

Microsoft to probe Israeli company over surveillance of Palestinians



Seattle, November 18 (RHC)-- U.S. technology company Microsoft says it is investigating whether the use of facial recognition technology developed by an Israeli startup it funded “complies with its ethics principles,” following reports that Israel uses the company’s facial recognition technology for surveillance on Palestinians.

Microsoft, which is based near Seattle, Washington, said in a statement that former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder would lead a team from law firm Covington & Burling to conduct the probe.

Holder, the top US legal and law endorsement official under former President Barack Obama, was hired by Uber Technologies in 2017 to review claims of sexual harassment.

M12, the venture fund of Microsoft, participated in a \$74 million investment in June on AnyVision, an Israeli startup based outside Tel Aviv.

AnyVision has come under scrutiny following reports by NBC News and Israeli media that its technology is used to surveil Palestinians who live in the occupied territories. AnyVision has denied the reports,

claiming its software was not used for surveillance and was deployed at border crossings for biometric identification.

The probe reflects growing unease about facial recognition surveillance in the United States and elsewhere that human rights organizations say could limit freedom of expression and lead to unfair arrests.

Microsoft announced facial recognition ethics principles last year, saying the company would “advocate for safeguards for people’s democratic freedoms in law enforcement surveillance scenarios and will not deploy facial recognition technology in scenarios that we believe will put these freedoms at risk.”

Israel has faced growing criticism and boycott in the West for its occupation and inhumane policies against the Palestinians.

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