

## Serpentine Galleries boss quits claiming she was forced out by bullying and 'misjudged personal attacks' on her husband over his investment in Israeli tech firm linked to WhatsApp hack

- Yana Peel quits as boss of the Serpentine Galleries after three years in role
- She claimed she was victim of bullying and 'personal attacks' on her husband
- Stephen Peel invested in controversial Israeli hacking software firm NSO
- Mrs Peel said she feared wealthy donors will stop contributing if she stays

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The boss of **London's** Serpentine Galleries has quit claiming she was forced out due to 'misjudged personal attacks' over her husband's involvement with a controversial tech firm linked to the WhatsApp hack.

Yana Peel, 45, has left after three years at the helm of the two venues in Hyde Park and said she feared funding from wealthy donors would dry up if she continued in the role due to the 'inaccurate' reports.

Questions were raised after husband Stephen invested in £790million **Israeli** tech firm the NSO Group, whose software was allegedly used to hack into WhatsApp.

Mr Peel bought a majority stake in the company earlier this year via his private equity vehicle, Novalpina. It is the second major purchase by the fund since launching in 2016.

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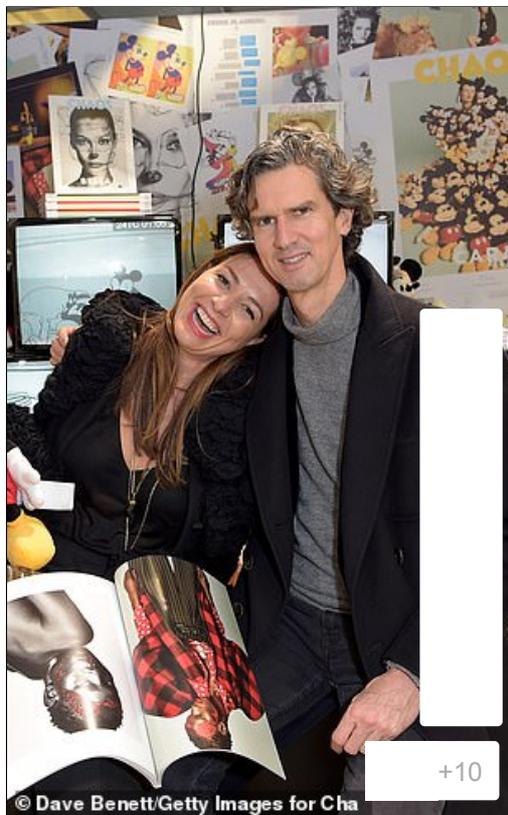
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Yana Peel, 45, has quit as boss of the Serpentine Galleries in London over 'misjudged personal attacks' over her husband Stephen's investment in controversial Israeli tech firm NSO. The couple are pictured together left at The Old Vic Theatre last year and right at a Disney 90th anniversary celebration in London last December



Mrs Peel, pictured left at the 2016 Serpentine Summer Party with (from left) Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Tommy Hilfiger, Naomi Campbell and Julia Peyton-Jones, said she had been subjected to 'toxic personal attacks' over her husband's business dealings



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Mrs Peel, left, pictured with (from second left) artist Christo Vladimirov Javacheff, ex-New York Mayor and Galleries Chairman Michael Bloomberg, London Mayor Sadiq Khan and Mr Obrist in front of Christo's temporary floating installation The London Mastaba in the Serpentine last year

In her resignation statement, Mrs Peel said: 'In light of a concerted lobbying campaign against my husband's recent investment, I have taken the decision to step down as CEO of the Serpentine Galleries. I am saddened to find myself in this position.'

'These attacks are based upon inaccurate media reports now subject to legal complaints.'

'I have decided I am better able to continue my work in supporting the arts, the advancement of human rights and freedom of expression by moving away from my current role.'

