

# German critic of NSA surveillance denied entry to US

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German-Bulgarian author Ilija Trojanow, a vocal critic of the mass surveillance carried out by the National Security Agency (NSA), was denied entry to the US September 30.

On Tuesday Trojanow told the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) that three-quarters of an hour before his plane was due to depart the day before from the Brazilian city of Salvador, en route to Miami, he was informed he would not be allowed to take his scheduled flight on American Airlines.

Trojanow said he was given no proper explanation for the ban on his entry and then had to fly back to Germany. The author of over 20 books had planned to attend a conference of German academics in Denver.

Commenting on his exclusion, the author declared on the FAZ website: “One of the most important and most threatening aspects of the NSA scandal is the secretiveness of the system. Transparency is apparently the greatest enemy of anyone who allegedly defends freedom. It is more than ironic when an author who has used his voice for years to stand up to the danger of surveillance and of a secret state within a state is rejected entry into the ‘land of the brave and free’”.

Trojanow is the co-author (with the German writer Juli Zeh) of the book *Angriff auf die Freiheit (Attack on Freedom)*, which criticized what the book describes as a culture of surveillance in Germany. Written in 2009, the book declares that the methods of observation George Orwell dreamed up for his novel *1984* are “basically harmless” compared to the ability of the state to carry out surveillance today.

In July of this year Trojanow was one of the most prominent signatories of an open letter to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, expressing support for US whistle-blower Edward Snowden.

Some 60,000 persons signed the open letter, which

criticised the failure of the German government to take any measures to counter the mass surveillance of the German and world populations by the NSA and the German intelligence agencies. Referring to the extent of the spying operation by Western intelligence agencies, the letter spoke of an “historic attack on our democratic, constitutional state”.

In an interview with *Der Spiegel* magazine on Wednesday, Trojanow notes that he has had repeated problems with the America authorities when attempting to enter the US. In 2012 his application for a work visa, so that he could take up a guest professorship at Washington University in St. Louis, was delayed without any explanation. He was finally only able to travel to the US following a protest letter from the president of the university.

Drawing on his experiences with both the US and German state authorities, Trojanow concludes: “It makes even more clear what the Snowden scandal revealed: the intelligence and security institutions are increasingly operating as a state within the state, without any checks or verification. And even those belonging to another part of the state apparatus have no way of shedding any light on what is going on”.

The case of Trojanow has been taken up by the 3,350 professional writers who are members of PEN American Centre. In a protest against Trojanow’s denial of entry to the US, the PEN letter writes: “Absent any other explanation, it is hard not to read the refusal to allow Mr. Trojanow into the United States as the most recent example in a long line of cases where writers have been barred from visiting this country because they possess, and express, disfavored political positions and views”.

The exclusion of Trojanow from the US is only the latest in a series of gangster-type measures undertaken

by the US in collusion with European governments to silence and intimidate supporters of Edward Snowden and critics of the intelligence agencies.

In July of this year a number of European countries blocked the airplane carrying Bolivian President Evo Morales from entering their air space. Morales' plane was finally forced to make an emergency landing in Vienna. This unprecedented response by European nations, which put the Bolivian president's life at risk, was a result of pressure from the US authorities fearful that Bolivia might provide asylum to Edward Snowden.

Six weeks later, US and UK intelligence agencies collaborated to hold David Miranda, the partner of *Guardian* reporter Glenn Greenwald, for nine hours at London's Heathrow Airport under British counter-terrorism laws. Greenwald is the author of a series of stories exposing the mass surveillance programs carried out by the NSA based on documents given to him by Snowden.

Miranda, a Brazilian citizen, was kept incommunicado and interrogated by British police without access to secure legal counsel. British officials confiscated all the electronic equipment in his possession, including his mobile phone, laptop computer, camera, memory sticks and DVDs.

The record of the German authorities makes clear that Trojanow can expect no support or assistance from them. The refusal of Merkel's government and all the major political parties in Germany to address the criminal practices of both the German and US intelligence agencies has exposed the absence of any faction within the political establishment prepared to defend basic democratic rights.

The PEN letter is available here:  
<http://www.pen.org/letter/pen-letter-protesting-exclusion-ilija-trojanov-us>



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