



Big brother watches: Mumbai police plans to have fun at New Year parties, at our expense

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Safety on the streets of Delhi has already been compromised by police devoting disproportionate attention to VIPs. It now appears that safety on the streets of Mumbai is also set to fall victim to its police's focus on another kind of VIP — violating individual privacy. We are referring to the police having been empowered to film year-end private parties at bars and nightclubs. Many legal experts point out that existing laws do not permit such filming. In order to make this absolutely unambiguous India requires a privacy law. Sure, the law ministry has proposed such legislation but it has yet to be put in the public domain, let alone implemented.

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In the absence of such a law, the [Mumbai police](#) now feels free to videograph one's family and friends in any of Mumbai's hotels and restaurants. This is ostensibly to protect citizens. But while a party's patrons are subjected to the presumption of guilt (of unnamed crimes) without any evidence that they pose a law and order challenge, the police force available for patrolling the streets of India's commercial capital is unnecessarily reduced. Worse, there are no guarantees that the videographers will not exploit their recordings to commit worse 'crimes' than they record. The archaic laws governing Mumbai mean that police anyway harass citizens for 'indecentcy', arbitrarily hauling them into custody for dancing, obscenity, and the like. Statutes against 'overcrowding' date back to long before Mumbai became a megapolis, a [global business](#) and tourist hub. Today, it is nonsensical to require people to obtain permits to drink spirits even in their homes or to set the legal drinking age at 25. Allowing new avenues of harassment and corruption in such an environment will cost the city in economic terms, without making it any safer.

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