

## **Statement by the President of the Generalitat regarding the espionage case involving Pegasus spyware**

*Palau de la Generalitat, 19 April 2022*

A democratic state does not violate civil and political rights – the indissoluble foundation of the entire human rights system – to combat a movement that is unequivocally peaceful, unequivocally democratic, and unequivocally pro-European, as is Catalan independence.

Yesterday, Citizen Lab – a Canadian laboratory that studies information controls that affect Internet security and threaten human rights – made public through an article by journalist Ronan Farrow and the *New Yorker* team that 65 Catalan citizens have been spied on using Pegasus software.

A mobile phone spyware tool that only states have access to and that has been used to listen in on the private conversations of journalists, lawyers, members of civil society and leaders of democratic political forces.

It has been used to spy on Catalonia's institutions. To spy on the Government of the Generalitat and the Parliament. To spy on the last 4 presidents of Catalonia.

To spy on presidents Artur Mas, Carles Puigdemont, Quim Torra and myself simply because we don't share their view, simply because we promote Catalan independence.

This represents an actual State-sanctioned operation against representatives of democratic institutions –also against elected representatives of the European Parliament – in what is the largest case of espionage using this technology detected so far.

And in the face of this blatant attack on democracy. In the face of this attack on the most basic rights and freedoms. In the face of this violation of the privacy that all citizens should enjoy and be guaranteed as fully free citizens. Anyone who believes in democracy should stand up and demand maximum transparency and accountability.

Today it is clear that it is the pro-independence movement that has been illegally spied on, but really, in the end, the main victim of Pegasus is democracy itself. Democracy which is fragile.

That is why it is essential to dispel all doubts and any shadow of suspicion. Because Spain already has a history of illegal wiretapping and the use of any means to put an end to the pro-independence movement. Therefore, the Government of the Generalitat will go all the way to identify those ultimately responsible for this attack that has occurred in the heart of the European community.

We will fight to the end to demand political accountability. We will fight to the end in defence of rights, freedom and democracy. And we will not rest until all those who have allowed this attack on democracy are brought to justice.

Therefore, we will take the necessary actions before the Mossos d'Esquadra police force so that they can carry out a thorough investigation – in collaboration with, as usually occurs in cases such as this, the Cybersecurity Agency – into this case of global and generalised espionage against the institutions of Catalonia and also against prominent members of the pro-independence movement.

The Catalan Government will provide all the legal defence, support, and assistance to all the individuals who have been victims of this espionage case and who are public employees, civil servants, or were when they were spied upon.

For my part, I will also personally file a complaint against an attack that clearly violates my privacy and that of my personal and family environment.

At the international level, we will therefore activate all existing mechanisms to report these facts and report them to the Council of Europe, the institutions of the European Union and the United Nations human rights mechanisms.

European institutions are currently investigating the espionage of other governments, including Poland and Hungary, against their own citizens. Today, the mass espionage that we have learned about puts Spain alongside these states, affecting an entire political movement that is democratic and peaceful. This has a direct impact on the European institutions: they demand that third countries observe civil and political rights, so they cannot turn a blind eye when these violations occur within the framework of the European Union in countries like Hungary, Poland, or even Spain.

But beyond the legal consequences of this persecution of Catalan institutions and the pro-independence movement, it is clear that this case of espionage and the way in which the Spanish Government deals with it could have important immediate political consequences.

That is why no one should hide and everyone should act with the utmost transparency. The credibility of the State and the confidence of the citizens of Catalonia in the Spanish Government has once again been severely shaken by an attack that follows no democratic logic or reason.

Today, trust in the Spanish Government and its institutions is at an all-time low. Because it becomes extremely difficult to trust someone who appears to have been spying on you and who has done so with the clear intention of fuelling the campaign against independence.

Clearly, things cannot continue as they are. The espionage made public yesterday affects and damages the minimum levels of trust required in political relations with the State.

It is up to the Spanish Government to accept responsibility in order to regain this trust. Regaining a trust that allows for political relations to return to the same terms as before. The Spanish Government must therefore provide explanations and act with the utmost transparency. This means launching an internal inquiry as quickly as possible with independent oversight to establish who is responsible, who ordered the actions and under what supervision and authorisation. It means helping the committee of inquiry established by the Congress of Deputies to shed light on its responsibility in this case. Based on the results of these proceedings, all appropriate political and legal responsibilities need to be taken.

Until these elements are in place, normalised political relations with the State cannot be restored. Without a doubt, illegally spying on your political adversary takes us further away from resolving the political conflict with the State.

That is why it is necessary for the Spanish State and the Spanish Government to take steps and demonstrate its genuine desire to move forward with an agreement that puts an end to the repression and allows the people of Catalonia to vote freely on the political future of the country.

Catalonia's commitment to resolving the conflict through a democratic agreement is absolute. We will never renounce it. Because the political conflict with the State will only be resolved with more and better democracy. As the citizens of Catalonia have repeatedly demonstrated, as on 1 October.

That is why today the Spanish Government must dispel all suspicion and demonstrate its democratic commitment, which today is in serious doubt. Catalonia will never be satisfied with being part of a State that spies on you for your political ideas. A State with such a weak and undemanding idea of democratic quality.

We value freedom, and all that it entails, too much to settle for less. That is why episodes such as the one that has come to light in the last few hours only reinforce our commitment to the freedom of Catalonia and the rights of its citizens. It only reinforces our commitment to a Catalan Republic of rights and freedoms, to a Republic at the service of the people.