Jonathan Scott : ‘Anyone can spy on your phone’

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Jonathan Scott, the investigator who denies the "Pegasus case", in exclusive for Girona Noticias

We are all potential "targets" of spies and 'Pegasus' is not the only spyware with which they can do it. We don't need to be politicians or businessmen. "Anyone can spy on your phone" and, "if any act of spying was taking place, potentially hundreds of different programs could be involved." These are statements made by Jonathan Scott in this exclusive interview with Girona Noticias.

The malware, spyware and forensic analysis researcher Jonathan Scott has been threatened, harassed, persecuted, defamed... He and his family have suffered the consequences of having revealed that Amnesty International falsified reports in which it attributed the espionage of the Moroccan journalist and activist Omar Radi to the 'Pegasus' program of the Israeli technological security company NSO Group.

Scott specifically mentions Runa Sandvik, a security researcher in New York and founder of Granitt for "digital security for journalists and others at risk," in her own words. To Tarah Marie Wheeler, U.S. technology and cybersecurity executive, CEO of Red Queen Dynamics and Senior Fellow for Global Cyber Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations in the United States. And

Lukasz Siewierski, an engineer, malware researcher and software developer.

Despite the retaliation from these three experts, among others, Jonathan Scott continues in his line of investigation and has continued to uncover the deficiencies and alleged manipulations of the forensic methodology of Amnesty International and Citizen Lab, two organizations with official reputations, and their false "positives" that point to 'Pegasus' as spying software on French human rights activist Claude Mangin Asfari, "Marianne", and allegedly on Spanish politicians such as Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and Defense Minister Margarita Robles.

Scott speaks exclusively to Girona Noticias. This newspaper has been waiting for days for an authorized spokesperson of NSO Group, author of 'Pegasus', to do the same. But so far the response of this Israeli corporation to our questions is silence.

We'll keep waiting...

Can you describe all the pressures that you have surely suffered in order not to uncover the falsehood of the reports that you have denied?

I've been through a lot, including getting death threats, being cyberstalked, and dealing with harassment towards my family and me. There is constant defamation, and I have to keep my University information private now because if it's released people will begin another campaign against my school to have me removed. I've learned to handle all these challenges over time, and they've become easier to deal with, but it is all still actively happening.

In addition to your dismissal from the University, have you suffered other reprisals?

Since my dismissal, I have not encountered any further issues. Surprisingly, my situation has actually improved. The actions of Runa Sandvik, Tarah Wheeler, and Lukasz Siewierski, which led to my dismissal from the PhD program, made me realize what kind of people I was dealing with. I came to understand that the opposition has no limits and will resort to any means necessary to silence those who disagree with them.

Do you intend to continue in this line of investigation?

Yes, absolutely. I will continue to investigate these cases of digital espionage because it's important to uncover the truth. Scientific research needs to be at the forefront of examining allegations of mobile spyware deployment to ensure that there is substantive evidence to support any claims made. Currently, these allegations are lacking in substance, and it's vital that we verify them through rigorous research.

If the accusations against the Kingdom of Morocco are not true, who do you think has made use of the 'Pegasus' program to spy on other people?

It seems like there's a lot of attention on Pegasus simply because Citizen Lab and Amnesty are focusing on it extensively. However, if any acts of espionage were occurring, it could be potentially hundreds of different programs involved. It's important to recognize that every country has its own surveillance tools that can be lawfully used to combat illicit activity, and it's important that these tools exist.

On the Internet there are several spying programs that can even be obtained for free and without control. Can anyone spy on anyone?

Yes, these days anyone can spy on your phone. There is an app called Cerebus, that can easily spy on your phone, and it is disguised as protection from your phone, yourself, and loved ones. https://www.cerberusapp.com/

This is why attributing so many cases of spyware to Pegasus without any evidence is so concerning.

Would you say that we are facing a kind of "Big Brother"?

Yes, we are actively living in a Big Brother world.

I find it interesting that no one ever seems to ask how Apple is able to send notifications alerting people that they've been spied on? Similarly, it's curious that WhatsApp seems to know who has been spied on despite having end-to-end encryption.

Who do you suspect are now our "Big Brothers"?

I think more attention should be given to the data that Apple and Google are collecting from phones on a constant basis. It's important to know the answer to this to gain a better understanding of how our data is being utilized and to ensure that privacy is being respected.

Do you think that the president of the Spanish government has really been spied on?

In my opinion, it's possible for any president to be spied on, but the current tools to detect such spying are often flawed and can easily produce false positive results. I'm curious to know whether the Spanish government used the MVT-Tool to diagnose the Spanish President's phone. If they did, there is a high probability that the results may have been inaccurate.

Can you give us any clue as to who may have spied on political figures in Spain?

Based on what I've found, it doesn't seem like all of the political figures in Spain have been spied on. Actually, there was one case where Citizen Lab claimed that a politician named Antoni Comin was being spied on for over 6 months, but it turned out to be false. It's really hard to say who could have spied on these political figures. It could be anyone, even their own spouses or partners, but the thing is, without proper evidence or access to their phones, it's impossible to know for sure.

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