

G4S: Media, privatisering en burger- en mensenrechten

Heel langzaam sluipt de privatisering de beveiligingswereld in. Veiligheid lijkt te worden geïnterpreteerd als een allesomvattend concept. Beveiligingsfirma G4S draagt dit totale concept van veiligheid uit en dringt zo door tot in de haarvaten van de samenleving.

In enkele landen om ons heen verloopt het proces van beveiligingsontwikkeling nog wat sneller, maar over de gehele linie is duidelijk dat privatisering de veiligheid langzaam overneemt. Niet alleen vinden er controles op vliegvelden, in gevangenissen, politiecellen en winkels plaats, ook neemt de beveiliging van ambulances, reguliere opvang voor vluchtelingen, logistieke diensten en zelfs rond subsidieverlening toe.

G4S, de grootste beveiligingsfirma ter wereld, levert veiligheidsexperts aan de media, bewakers voor politiecellen in Nederland, ambulancepersoneel in het Verenigd Koninkrijk, complete gevangenissen in de VS, betaalt boeren uit in het kader van het Wereld Voedselprogramma van de Verenigde Naties en nog een veelheid aan diensten. Deze multinational is de op twee na grootste werkgever in de wereld. Het bedrijf groeit razendsnel door een eindeloze rij overnames, zowel op het gebied van de particuliere beveiliging als private militaire dienstverleners.

Bij ons eerdere onderzoek naar de relatie tussen Nederland en Israël in het kader van de beveiligingsindustrie, kwam G4S al bovendrijven (*Security Industry: links between Israel and the Netherlands? July 2011*). Hiervoor werden stukken opgevraagd over de relatie tussen de overheid en G4S. Bij de publicatie lag de nadruk vooral op de betrokkenheid van G4S bij de Israëlische bezetting van Palestina. Voortbordurend op dit rapport zal in deze *Observant*, en in een van de volgende, een serie artikelen verschijnen. Daarnaast hebben we een nieuwe reeks informatieverzoeken aan diverse overheidsorganen gestuurd.

Nu alvast de eerste drie artikelen over G4S. Het eerste belicht de relatie tussen de media en een beveiligingsexpert van het beveiligingsbedrijf, Glenn Schoen. Deze aparte relatie komt terug in het rapport *Dangerous Partnership, Private Military & Security Companies and the UN* dat in juni 2012 verscheen en waarvan in 2014 een update is gemaakt.

Op zowel *Security Industry* als *Dangerous Partnership* heeft G4S gereageerd. De reacties zijn opgenomen in de bijlagen van

de rapporten. *Dangerous Partnership* gaat over de relatie tussen de Verenigde Naties (VN) en private militaire en beveiligingsbedrijven, de verschillende rollen die deze bedrijven vervullen, van adviseur tot de eigenlijke bewaker, en natuurlijk ook de burger- en mensenrechten standaarden van die bedrijven. G4S en dochterondernemingen als Armorgroup komen regelmatig ter sprake in het rapport.

Wat het rapport en de update van waarde maakt, zijn niet alleen de beschrijving van de mensenrechtenschendingen en hoe de VN daar mee omgaat. Het rapport probeert ook de vraag te stellen wat het inhuren van bedrijven met een discutabele reputatie betekent voor de politieke geloofwaardigheid van een orgaan als de VN en wat het inhuren zegt over haar eigen legitimiteit. Hoewel er niet een eenduidig antwoord op volgt, is de vraag stellen al een belangrijk startpunt.

De VN heeft het over de noodzaak voor het inhuren, de kostenbesparingen en andere futiele argumenten die niet ingaan op de basisvragen ten aanzien van het aanzien dat de Verenigde Naties geniet, de reputatie van de ingehuurde bedrijven en andere fundamentele politiek/maatschappelijke vragen. De schrijfster van het rapport gebruikt het woord *bunkerization*, waarbij de VN niet meer vragen stelt over haar eigen rol maar zich achter een muur van veiligheidsmaatregelen terugtrekt.

De noodzaak van het inhuren, resoneert weer door in het artikel over de media en G4S. Daarin zegt Glenn Schoen dat "we in een gevaarlijke wereld leven". De VN huurt G4S in om haar te beschermen tegen 'de gevaarlijke wereld'. Vraag is echter waar het probleem ligt: bij de wereld of bij de ingehuurde bedrijven en de houding van de VN? *Dangerous Partnership* is zeker geen rapport over G4S, maar plaatst het bedrijf wel in een bepaalde context.