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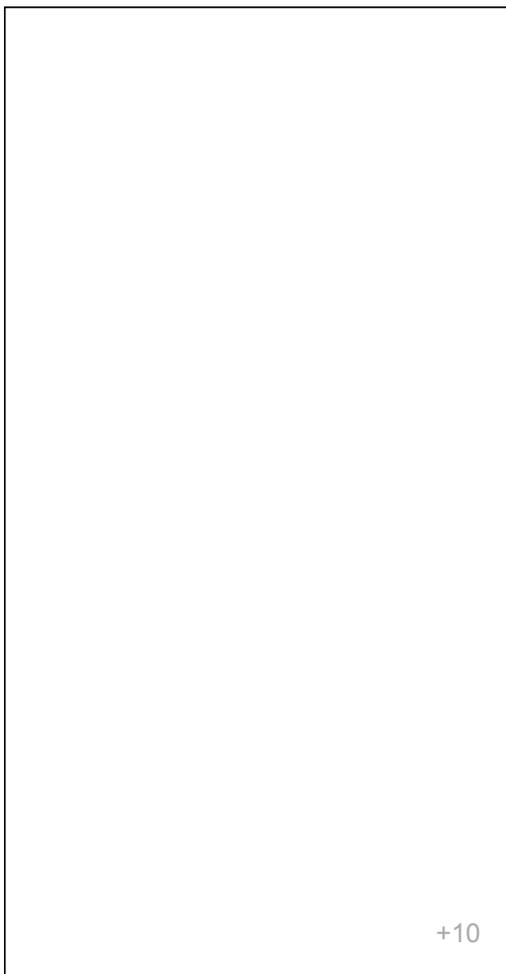
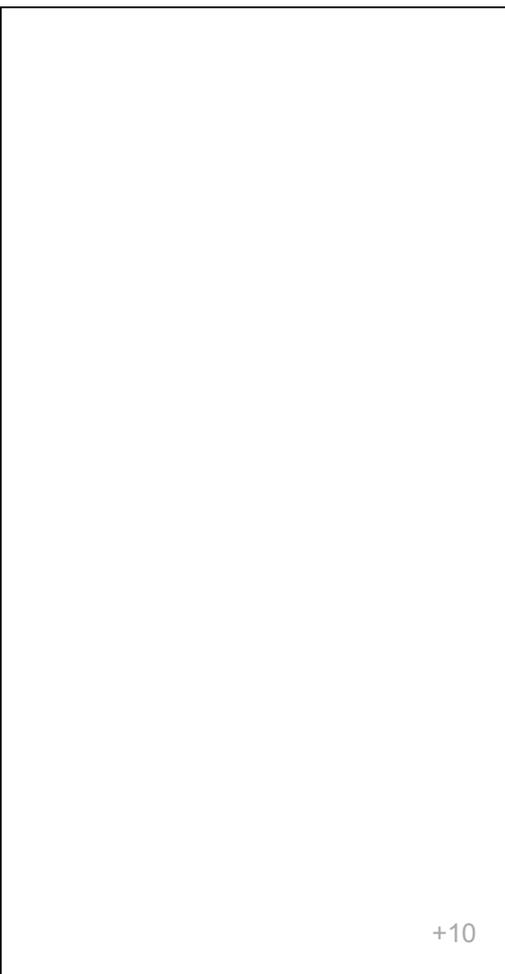
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Bosses at NSO insist the software, called Pegasus, is used for security purposes to help prevent terrorist attacks, infiltrate drug cartels and help rescue kidnapped children.

But NGOs and campaigners claim it has been sold to authoritarian regimes who have used it to spy on citizens - with ongoing court cases claiming the technology has been used to target dissidents.

Critics have accused Mrs Peel of hypocrisy over her husband's decision to invest in NSO after the couple have spent years fighting human rights abuses as free speech advocates.



Mrs Peel, pictured left with Serpentine artistic director Hans-Ulrich Obrist at a Royal Academy of Arts summer exhibition in London earlier this month and right with model Adwoa Aboah at the 2018 Serpentine Summer Party, said the attacks were based on 'inaccurate reports'

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She looked effortlessly chic

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**The mother of two, pictured with stylist Edward Enninful at 2018 London Fashion Week, said the world of art 'should be about free expression', not 'intimidation'**

She has a small, single digit stake in Novalpina but has no involvement in operations or investment decisions.

