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Safeguard citizens' rights against domestic political espionage

Written question No. 752 to the Committee of Ministers
by Ms Laura CASTEL, Spain, Members not belonging to a Political Group

At the end of July 2020, the Guardian and El País revealed that the mobile phones of the President of the Catalan Parliament, Mr Roger Torrent, and the former member of the European Parliament and former Catalan Minister of Foreign Action, Mr Ernest Maragall, had been hacked with Pegasus spyware created by the NSO Group.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression has already issued alerts concerning breaches of privacy and freedom of speech stemming from the use of Pegasus, deemed to be used against political opponents, dissidents and human rights defenders. In this case, communications were hacked, among many other occasions, during a meeting with the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Dunja Mijatović, in Strasbourg.

We understand this constitutes domestic political espionage and a serious breach of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (private and family life) and Article 10 (freedom of expression), but also of European Union directives on security and private data protection.

Ms Castel

To ask the Committee of Ministers:

What concrete steps will the Committee of Ministers take to safeguard citizens' rights against "domestic political espionage" happening in Council of Europe member States?