

LEGAL ACTION AGAINST SPYWEAR ABUSE

In 2022, Citizen Lab and Amnesty International revealed that dozens of people in Catalonia were secretly spied on using Pegasus, a powerful spyware tool that gives others full control of your mobile phone without physically touching it. The targets weren't criminals or suspects under investigation - they were journalists, lawyers, human rights defenders, and politicians. For the team at Irídia, the lack of accountability for this invasion of the rights of everyday citizens could not go unchecked. They decided to step up their fight against spyware and take legal action.



Story by Irídia

Pegasus spyware is developed by Israeli firm NSO Group and sold to governments. Many examples where the spyware was used appear to be illegal and the European Parliament named Spain as a country of concern, yet no meaningful action followed.

“This espionage puts democracy at risk. At Irídia, we demand judicial and political accountability for this massive violation of human rights” - Anaïs Franquesa, Irídia’s director.

We launched a legal case and campaign to uncover the truth and hold those responsible to account. The case centres on a lawyer who was unlawfully spied on in 2020. Our goal is not only justice for this specific lawyer, but to ensure there are proper protections in place for everyone against spyware abuse.

“Every piece of new information that we obtain during our judicial investigations is like discovering a new part of a secret map, bringing the victims closer to the truth and to justice” - lawyer Andreu Van Den Eynde.

We filed a criminal complaint in Spain and secured indictments against three NSO Group board members in Luxembourg and a former government official in Spain.

“The indictment of three NSO Group board directors sets an important precedent in the fight against spyware espionage in Europe. As it is the first global case to result in the indictment of NSO Group board directors it marks a major step forward. For the first time, those involved will have to personally answer before the courts.” - Spyware researcher and advocacy officer, Cèlia Carbonell

A LEGAL FIGHT FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

BUILDING A MOVEMENT

Our work has been felt beyond the courtroom. In 2025, along with Data Rights we co-founded the PEGA Coalition, a European network of human rights groups coordinating legal action against spyware in countries including Germany, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Serbia, and Spain. We also contributed to Spain's review by the UN Human Rights Committee, which raised concerns about Pegasus and called for full investigations.

The case has inspired similar lawsuits in other countries and strengthened international collaboration. We hosted private meetings for civil society groups and experts to share findings, exchange collective expertise, and support others to pursue justice.

"The idea of creating a coordinated international effort on spyware litigation first emerged during a workshop organised by Irídia in January 2024. Since then, Irídia has played a leading role in bringing together NGOs working on related cases. This partnership later became the PEGA Coalition, with the HCLU and others continuing to work closely" - **Ádám Rempert**: Expert, Public Participation Program at Hungarian Civil Liberties Union

THE ROLE OF DFF

As well as funding the litigation itself, DFF played an important role in the early stages through funding our pre-litigation research. In cases like this, where the lack of available information is one of the biggest obstacles to advancing the investigation, and therefore to achieving justice, research is essential to keep the case alive and prevent it from being dismissed.

"DFF's support allowed us to build a strong foundation for this case. It gave us the space to think strategically, connect with allies, and stay resilient in the face of legal and emotional challenges" - **Cèlia Carbonell**

DFF's network also helped us connect with others. It was thanks to the DFF network that we were able to meet other organisations litigating on the Pegasus case at the EU level for the first time. Thanks to that contact the idea of the PEGA Coalition came to fruition.

The criminal investigations in Spain and Luxembourg are ongoing, and we are prepared to take the fight to international courts. The goal remains clear: accountability from those responsible, and legal guarantees to prevent this surveillance from happening again.

"Those who have been spied on have to deal with specific psychosocial consequences that affect all areas of their lives. Extreme feelings of vulnerability, mistrust and paranoia are commonplace. Strategic litigation to achieve accountability and legislative changes that guarantee non-repetition is therefore an essential part of the recovery process for victims." - **Cira Martínez**, coordinator of psychosocial work at Irídia.

Our work is a powerful reminder that in the face of secrecy and surveillance, civil society can fight back, and hold governments and businesses accountable for their harmful actions.

LOOKING AHEAD

They know everything about you, you know nothing about them.

Iridia wants to prosecute state espionage and we need your help.

Iridia vs. Pegasus

Irídia

DFF Digital Freedom Fund