Jeffrey P. Bezos  
Founder and Chief Executive Officer

David Zapolsky  
General Counsel and Senior Vice President  
Amazon.com, Inc.

Dear Mr. Bezos and Mr. Zapolsky,

We are a coalition of organizations dedicated to protecting civil rights and liberties and safeguarding communities. We write today to reiterate our demand that Amazon stop providing its face surveillance product, Rekognition, to the government. Protecting communities and retaining customer trust requires that Amazon act immediately.

Since we sent our first letter in May 2018, Rekognition has been the subject of widespread attention and opposition. Over 150,000 consumers have signed petitions demanding Amazon stop providing Rekognition to governments. Dozens of members of Congress, including the Congressional Black Caucus, have recognized Amazon’s responsibility to protect people from the harms of face surveillance. Institutional shareholders have sounded the alarm about Rekognition’s impact on Amazon’s business. More than 400 Amazon employees, including senior engineers, have made it clear that they do not want to build products like Rekognition that will harm vulnerable communities.

The dangers of face surveillance can only be fully addressed by stopping its use by governments. Face surveillance provides government agencies with an unprecedented ability to track who we are, where we go, what we do, and who we know. Face surveillance gives the government new power to target and single out immigrants, religious minorities, and people of color in our communities. Systems built on face surveillance will amplify and exacerbate historical and existing bias that harms these and other over-policed and over-surveilled communities. In a world with face surveillance, people will have to fear being watched and targeted by the government for attending a protest, congregating outside a place of worship, or simply living their lives.

Instead of acting to protect against the very real dangers of face surveillance, your company is ignoring community concerns and further pushing this technology into the hands of government agencies. It was recently revealed that Amazon has discussed Rekognition with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, a deal that if realized would supersize the government’s ability to target and separate families living in our communities. The F.B.I. is also piloting the use of Rekognition. All the while, you have refused to provide meaningful answers to Congressional inquiries, including basic information about the company’s government customers.

Amazon’s inaction in response to widespread concerns about face surveillance stands in contrast to the steps taken by its competitors. In
December 2018, Google announced it will not sell a face surveillance product until the technology’s dangers are addressed, with its CEO Sundar Pichai warning that the tech industry “just can’t build it and then fix it.” And Microsoft’s President Brad Smith rightly acknowledged the risks associated with face surveillance and the company’s obligation to act internally to address potential harms. It is wholly irresponsible to wait for society to develop an “immune response” to technologies like face surveillance, as Mr. Bezos has suggested. As your employees wrote, “we already know” Rekognition will “ultimately serve to harm the most marginalized.” The dangers are clear, and so are the steps to address those dangers.

By continuing to sell your face surveillance product to government entities, Amazon is gravely threatening the safety of community members, ignoring the protests of its own workers, and undermining public trust in its business. Amazon must stop providing a face surveillance product to governments.

We look forward to your written response to this letter.

Signed,

American Civil Liberties Union
ACLU Foundations of California
ACLU of Massachusetts
ACLU of Washington
New York Civil Liberties Union
18MillionRising.org
A New PATH
Access Now
ALIGN (The Alliance for a Greater New York)
American Friends Service Committee
American Muslim Empowerment
Network-Muslim Association of Puget Sound
American Muslims of Puget Sound
Arab American Institute
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC
Asian Americans Advancing Justice- Asian Law Caucus
CAIR San Francisco Bay Area
Californians United for a Responsible Budget
Campaign for Accountability
Casa Latina
Center for Media Justice
Center on Policy Initiatives
Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice
Color Of Change
Council on American Islamic Relations, Massachusetts

John T. Williams Organizing Committee
Justice for Muslims Collective
LAANE (Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy)
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children
Library Freedom Project
Lucy Parsons Labs
Make the Road New York
Music Justice League
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
National Immigration Law Center
National Immigration Project of the NLG
National Lawyers Guild - New York City Chapter
National Lawyers Guild - Massachusetts Chapter
New Economy Project
New York Communities for Change
Oakland Privacy
OCCORD (Orange County Communities Organized for Responsible Development)
OneAmerica
Our Revolution Arlington
Partnership for Working Families
Policing and Social Justice Project at Brooklyn College
RAICES
Real Change Homeless Empowerment Project
Restore the Fourth
Silicon Valley Rising
Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood
Starting Over, Inc.
SumOfUs
Tenth Amendment Center
The Greenlining Institute
The Legal Aid Society (NYC)
The Project on Government Oversight
Tri-State Coalition for Responsible Investment
Unitarian Universalist Mass Action
War Resisters League
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
X-Lab
Council on American-Islamic Relations, California
CREDO Action
Data for Black Lives
Defending Rights & Dissent
Demand Progress
Densho
El Centro de la Raza
Electronic Frontier Foundation
End Solitary Santa Cruz County
Entre Hermanos
Fair Chance Project
Families for Justice as Healing
Families Belong Together
Fight for the Future
Free Press
Freedom for Immigrants
Freedom of the Press Foundation
Government Accountability Project
Government Information Watch
Grassroots Collaborative
Harrington Investments, Inc.
Harvard Law School National Lawyers Guild
Human Rights Watch
Immigrant Defense Project
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility
International Committee for Robot Arms Control
Our Revolution Arlington
Partnership for Working Families
Policing and Social Justice Project at Brooklyn College
RAICES
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X-Lab