



Date : 15/09/2021

"NSO targets human rights activists - it is not welcome in UK"

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK ([AOHR UK](http://www.aohr.org.uk)) condemns the presence of the controversial NSO Group at the forthcoming International Security Expo, to be held in London 28-29 September. The NSO Group's [Pegasus software](#), used by authoritarian regimes across the world, must be not allowed to continue "business as usual" following damning revelations about the firm and its top-selling software earlier this year.

The International Security Expo's (ISE) own website gives only a vague indication of its purpose: "International Security Expo is the only flagship event bringing Government, industry, academia and the entire end-user community in charge of regulation & procurement together to debate current challenges". In reality, it is a way for state and private security services to makes sales – and [launder reputations](#).

Events include "Global Counter Terror and Serious and Organised Crime Summit", with speakers from across academia, law enforcement, and private security firms.

Amongst the many exhibitors at the event is the controversial [NSO Group](#). NSO is responsible for producing the Pegasus spyware product, one that the company has sold to authoritarian regimes around the world – and which, in turn, has been used against journalists, opposition politicians, and human-rights defenders.

Revelations earlier this year showed just how extensive the use of Pegasus software has been against such targets, and how important a tool it is in the repression of dissent. [Bahrain](#), Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Morocco have all been proven to use the spyware against their own citizens, and indeed citizens of second countries.



The [investigation](#) proved with evidence that those governments used the program to spy on dissidents, journalists, trade unionists and activists. The report highlighted that the number of victims of spying operations exceeds fifty thousand people.

One victim of Pegasus hacks is [Ahmed Mansoor](#), an Emirati human rights activist now enduring a ten-year prison sentence in the UAE. [Mansoor](#) was likely targeted in 2016 by the spyware, before his arrest in March 2017. Another was the fiancée of murdered Saudi journalist [Jamal Khashoggi](#), whose phone was also hacked in the aftermath of his killing in the Saudi embassy in Istanbul. NSO is an Israeli-based company; its sales are vetted by the Israeli state, leading to speculation that the software's use involved collaboration between the Gulf autocracies and Israel.

The NSO's presence at ISE, alongside numerous other security companies (Abus, Intersec) and state agencies (the British Transport Police) implies that the worldwide criticism of the firm earlier this year – that fact that it “created the world's most invasive mobile spy kit” – has not harmed its commercial viability. Once again, profits have come before [human rights](#), it appears.

AOHR UK again condemns the firm's presence at ISE, and the event's organisers for allowing the group to present itself as a respectable company.

AOHR UK [demands](#) that the NSO Group's invitation to ISE be rescinded, on account of the enormous harm its products have done to the cause of human rights and democracy globally, including in the Arabic-speaking world.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK)