

350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10118-3299
Tel: 212-290-4700
Fax: 212-736-1300; 917-591-3452

ASIA DIVISION

Brad Adams, *Executive Director*
Kanae Doi, *Japan Director*
Meenakshi Ganguly, *South Asia Director*
Phelim Kine, *Deputy Director*
Elaine Pearson, *Australia Director*
Sophie Richardson, *China Director*
Phil Robertson, *Deputy Director*
John Sifton, *Advocacy Director*
Mickey Spiegel, *Senior Advisor*
Patricia Gossman, *Senior Researcher*
Andreas Harsono, *Senior Researcher*
Sunai Phasuk, *Senior Researcher*
Tejshree Thapa, *Senior Researcher*
Jayshree Bajoria, *Researcher*
Carlos H. Conde, *Researcher*
Saroop Ijaz, *Researcher*
Maya Wang, *Researcher*
Linda Lakhdhir, *Legal Advisor*
Riyo Yoshioka, *Senior Program Officer*
Georgia Bright, *Senior Associate*
Shayna Bauchner, *Associate*
Daniel Lee, *Associate*
Seashia Vang, *Associate*

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

David Lakhdhir, *Chair*
Orville Schell, *Vice-Chair*
Maureen Aung-Thwin
Edward J. Baker
Robbie Barnett
Robert L. Bernstein
Jerome Cohen
John Despres
Mallika Dutt
Kek Galabru
Merle Goldman
Jonathan Hecht
Sharon Hom
Rounaq Jahan
Ayesha Jalal
Robert James
Joanne Leedom-Ackerman
Perry Link
Kimberly Marteau Emerson
Krishen Mehta
Andrew J. Nathan
Xiao Qiang
Bruce Rabb
Balakrishnan Rajagopal
Ahmed Rashid
Victoria Riskin
James Scott
Mark Sidel
Eric Stover
Ko-Yung Tung
Francisc Vendrell
Tuong Vu

Human Rights Watch

Kenneth Roth, *Executive Director*
Michele Alexander, *Deputy Executive Director, Development and Global Initiatives*
Nicholas Dawes, *Deputy Executive Director, Media*
Iain Levine, *Deputy Executive Director, Program*
Chuck Lustig, *Deputy Executive Director, Operations*
Bruno Stagno Ugarte, *Deputy Executive Director, Advocacy*
Dinah PoKempner, *General Counsel*
James Ross, *Legal & Policy Director*
Hassan Elmasry, *Co-Chair*
Joel Motley, *Co-Chair*

August 2, 2017

Liu Qingfeng

Chairman, Iflytek

National Intelligent Speech High-tech Industrialization Base

No. 666, Wangjiang Road West

Hefei City, Anhui Province

China

Dear Mr. Liu Qingfeng,

Human Rights Watch is an independent nongovernmental organization that monitors and reports on compliance with international human rights standards in more than 90 countries around the world. We have been reporting on and advocating solutions to human rights abuses in China for over 20 years.

We are currently researching the Ministry of Public Security's collection of voiceprints. The research focuses on the extent to which the Chinese government has complied with domestic law and fulfilled its obligations to protect privacy rights under international human rights law.

Human Rights Watch has found information indicating that Iflytek has supplied voiceprint technology to the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) and its provincial counterparts. For example, a February 2017 report by *The Paper* described how Anhui police are piloting a system to monitor phone conversations, which can automatically pick out the voiceprints of suspects, and alerting the police.¹ The technology works through a joint surveillance system put in place by Iflytek and "the local telecommunications system" in Anhui province. A 2015 state press report also states that Iflytek has set up, jointly with the MPS Forensics Center, an MPS major laboratory in artificial

¹ Wang Xinxin (王心馨), "This System, Which Knows Liars by Listening to Their Voices, Ensures Telephone Fraud Posing as Law Enforcement to Plummet by 80% in Anhui (听声就能“识”骗子, 它让安徽冒充公检法电话诈骗骤降八成)," *The Paper*, February 26,

2017,

<https://chinadigitaltimes.net/chinese/2017/02/%E3%80%90%E7%9C%9F%E7%90%86%E9%83%A8%E3%80%91%E5%90%AC%E5%A3%B0%E5%B0%B1%E8%83%BD%E8%AF%86%E9%AA%97%E5%AD%90/> (accessed July 29, 2017).



