

**Question for written answer E-002454/2022
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Jordi Cañas (Renew)

Subject: Harassment of journalist Ignacio Cembrero by the Government of Morocco in connection with the use of Pegasus spyware

On 18 July 2021, Ignacio Cembrero was informed by the platform Forbidden Stories that he had been spied on with Pegasus spyware by the Kingdom of Morocco. The journalist, who specialises in the Maghreb, reported this violation of his privacy by the Moroccan Government to the Spanish Public Prosecutor's Office, requesting that the persons responsible be identified. Last week, Morocco filed a civil lawsuit against the journalist¹, requesting him to retract what he said or wrote about Pegasus and Morocco and seeking monetary compensation, which it has left for the Spanish courts to determine.

This is the fourth complaint filed against the journalist by Morocco or persons associated with the country. This series of complaints clearly shows that the journalist is being harassed by the Moroccan Government. This can be considered a series of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP). Morocco's aim is clearly to silence the journalist by getting him embroiled in a series of lengthy and costly court battles that he cannot afford, in order to suppress his critical and dissenting voice.

In light of the above:

Does the Commission intend to prioritise the adoption of the directive on strategic lawsuits (SLAPP) against journalists and human rights defenders²?

What mechanisms does the Commission intend to put in place to ensure that third countries comply with the Anti-SLAPP Directive?

¹ https://www.elconfidencial.com/espana/2022-07-03/marruecos-denuncia-al-periodista-ignacio-cembrero-por-vincularle-con-pegasus_3453417/

² Regard being had to Article 81(2) TFEU: