

# Governments also gather intelligence to keep themselves in power

Governments spy on groups and individuals - inside or outside of their borders - who speak out against or threaten the power of the ruling political and economic elite. This use of a country's intelligence services serve a small section of the population: the rich and powerful. During apartheid and the democratic era, South African journalists, academics and activists have been targets for government interception and espionage. The point of such espionage can be to gather intelligence to interfere with the activities of such groups or individuals, or even to silence them entirely through measures such as imprisonment or assassination.



Academics are prime target for government espionage. They are at the forefront of new knowledge development, and often are the first to encounter new information. Governments want to be the first to know. But, academics that keep an eye on government activities within their field of expertise are often vocal critics of the powers-that-be, and can back up this criticism with facts and sound arguments. This is a threat to those in power, as it informs the public discourse and can fuel citizens' negative sentiment towards the ruling elite.

Journalists who write about political corruption are a prime target for government intelligence services doing the bidding of the ruling elite. Because a free press threatens the political establishment by showing up its shortcomings, those in power often see it as a threat that must be counteracted.



Activists, who are often also journalists or academics, are especially unwelcome to the ruling elite. Unlike journalists and academics who influence the public primarily through disseminating information, activists also work to spur the public to take action against governments who fail in their citizens or commit human rights violations. Actions can include protests, litigation, and aggressive awareness and educational campaigns. Ultimately, activist push to see actual change in the status quo.