

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000600/25
to the Commission**

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(10 February 2025)

Subject: Use of Paragon Solutions spyware against journalists and civil society representatives

Several newspapers ⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾ ⁽³⁾ revealed on 31 January 2025 that WhatsApp had informed more than 100 journalists and civil society representatives worldwide that they had been attacked by spyware developed by the Israeli company Paragon Solutions. Also among the victims is Francesco Cancellato, director of the online newspaper Fanpage.it.

This attack allowed hackers to illegally gain full access to victims' devices, collecting sensitive data and intercepting private communications on the encrypted platform.

In the light of these events, can the Commission answer the following questions:

1. What measures will the Commission take to launch an investigation to ascertain the extent of this violation?
2. Will it launch an investigation to ascertain who is responsible and take action against the perpetrators?
3. What measures will it take to protect press freedom and journalists from such cyber attacks given the violations of Directive 2009/136/EC, Directive (EU) 2018/1972, Regulation (EU) 2024/1083, Regulation (EU) 2016/679 and Directive 2013/40/EU?

Submitted: 10.2.2025

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission

(11 April 2025)

The Commission attaches great importance to upholding and fostering pluralistic and independent media in the EU — a key pillar of our democratic societies — and condemns any attempts to illegally access data of citizens, as well as any form of interference in the professional activities of journalists and their editorial independence.

EU law on data protection and privacy offers comprehensive protection to the confidentiality of communications and users' personal data and terminal equipment.

Moreover, Article 4(3) of the European Media Freedom Act ⁽¹⁾, which will start applying in August 2025, provides a set of safeguards for the protection of journalistic sources and confidential communications, in particular against the deployment of intrusive surveillance software.

In this light, any action or decision at national level should respect those safeguards and the Commission is closely following the preparations in Member States to implement and apply them, engaging with the relevant national authorities and ensuring alignment with the Act's objectives and requirements.

The Commission will also continue to monitor the situation of media freedom and pluralism in all Member States, including within the forthcoming 2025 Rule of Law Report ⁽²⁾.

¹ <https://www.fanpage.it/attualita/giornalisti-presi-di-mira-dallo-spyware-israeliano-paragon-spiato-anche-il-direttore-di-fanpage-it/>.

² https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/spiato-software-militare-israeliano-fondatore-ong-mediterranea-AGim5PJc?refresh_ce&nof.

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/jan/31/italian-journalist-whatsapp-israeli-spyware>.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2024/1083, OJ L, 2024/1083, 17.4.2024.

⁽²⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/annual-rule-law-cycle_en