

Rejoinder to Novalpina Reply

Novalpina's Stephen Peel promised "[robust transparency](#)" in his March 1, 2019 letter; this latest reply from NSO Group shows that there is still a way to go to deliver on that promise. In its reply, NSO Group claims that it complies with all applicable laws and regulations -- but neglected to clarify from/through which EU countries it exports its products. Without transparency on this front, their commitment to transparency remains empty. As national law and government processes vary widely on export licensing, it is important for civil society to know from which countries NSO Group obtains its licenses and understand the conditions under which those licenses are issued.

When Mr. Peel previously mentioned Bulgaria and Cyprus as sites of NSO Group exports in Europe, [we wrote to the authorities in those countries](#) to clarify how their assessment of NSO Group's products lines up against the EU's dual-use controls and human rights commitments. After authorities in both countries denied issuing export licenses to NSO Group, we reached out to Mr. Peel, who offered no further clarity as to the nature and scope of the activity he himself cited. This leaves us with unanswered questions:

- Did NSO Group export through one of its many affiliates, parent, or shell companies?
- Did authorities decide not to require licenses? How was this assessed? On what grounds?

There's one thing we do know: this is *not* "robust transparency".

Furthermore, NSO Group claims to be "the only company in the cyber sector" with governance frameworks that align with the UN Guiding Principles, due to their recently published human rights policy. However, companies such as [Nokia](#) and [Ericsson](#) have human rights policies in place that are much more robust than NSO Group's policy, and those firms offer more evidence of implementation. NSO Group can continue to claim that it is committed to respecting human rights, but without clear evidence of its respect for human rights, participation in processes to remedy violations it's linked to, and transparency around its export activities, this remains an empty promise.

For More Information, please contact:

Peter Micek | General Counsel | peter@accessnow.org | +1-888-414-0100 x709