greenwald has just a book out: *No Place to Hide; Edward Snowden, the NSA and the U.S. Surveillance State* - translated in Dutch as *De Afluisterstaat, Edward Snowden, de NSA en de Amerikaanse spionage- en afluisterdiensten*. The book is three things at a time. It is a gripping memoir of the tense days leading up to the Snowden revelations and their aftermath. It is also an explanation of the most important discoveries in the NSA- documents so far. And finally it is a strongly worded argument against the kind of society in which surveillance has become omnipresent.

Greenwald has been writing about the issues long before Edward Snowden contacted him – actually, it was because Greenwald had a strong reputation as a tenacious and aggressive journalist on these matters, that Snowden approached him. After having been a lawyer, Greenwald switched to journalism, started a blog and wrote for salon.com and The Guardian. He is also the author of a number of books - hearing some of their wonderfully provocative titles will tell you a lot about where he stands, and what kind of strong positions he likes to take:

How would a Patriot Act? Defending American values from a president run Amok (from 2006)

A year later he wrote A Tragic Legacy – which is also about the presidency of George W. Bush.

Great American Hypocrites; Toppling the Big Myths of Republican Politics (2008)

And: With Liberty and Justice for Some: How the Law is Used to Destroy Equality and Protect the Powerful (2011)

Glenn Greenwald had received a number of awards. Last year's series on the NSA in The Guardian, led by Greenwald and Laura Poitras, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service.

Glenn Greenwald, welcome to Amsterdam.