Tot slot in deze *Observant* een analyse van de documenten die zijn verkregen middels informatieverzoeken over de relatie tussen G4S en de overheid. Voor een van de komende nummers van de *Observant* wordt gewerkt aan stukken over G4S en de olie-, gas- en mijnindustrie, een lijst van incidenten waarbij G4S of haar dochterondernemingen betrokken waren, nieuwe inzage-documenten en de controle op de particuliere beveiligingssector in Nederland en daarbuiten.

Dangerous Partnership

Uit het rapport *Dangerous Partnership, Private Military &*

Security Companies and the UN:

'The United Nations is increasingly hiring Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) for a wide array of security services. The UN's leadership says these services are needed to protect the organization's staff and worldwide operations from growing threats and unprecedented dangers.'

But many reports from governments, NGOs and the media have shown how PMSCs have committed serious human rights abuses, killed or injured innocent civilians, engaged in financial malfeasance and committed many other breaches of the law. Given the track record of these companies, serious questions arise as to whether PMSCs are appropriate UN partners for the complex task of creating a secure, just and lawful world. Opacity around the UN's use of PMSCs has so far prevented a healthy debate.'

Uit Security Industry: links between Israel and the Netherlands? an inventory:

Group 4 Securicor (G4S) is the world's largest security company in terms of revenues and has operations in more than 120 countries across six continents, according to the company website. With over 625,000 employees globally, it is the second largest private sector employer in the world, second to Wal-Mart.²¹² Several mergers helped G4S to obtain this position. In 2002, the Danish security firm Group 4 Falck A/S, as it was called back then, bought the American company Wackenhut, owner of several prisons in the US.²¹³ In February 2004, Group 4 merged with the British company Securicor.

G4S offers a wide range of secure solutions and business processes, including secure facilities management, security consultancy, event security, secure transport services, security systems and security services to governments. The Group provides services to public, private and corporate customers.

In Israel, the Group's subsidiary is called G4S Israel (Hashmira Group). G4S Israel is the country's leading provider of security solutions and comprehensive security. The Group provides advanced security services, security systems and technology-rich protection, identification and control systems and patrol call center services. [... In 2010] G4S holds a 90.5% stake, while Igal Shermister, the Group's Chairman and grandson of the founder, holds 9.5% of shares.

G4S has been under fire for its presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) for about ten years now. In 2002, the security firm pulled guards out of the West Bank after investigations revealed how armed patrols work with Israeli settlers to intimidate, harass and control Palestinians.

Not much seems to have changed since. In November 2010, the journalistic watchdog DanWatch in Denmark published a report on G4S involvement in the OPT. According to their documentation, Hashmira has provided security services to three supermarkets in the settlements of Ramat Shlomo and Modi'in Illit. Additionally, another G4S subsidiary, called Moked 99, provides security services in several settlements.

On its webpage this company states it has so-called 'action zones' in the settlements of Har Adar, Maale Adumim and the settlement areas in East Jerusalem.

Bloomberg Businessweek lists Moked 99 as a Hashmira subsidiary. It is described as a patrol and monitoring operation, which provides design and installation services for intrusion/burglar alarms, fire detection systems, and closed-circuit television systems, also offering security services for hotels with building control, energy savings control, and low-voltage systems.

Also in November 2010, the Danish *Berlingske Tidende* revealed that G4S sold Israel torture instruments. This is from PressTV, a Danish publication reporting in English:

'The firm, named G4S, sells the devices to the detention facilities in the occupied West Bank, which provide the necessary means for torture of the Palestinian prisoners, *Berlingske Tidende* reported on Nov. 23. [...] According to the Palestinian Ministry of Detainees, nearly 200 Palestinian inmates have so far died in Israeli confinement, either due to medical negligence or under torture.'

In a letter dated 21 December 2010, G4S responded to the allegations concerning its activities in the occupied territories and its involvement with illegal settlements. The company confirmed it had never pulled out of the occupied territories entirely. The letter does not clarify the extent of G4S involvement in the occupation at present.

'In 2002 we announced that we were withdrawing from several contracts providing security officers to residential settlements in the West Bank. Since then we have not

performed such work, nor bid for any such contracts. However, we continue to serve major commercial customers, for instance supermarket chains, whose operations include the West Bank. Under these contracts we will provide security officers to protect the premises of these commercial clients who serve the general public. The number of such officers deployed in the West Bank is generally less than 20 and currently stands at eight. Other G4S staff may also periodically travel through the West Bank in the course of their work.'

