



## **PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **VICTORY FOR CAMPAIGNERS OVER TERRORIST HACKING SOFTWARE**

*Security fair organisers back down after Pegasus used to target human rights defenders*

**London, 27 September 2021** – Detained International and other human rights NGOs are celebrating victory in their protest against the Israeli firm NSO being allowed to exhibit its spyware at next week’s International Security Expo in London.

The arms fair taking place at Olympia was due to feature NSO promoting its highly controversial ‘Pegasus’ software, which it says is used to root out high-level criminals and terrorists, but has been found to be used by governments to snoop on and discredit critics of their regime.

A number of NGOs wrote to Nineteen Group, the organisers of the International Security Expo, expressing “disappointment and shock” at the inclusion of the NSO Group, especially as the Pegasus spyware was due to be on sale at Olympia. Last week, the European Commission condemned Pegasus as “a crime in the whole of the European Union,” a statement which followed a vote in the European Parliament which deplored the use of Pegasus to target human rights defenders.

Now Nineteen has caved in, and confirmed by email to Detained International today that “NSO Group will not present or promote their Pegasus system during our events next week.”

Detained International’s chief executive one of the NGOs whom signed the latter David Haigh said, “NSO should really have been thrown out of the entire fair, as they have developed a highly dangerous product and sold it beyond its remit without doing due diligence on the human rights record of its clients.

“But the fact that NSO has been told it cannot sell or promote Pegasus at this fair is a major victory for human rights campaigners. We must remain ever watchful of attempts to silence legitimate voices of dissent and efforts to help the victims of arbitrary justice.”

Pegasus is a spyware program developed by the Israeli firm which not only hacks a smartphone but then deletes itself, making it unable to be traced. NSO assures the world it is only sold for the purposes of tracing high-level criminals and terrorists, but the fact that it was sold to the UAE who installed it on Haigh's phone suggests it is being used well beyond its agreed remit.

Haigh was in hospital in London in August 2020 when agents of the UAE regime installed Pegasus through links he unwittingly clicked on. By a fortunate coincidence, Haigh then turned off his phone before the software had a chance to delete itself. He has had his phone examined by international IT experts to collect information on Pegasus, so the human rights community now understands much more about hacking software than it did.

The original letter to Nineteen was signed by:

**Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK**

**Peter Tatchell Foundation**

**Gulf Centre for Human Rights**

**International Campaign for Freedom in the UAE (ICF UAE)**

**Detained International**

**Association for Victims of Torture in the UAE (AVT UAE)**

**Ali Abdulemam Gulf (RL4G)**

**Aisha Ali-Khan – Women's Rights Campaigner and Activist**

**Afsana Lachaux – Women's Rights Activist**

**Tiina Jauhiainen**

**David Haigh – Pegasus Victim**

**End**

**About Detained International:** Detained international is a legal advocacy NGO that provides pro bono legal advocacy to victims of injustice, inequality and other human rights violations in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates and wider Middle East.

Headquartered in London and Washington DC, Detained International was founded in 2018 by UAE torture victim David Haigh, a prominent human rights lawyer and justice and equality advocate. Detained International exists to help people in their hour of need, in many cases when they have been locked up far from home for no legitimate or even apparent reason and lack the support from obvious channels like their national embassy.

### **Press Contact**

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## COPY EMAIL

Dear Mr Haigh,

Many thanks for your correspondence. I am contacting you from the International Security Expo press office. Please see a statement below in response to your letter.

A spokesperson from Nineteen Group said:

*“We can confirm that NSO Group will not present or promote their Pegasus system during our events next week.*

*“While we do not comment on news stories relating to our exhibitors’ businesses, we work hard to ensure that all participating companies and the products they present address current and emerging security challenges.*

*“International Security Expo and our new co-located International Cyber Expo, as trade events, represent an important meeting point for those working at every level of the international security community – from Government, industry, academia and the entire end-user community – to discuss current challenges, share knowledge and source the latest security technologies to protect people, businesses and nations.”*

Kindest regards,  
Beki