

# Coalition against Stalkerware

In November 2019, Kaspersky and nine other organizations from the IT Security industry and advocacy/non-profit groups launched a global initiative to protect users against stalking and domestic violence. Kaspersky gathered prominent organizations that raise awareness around the topic, including; Avira, Electronic Frontier Foundation (USA), European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence, G DATA, Malwarebytes, National Network to End Domestic Violence (USA), NortonLifeLock (ex-Symantec), Operation Safe Escape (USA), and Weisser Ring (Germany).

## What is stalkerware?

Stalkerware is commercially available software that enables a remote operator to monitor the activities on another user's device without their consent. It allows the operator to collect keystrokes, monitor messages, call information and GPS locations – all without the user's knowledge. It can often be used to abuse the privacy of current or former partners.

Stalkerware can be installed on both Android and iOS devices. There are also desktop versions of commercial spyware, but these are not particularly popular.

## What is impact and reach of stalkerware?

Based on Kaspersky stats, stalkerware is of growing interest to malicious users. Number of our users facing stalkerware rose by 67%: **40,386** mobile users were attacked in 2018, while in 2019 this number increased to **67,500**. Moreover, there was a twofold increase in the number of the attacks during the second half of 2019 when compared to the first half. For example, there were 4,483 Kaspersky users attacked in January 2019; in September 2019, this number rose to 9,546, and, in December 2019, this number reached 11,052 attacked users.

**Russia, Brazil, India** and the **US** are the most prominent regions for stalkerware globally. When it comes to Europe – **Germany, Italy, and France** are the top three affected places respectively.

European Institute for Gender Equality research states that “seven in ten women (**70%**) who have experienced cyber stalking, have also experienced at least one form of physical or/and sexual violence from an intimate partner”.

## Our response to protect users against stalkerware

- While Kaspersky has always been detecting stalkerware, as a security vendor, we did not have the rights to block or remove this legal software from the user's device. All we could do was inform the user about its presence. So, in April 2019, Kaspersky upgraded its Internet Security for Android solution with **Privacy Alert**. Kaspersky was the first vendor in the industry who started notifying users about stalkerware installed on their devices and the dangers that it poses.
- In co-operation with non-profit organizations, digital activists, and cybersecurity vendors, Kaspersky announced the creation of the **Coalition against Stalkerware**, an international working group dedicated to tackling stalking software.

# The purposes and values of the Coalition

The Coalition convened in order to facilitate communication between those organizations working to combat domestic violence and the security community.

Members' objectives include:

- improving detection and mitigation of stalkerware;
- increasing technical capacity of survivors and advocacy organizations;
- raising awareness.

The founding members started with creating a standard definition for stalkerware and reaching a consensus on detection criteria, which has made it possible for the IT security industry to communicate and work around the issue.

## Our future plans

As the Coalition moves forward, it intends to:

**Samples exchange:** creating a platform to exchange stalkerware samples – with the goal of improving detection and mitigation of stalkerware.

### Step #1

### Step #2

**Technical capacity of NPOs:** a series of webinars and training courses for NPOs around the globe.

### Step #3

**Dual-use tests:** combined expertise from victims support and cybersecurity will improve our products, and in its turn – to better help affected users.

### Step #4

**New partners:** the Coalition may become the “No More Ransom project for NPOs” (as **ZDNet stated** – “Currently, No More Ransom is considered the gold standard in terms of private industry and law enforcement collaboration”).

#### Links:

<https://stopstalkerware.org/>  
<https://kas.pr/ym61>

**[www.kaspersky.com](https://www.kaspersky.com)**

#### Contacts

The Coalition is looking forward to working with new partners (non-profit organizations, industry, academia and other areas such as law enforcement) that think alike and would like to cooperate in reaching our joint goal to protect people against stalking.

To become a new partner, please contact Kristina Shingareva, Head of External Relations at Kaspersky: [ka@kaspersky.com](mailto:ka@kaspersky.com) or use the web form at the Coalition's web site: [stopstalkerware.org](https://stopstalkerware.org).