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MEPs mission to Spain met with lack of openness and transparency over spyware scandal

PEGA

Today, the Pegasus Committee of Inquiry (PEGA) has just finalised its two day mission to Spain to investigate the wide-spread use of the Pegasus spyware software against political and social leaders, including Greens/EFA MEPs Diana Riba i Giner and Jordi Sole. The PEGA Committee, which was set up in the wake of the Pegasus surveillance spyware scandal otherwise known as 'Catalangate,' has faced numerous hurdles from across the political spectrum at both the committee level and from Member States, most recently with Greece.

Saskia Bricmont MEP, Greens/EFA Coordinator in the PEGA Committee, comments:

"We expect all Member States to take the issue of the use of spyware seriously and to cooperate sincerely with the PEGA Committee. Transparency and accountability are essential to building trust in our elected officials. Unfortunately, we've seen the opposite from the largest parties in the European Parliament and from key governments implicated in the scandal.

"Citizens must be able to trust that the governments they elect are acting in their best interest and not deploying surveillance spyware against anyone they deem a threat to their power."

Diana i Riba MEP, Greens/EFA Member of the PEGA Committee, comments:

"A year after the revelations of the Pegasus scandal; we have seen attempts to block the mission, and a lack of cooperation and transparency from multiple government departments. After we finally got an agreement to look into the extent of the use of Spyware in Spain, we seem to have been given the runaround by the authorities. In this regard, we are most disappointed that all of the Spanish government ministers who were invited to appear before the Inquiry Commission declined to do so

"During the mission it was made clear that at least 18 of 65 individuals revealed in the scandal have been spied on by the Spanish security services with judicial authorisation. However, we could not establish how the spying was authorised and both the governmental interlocutor and Ombudsman could not shine any light on the remaining open cases.

“The fact that the Spanish authorities refuses to give details on these cases of espionage on Catalan political and civic leaders reinforces the idea that an urgent moratorium on the use of spyware must be imposed and that a strict legal framework be negotiated to prevent its illegitimate use.

“Despite all the obstruction, the Inquiry Committee has indeed heard some of the victims and has been able to certify the defenceless situation they find themselves in, since a year after the disclosure of the scandal the cases remain without investigation and accountability.”

More:

While the Ombudsman did confirm the legality of 18 cases he investigated, the question of proportionality was not within the scope of his investigation. The perpetuation of false information and disinformation campaigns from multiple groups during the mission is worrying. While the Committee has supported CitizenLab, who revealed the scandal in Spain, in all other Member States, their work in Spain has been put into question.

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Responsible MEPs



Saskia Bricmont

Member



Diana Riba i Giner

EFA President and first Vice President of the Greens/EFA Group

Contact person



Alex Johnson

Press & Media Advisor EN (English language press)

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