The former Serpentine boss appeared to accept there are some criticisms of NSO, but said any discussions must be 'constructive'.

She added: 'The world of art is about free expression. But it is not about bullying and intimidation. I welcome debate and discussion about the realities of life in the

## What are NSO accused of?

Yana Peel's husband Stephen manages a private equity firm, Novalpina, who are the majority shareholder in the NSO group, maker of the Pegasus software

Pegasus allows for monitoring of devices and their content, including the remote activation of cameras and

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digital age.

'There is a place for these debates, but they should be constructive, fair and factual - not based upon toxic personal attacks.'

Facebook-owned messenger app, WhatsApp, said last month a cyber attack on it's tech may have targeted human rights groups and that the sophisticated spyware deployed - known as Pegasus - was developed by NSO.

The firm, one of the world's most popular messaging tools which is used by 1.5 billion people monthly, said it had notified the U.S. Department of Justice to help with an investigation into the breach and encouraged its users to update to the latest version of the app, where the breach had been fixed.

microphones without users' knowledge.

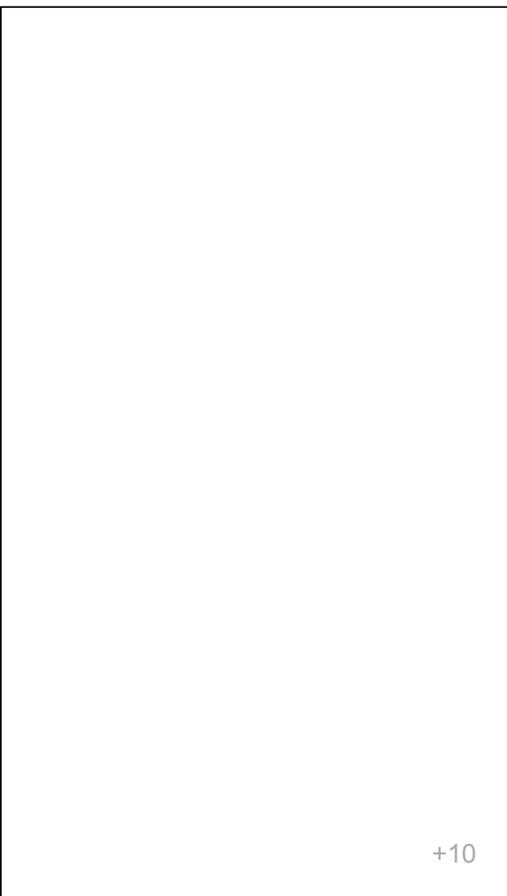
The firm says the software is used by authorities to help prevent terrorist attacks, infiltrate organized crime groups and help rescue kidnapped children.

But human rights campaigners say Pegasus has been used by authoritarian regimes to spy on citizens.

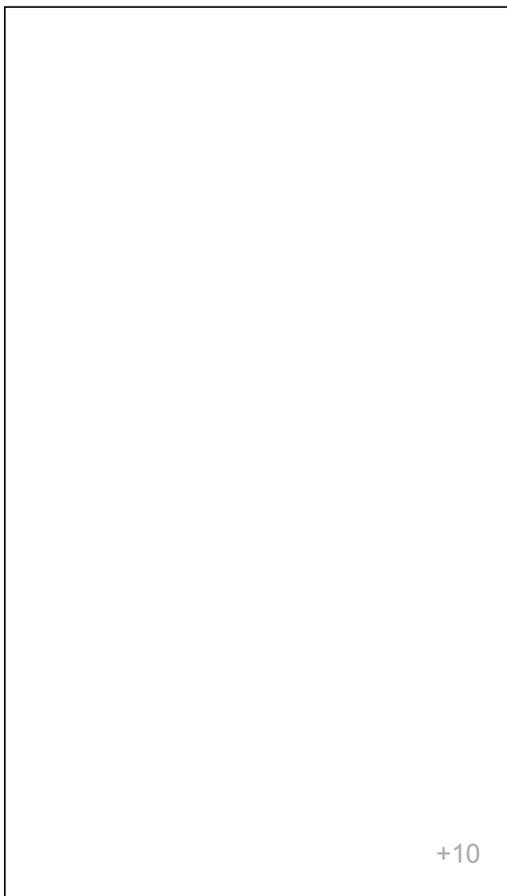
Amnesty International have filed a lawsuit in Israel which says its staff may be under surveillance since the WhatsApp hacking scandal.

