

Meta* to pay \$168 million for spying through WhatsApp.

A federal court in California has ordered the Israeli company NSO Group to pay Meta* \$168 million for using the Pegasus spyware to hack around 1,400 WhatsApp users.

The lawsuit, initiated in 2019, concluded with a victory for Meta*, which accused NSO of violating U.S. cybersecurity laws. The Pegasus software allowed surveillance of journalists, activists, and government officials, secretly extracting data and activating cameras or microphones.

NSO Group, known for its government surveillance tools, argued that Pegasus was used to combat terrorism and crime. However, the court found that the company illegally exploited vulnerabilities in WhatsApp. The ruling includes \$167.25 million in fines and \$444,719 in compensatory damages. Judge Phyllis Hamilton noted that NSO refused to provide the source code for Pegasus, complicating the case.

NSO plans to appeal the verdict.

*Meta is recognized as an extremist organization and banned in Russia.