G4S does not address the alleged involvement in providing devices used for torture; the letter only refers to providing 'security equipment, including X-ray machines and body scanners, with associated maintenance services, to the Israeli police, prison service and Ministry of Defence. We do not control, nor are we necessarily aware, where this equipment is deployed as it may be moved around the country.'

As a result of the allegations about involvement in the occupied territories the City Council of Copenhagen decided to examine the possibility of cancelling its cooperation with Group 4 Securicor.

In the Netherlands, G4S is one of the two largest private security companies - turnover was 337.5 million Euros in 2008, (its rival Trigion made just a little less: 323 million Euros223). G4S offers a variety of services closely related to the activities of police and justice ('justitie' in Dutch), and other authorities. The company is most known to the public for surveillance and airport security. It also offers ATM management and transport of money and valuable articles. Less known services of G4S are, amongst others, organizing the detention of suspects in police custody, and providing guards for prison and refugee detention centres.

Accordingly, a quick-scan of the lists of contracts provided by the Dutch police regions and Ministries showed a lot of links with G4S. For the Regional Police Haaglanden, the company provides reception and security services. For Gelderland Midden, it provides training and safety solutions; for Hollands Midden, alarm and burglar installation and maintenance; while Limburg Zuid contracted G4S for key server services and alarm handling. Furthermore, the company provides surveillance and security services for the regions Utrecht, Friesland and Gooi en Vechtstreek. According to the list obtained from the VtSPN (a police body set up to coordinate cooperation within the Dutch police and as such responsible for supra-regional contracting) G4S obtained a national contract for the care of detainees in police cells

and another one for providing security services. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs hired the company to provide the security for Dutch official residences in Turkey, Denmark, Morocco and Poland.

One option to put pressure on G4S would be to join forces with trades unions, as the reputation of the company is reportedly bad on labour rights as well. Human Rights Watch recently conducted an investigation in the United States into the rights of employees to associate or to protest. HRW concluded that: 'G4S's attempt to deny rights of association and bargaining to 'sergeants' at the Florida Power and Light facility not only violated US law but also ran afoul of clear ILO norms.'

Indeed, in March 2009, The American Prospect (set up to pursue new policies and new possibilities for social justice) flagged up the problems unions have in organizing American workers. As an example to illustrate how unions increasingly find themselves having to organize the world, it used the example of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) putting in global leverage to win the right to organize Wackenhut security guards.

'It began the campaign in 2002, but three years later, Wackenhut, a historically anti-union company of 35,000 U.S.-based security guards, became part of the immense British conglomerate G4S [...]. The only way to organize Wackenhut in the U.S., SEIU determined, was to organize G4S globally. SEIU launched an ambitious campaign with its international affiliates, which included efforts to keep Wackenhut from receiving the security contract for the 2012 London Olympics; lawsuits in British, Indian, Indonesian, and Panamanian courts; and strikes by G4S employees across Africa. Awash in a global sea of troubles, on Dec. 16, 2008, G4S signed a groundbreaking agreement with the global network of unions, agreeing to obey national labour laws in each of the 115 countries where the company has a presence and honor a neutrality pledge during most unionization campaigns.'

G4S has a business ethics policy which was updated in December 2010, just after the Danish publications. It starts with a section on human rights, which seems to offer opportunities for holding the company to account:

'G4S supports the principles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and we are committed to upholding these principles in our policies, procedures and practices. Respect for human rights is and will remain integral to our

operations.

We will endeavour to work with business partners who conduct their business in a way that is compatible with our policies of respect for human rights and ethical conduct. We will work with customers to ensure that contractual requirements do not infringe human rights.

We will take measures to ensure that the work of our employees does not compromise internationally accepted human rights conventions, whilst recognising and respecting the diversity in local cultures across the different countries in which we operate." with customers to ensure that contractual requirements do not infringe human rights.

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Security Industry: links between Israel and the Netherlands?
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<http://www.burojansen.nl/paginas/pdf/SecurityIndustrylinksIsraeltheNetherlands.pdf>

Dangerous Partnership, Private Military & Security Companies and the UN

<http://www.globalpolicy.org/multimedia/podcast/51757-dangerous-partnership-private-military-and-security-companies-and-the-un-july-10-2012.html>

Contracting Insecurity - Private military and security companies and the future of the United Nations

http://www.globalpolicy.org/images/pdfs/GPFEurope/PMSC_2014_Contracting_Insecurity_web.pdf