Summary

According to an ACLU report, popular social media websites have been providing their data streams to a company called Geofeedia, which in turn analyzes these data and gives them to law enforcement to respond to crime. Law enforcement agencies have been using this kind of information to spy on minority groups such as Black Lives Matter. After the report going live, multiple social media companies have responded by saying they have stopped businesses with Geofeedia.

Geofeedia said that they were given access to public feeds on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. However, according to the ACLU report, Geofeedia could actually pull private data from them, causing a problem. ACLU says that social media companies should list strict policies to stop their data being used as a surveillance tool for outside agencies.

Opinion

Due to the popularity of social media nowadays, I’m not surprised to hear that the government is using social media to track its people. Everyone already uses it to stalk people they know, to find out how their friends are living. However, just because many people are posting their everyday life online, I don’t think it gives the government a right to spy on us through social media.

After reading the article, I was a bit afraid, of my privacy. Even though I don’t post many stuff on social media myself, my posts under government surveillance is a frightening thought. Something I think is innocent or interesting, may very well be a target of the government, and that may get me into trouble. “Internet speech can also be easily misunderstood, particularly when it is interpreted by a system that relies on the biases of its users and programmers.” (McCullough, 2016, p.1)
Social media companies should have stronger public policies regarding who they are giving their data to and how it is being used. They should let the public know what and how law enforcement agencies are using social media to surveillance on them. The process needs to be transparent accountable. (McCullough, 2016, p.1) If it is simply monitoring public feeds, then it would be acceptable, but when it comes to private conversations being spied on, then that would be against the law.

This issue of spying through social media is something the society needs to face together. The government is going to use this method for surveillance, so the people need to negotiate the options with the government. There should be a certain line that law enforcement agencies cannot cross.

Question

Does the government have access to private information of their people on social media networks?