HRW.org

intelligent voice technology (智能语音技术公安部重点实验室) that has “helped solve cases” in Anhui, Gansu, Xinjiang, and Tibet.²

Iflytek’s website states that it has developed the country’s first “mass automated voice recognition and monitoring system,” and that it has helped the MPS in building the National Voice Print Database (全国重点人员声纹库).³ The website also claims that Iflytek has developed other audio-related applications, including “keyword spotting” for “public security” and “national defense” purposes. The website gave no further details of what these keywords or the security threats might be. A patent filed in August 2013 states that Iflytek has developed a system to discover “repeated audio files” in the telecommunications system and on the internet that may be useful in “monitoring public opinion.”⁴

Human Rights Watch also reviewed a number of documents which identify Iflytek as a designated supplier of voiceprint collection systems purchased by Xinjiang and Anhui police bureaus.

Questions for Clarification

In the interest of thorough and accurate reporting, we are writing to solicit further information and other perspectives you may have about your activities in China. We would appreciate your response to the following questions.

1. Can you provide details of the “mass automated voice recognition and monitoring system” mentioned on your website, including how it functions, or the capacity of the system?
2. Can you confirm that Iflytek, as reported by *The Paper*, is working with “the local telecommunications” company in Anhui province in piloting a system to monitor phone conversations? Can you provide further details about this system, including whether it monitors all traffic going through this company at all times?
3. Can you provide details about Iflytek’s business relationship with the Ministry of Public Security, as well as its relationship with public security bureaus at the provincial and autonomous region levels? Please specify the name of the Party and state agencies with which Iflytek is cooperating.
 - a. Can you confirm that Iflytek is a designated supplier of voiceprint collection systems purchased by the Xinjiang and Anhui police bureaus?

² Li Meng, “In Cases in Which Evidence is Missing, Police Listens to ‘Voices’ to Determine Suspects; After 3 Years of Using Voice Technology, 20 Cases Have been Solved (证据缺失民警听“声”定疑犯 语音技术三年“断案”20余起),” December 9, 2015, http://ah.ifeng.com/industry/keji/detail_2015_12/09/4637525_0.shtml (accessed July 28, 2017).

³ “Technical Achievements,” Iflytek, <http://www.iflytek.com/about/technical.html> (accessed July 28, 2017).

⁴ Wu Ji et. al., China Patent No. CN103440270 A, 2013, <https://www.google.com/patents/CN103440270A?cl=zh> (accessed July 28, 2017).

- b. Can you share with us any details of the cases Iflytek has helped solve in Anhui, Gansu, Xinjiang, and Tibet, jointly with the MPS Forensics Center? Have you examined or questioned whether there are any that may involve individuals simply exercising their human rights peacefully, including freedom of expression and association?
 - c. Has Iflytek sold the technology described above, with the ability to discover “repeated audio files” in the telecommunications system and on the internet, to police bureaus or government offices in China? If so, can you describe to us what type of "repeated audio files" this technology is used to identify?
- 4. Can you provide details of any human rights policies and procedures Iflytek may have, and how they apply to operations, sales, or other businesses initiatives in China?
 - 5. Do you review sales to ensure your products and services are not used inappropriately, such as by violating international or domestic standards on privacy? If so, what steps do you take if issues are identified?

We would welcome a response to these questions and any other comments you may have by August 16, 2017. Thank you for your assistance in these matters.

Sincerely,

Arvind Ganesan
Director, Business and Human Rights Division
Human Rights Watch

Sophie Richardson
China Director
Human Rights Watch