

The Right to Privacy

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The Constitution of the United States guarantees each of its citizens the right to privacy. This means that each person has the right to an undisturbed private life. In my opinion, not only does a country have to make its citizens feel secure in the privacy of their homes, but also each citizen has to respect (omitted in recording: the private life of) his fellow citizens.

In the book To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee, we see the example set by Atticus Finch, a prominent lawyer, as he addresses the issue of personal privacy. Atticus is raising his two children, Jem and Jean Louise. Next door to the Finches lives Arthur Radley, a mysterious man who never shows himself in public. Jem and Jean Louise often try to sneak into the Radleys' backyard to get a look at Arthur. The children are curious to know what is going on inside the Radleys' home. Atticus gathers his children together to explain to them the meaning of privacy. He tells his children that it doesn't matter who this person is; he can live as he wants as long as he is not a disturbance to society, which Arthur is not.

Violations of privacy occur in many places around the world and take many forms. When I lived in Belorus, it was popular for government officials to listen in on people's phone calls, especially if the person was Jewish. A few times I had to ask an invisible and unknown listener to clean the line for me. A teacher in the public schools could check my backpack without saying a word. Then, when I would ask her why she was doing this, she would give me a strange look. This would even happen when I was an adult in technical school. I thought that our government was supposed to guard its citizens' privacy. I felt very insecure and was very disappointed in my country.

Americans are lucky that the American Constitution guarantees the right to privacy. A country has to ensure that its citizens feel secure in the privacy of their homes. It would be very nice if everyone, authorities and private citizens alike, respected the rights of others to their personal space, free from the public eye. The message that Atticus Finch taught his children is a message for each of us.

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