

Israel appoints commission to review NSO

Amid allegations that Pegasus spyware was misused, lawmaker says all aspects of granting licences will be looked into

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
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Israel has established a commission to review allegations that the NSO Group's controversial Pegasus phone surveillance software was misused, the head of Parliament's Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee said on Thursday.

"The defence establishment appointed a review commission made up of a number of groups," lawmaker Ram Ben Barak said.

"When they finish their review, we'll demand to see the results and assess whether we need to make corrections," the former deputy head of Israel's Mossad spy agency added.

Pegasus has been implicated in possible mass surveillance of journalists, human rights defenders and 14 heads of state.

Their phone numbers were among some 50,000 potential surveillance targets on a list leaked to rights

group Amnesty International and Paris-based Forbidden Stories.

NSO has said the leak is "not a list of targets or potential targets of Pegasus."

NSO chief executive Shalev Hulio told Army Radio on Thursday that he would "be very pleased if there were an investigation, so that we'd be able to clear our name".

He also alleged there was an effort "to smear all the Israeli cyber industry".

Open to probe: NSO

NSO has said it exports to 45 countries, with approval from the Israeli government.

Mr. Hulio said the company could not disclose the details of its contracts due to "issues of confidentiality," but said he would offer full transparency to any government seeking more details.

"Let any state entity come along – any official from any state – and I'll be prepared to open everything up to them, for them to enter, to dig



Snooping row: Israeli cyber firm NSO Group's exhibition in Tel Aviv, in this file photo. ■ REUTERS

around from top to bottom," he said.

Referring to the government-run Defence Export Controls Agency, Ben Barak said Israel's priority was "to review this whole matter of giving licences." Pegasus had "exposed many terror cells", he said, but "if it was misused or sold to irresponsible bodies, this is something we

need to check."

Reporters Without Borders on Wednesday called for a moratorium on cyber surveillance software.

Pegasus can hack into mobile phones without a user knowing, enabling clients to read messages, track location and tap into the phone's camera and microphone.