

# [***Former prime minister Kaczyński says Poland needed spyware but he wasn't interested in the details***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BJM-5K61-DYMD-60BX-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

WARSAW, Poland — Former Polish prime minister Jarosław Kaczyński told a parliamentary committee Friday he believes Poland needed advanced spyware but that, despite his leadership position, he wasn't interested in how or against whom it was used.

Kaczyński testified before the committee in a televised session about the purchase and allegedly illegal use of advanced spyware by a government headed by his Law and Justice party, which was in power from 2015 to 2023. For part of that term he was deputy prime minister for national security.

“As far as Pegasus (spyware) goes, I was aware that it's a tool for breaking into communication devices, and that Poland needs it, and that other countries also have it,” Kaczyński said. But he stressed that he was “not directly interested in the operational activity of the (security) services.”

However, he later said the “use of Pegasus was in accordance with the law, there were no shortcomings, and in 99% it was used against criminals.”

Most of the time Kaczyński avoided directly answering questions, saying he did not remember the facts or digressing to praise the Law and Justice government. The questioning went on for many hours.

The Israel-based NSO Group’s Pegasus spyware was [*used to spy on mobile devices*](https://apnews.com/article/technology-business-middle-east-elections-europe-c16b2b811e482db8fbc0bbc37c00c5ab) belonging to opponents of the party, according to findings by the University of Toronto’s nonprofit Citizen Lab. Recent details suggest it was also used to eavesdrop on some key members of Kaczyński's right-wing party.

The revelations, first reported by The Associated Press in 2021, shocked Poland and added to the European Union’s concerns that the Law and Justice government was undermining the rule of law. They also hurt the credentials of Kaczyński's populist party. The Polish hacks are considered particularly egregious because they occurred in a EU member country.

As the hearing began, Kaczyński sought to avoid testifying and argued he should not have to give evidence, saying that he has only marginal knowledge of how the Pegasus spyware was used but that what he does know is classified and should not be revealed in a public hearing.

Kaczyński refused to repeat the portion of the witness oath that promises “the whole truth,” causing a delay as the committee debated whether he had been properly sworn in.

When the proceedings continued, Kaczyński attacked his political rivals, the current government, saying that the commission's probe was a “political undertaking” aimed at proving an “illusionary notion that there was dictatorship in Poland” during his party's term in power.

Kaczyński, 74, was prime minister in 2006-2007, but continued to play a key role in Poland’s ***politics*** after leaving the job, especially when his party ruled again in 2015-2023. He was considered Poland's most powerful politician during the period the spyware was used.

In January 2022, Kaczyński [*acknowledged that the country bought advanced spyware*](https://apnews.com/article/technology-business-software-spyware-jaroslaw-kaczynski-0c41a504e8fbdbb6b9b06f6869848a48) from the NSO Group, but denied that it was being used to target his political opponents.

Current Prime Minister Donald Tusk has said the previous government [*used Pegasus illegally*](https://apnews.com/article/poland-government-pegasus-spyware-tusk-duda-78420fc7099401926d28b5be98669192) and targeted a “very long” list of victims. Poland's license for the use of Pegasus was discontinued in 2022, following the reports that the government used it against political opponents.

President Andrzej Duda, who is a Law and Justice ally, has shown little interest in clarifying the serious allegations around the use of spyware.

Pegasus gives operators complete access to targeted mobile device, allowing them to extract passwords and to activate the microphone and camera for real-time eavesdropping.

Law and Justice lost power in December following an [*electoral defeat*](https://apnews.com/article/poland-election-tusk-opposition-29eb9108f6e9c242e9bb3a2f803b5a63). The new parliament dominated by a pro-EU coalition has set up the special committee to dig into the previous government's use of the spyware. The committee is also to question other members of the Law and Justice government and cyber security experts.

A number of cases of Pegasus abuse have been revealed since 2015, showing the NSO Group spyware was employed to eavesdrop on journalists, politicians, diplomats, lawyers and human rights activists from the Middle East to Mexico.

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