NSO said last week that it was setting up a 'governance framework' to ensure its software was used lawfully.

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Mrs Peel, left and right, with ex-Culture Secretary Matt Hancock

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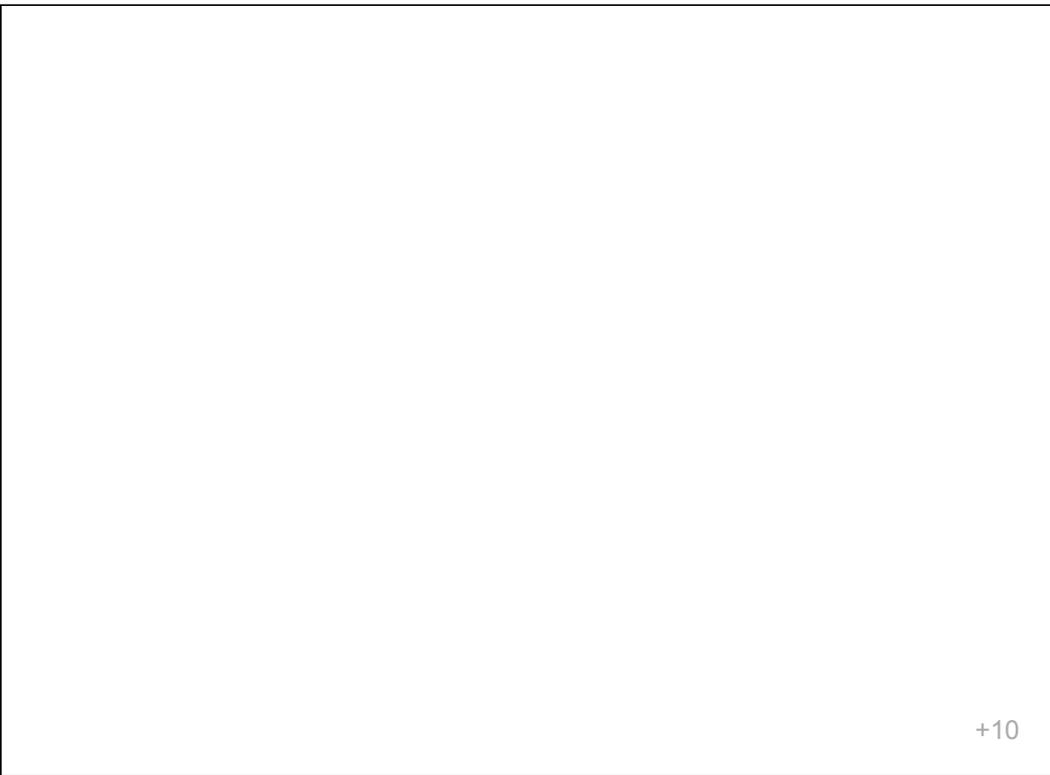
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**The Serpentine Galleries said Mrs Peel, pictured at the opening of its new pavilion in 2017, had left the organisation 'well-placed to thrive'**

Her husband's business is attempting to get to grips with the criticism of NSO and last week bosses at the tech firm revealed a 'governance framework' to ensure its software's lawful use.

Novalpina also said it will announce a new framework for the firm which will be a 'new benchmark transparency and respect for human rights', and fully align with the UN's guiding principles.

Although the exact details of the framework remain unknown, Novalpina said it will 'in future aim to disclose all information of relevance and importance unless it is expressly prohibited in law' from doing so.

In a statement, The Serpentine said: 'Yana leaves the Serpentine Galleries deeply grounded in its mission to provide both established and emerging artists with a dynamic platform to showcase their work, and well-positioned to thrive.'

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