

# $NOM\Xi$

no such organisation Navine G. Khan-dossos

#### $NOM\Xi$

NO SUCH ORGANISATION

NAVINE G. KHAN-DOSSOS

OCTOBER 24 - NOVEMBER 20, 2020

#### NO SUCH ORGANISATION

No Such Organisation (2018 – 2020) is a series of one hundred paintings that document the fallout from a single event: the assassination of Saudi-Arabian dissident Jamal Khashoggi in 2018. The cycle of paintings chronicles the repercussions of this event sequentially, through the journalistic and juridical investigations it triggered. These investigations confronted the development of cyber weapons and spyware, and the ways in which they have compromised the safety and working conditions of journalists, activists and political dissidents throughout the world.

The reporting of Khashoggi's death changed radically during the first days and weeks that followed, in what Navine Khan-Dossos perceived as a kaleidoscope of tumbling details. It was a story that never quite settled, either in terms of fact or of responsibility. The paintings respond to this uncertainty by deploying symbolic elements that stand in for players in the story — nation states, agencies and technologies — which shift into new alignments with each iteration, resisting final judgement. The case remains without a central visual figure, as the body of Khashoggi was never recovered. Sound and silence meanwhile played a key role in the case, as a recording from the Saudi consulate in Istanbul was circulated in the media. Into this absence of images, Khan-Dossos inscribes one hundred renderings of the event.

As the narrative around the murder expanded over the subsequent months, so the subjects of the paintings broaden to visualize (urther issues raised by the case. In particular, the role of surveillance technologies sold by private companies to governments for domestic and international use in matters of security and intelligence, with little oversight. A critical stance is now developing around the ethics of such surveillance tools, and as such, the paintings explore in abstracted terms these changes in awareness and campaigning around the role of cyber weapons in global politics.

Alongside No Such Organisation, Khan-Dossos exhibits Silent Latitude (2019), a work that equally emerges from a commitment to structure and form as a way to represent complex narratives. Fabricated in collaboration with the Greek Transgender Support Association in Athens and Z33 with MIA-H in Hasselt, Silent Latitude is a quilt made by many women in different places, a communal act of creation. The work began with a series of watercolour designs produced in Athens with the GTSA, based on the Greek Cross, which is a common pattern in traditional quilting. The designs were then reworked and completed by the women of MIA-H, a Belgian textile workshop. No Such Organisation and Silent Latitude follow a similar structural base: a square format divided into a 3x3 grid. In both works, the individual squares may stand alone, and also interact to form larger configurations of pattern and signification.

The title *Silent Latitude* is taken from the poetry of Hadewijch, a thirteenth-century Flemish Beguine, or lay nun, known as a mystic and poet, which refers to the commonality of souls in Paradise. For the artist, the title refers to the apparent divide between the European North and South — the two sites of production for this work — along with the actual commonality of mutual support groups in both locations. The quilt is co-owned by the artist and the GTSA, with any proceeds equally divided in recognition of the shared labour. The work follows in the tradition of the Beguine communities that maintained their independence from the Church through textile production.











#### CHILLING EFFECTS

#### Stephanie Kirchgaessner

When I interviewed the pro-democracy activist Farida Nabourema in July 2020, she could not — for her safety — tell me where she was. But I knew she was not in her native Togo, where she fears arrest.

As we spoke, I could hear her nine-month-old son blowing bubbles. I imagined that she was bouncing him on her knee.

I'm an investigative reporter and I cover surveillance. When I write about spyware and the way it affects people's lives and work, it is people like Farida who I think about.

I spoke with her while I was reporting on a case of a Catholic bishop and priest from Togo who had been targeted with spyware made by NSO Group in 2019. The spyware, called Pegasus, is sold to governments and can infiltrate mobile phones to access calls, texts and photos. It can even turn a phone into a listening device. It is impossible to say for sure whether the repressive Togolese government was behind the attack, but they remain the most obvious and probable candidate. The two clergymen were known to be vocal critics of the government, and may have been perceived as a threat to President Faure Gnassingbé, who has led Togo since 2005. For nearly four decades before him, the country was ruled with an iron fist by his father. (In fact, Farida's father was a dissident against that regime.)

For Farida and her fellow activists, the threat of surveillance is nothing new. In 2017, activists she worked with were arrested, interrogated and tortured by the Togolese authorities. The nature of the questions they were asked strongly suggested to them that the authorities had gained access to their private WhatsApp chats.

These days, Farida says, her ability to strategize and organize has been made much more difficult because of the threat of

surveillance. Her 'safe' online space where dissent could grow and thrive has been disrupted. This is especially prohibitive for people in exile, who are trying to effect political change in Togo from afar. For dictators and despots, this is good news. It's good news for authorities in Saudi Arabia, too, and in the UAE, and any of the dozens of countries where governments have evidently turned to spyware to control the threats to their rule.

Not only has communication between activists become more difficult for Farida, so has talking to her parents. Her righteous and rightful anger is triggered not only by the disruption that the threat of surveillance has had on her work, but by the overwhelming feeling of having one's personal space violated by invisible intruders into one's most intimate conversations: with friends, with lovers, with doctors, with our mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers. How might these details of my life be used against me? Anyone who seeks to challenge the very notion of spyware — activists and journalists alike — has had this question run through their mind.

I am not in danger of arrest or of facing physical threats from where I work in Washington DC. Yet there is something eerie about focusing one's investigative attention on spyware. Its reach is borderless.

It can be difficult to capture in a single article the true cost of such surveillance and its threats. At a time when the world is reeling from an abundance of terrible news, from the Covid-19 pandemic to the undermining of democracies across the world, the sale of a spyware called Pegasus does not always register as high priority on the list of concerns.

Pegasus is however a particularly current threat: a twenty-first-century weapon. An instrument that seems to be being used, routinely and devastatingly, to keep undemocratic forces in power.

Elsewhere, this software has been exploited differently. Several supporters of Catalan independence were targeted with Pegasus in 2019, at the same time as the attacks on the bishop and priest in Togo. In Spain, no authority has taken responsibility for the targeting, which even affected senior elected officials in the Catalan parliament. Despite the nationalist hangover of Franco's previous authoritarian regime, Spain is currently a strong democracy. What does this tell us? Perhaps that the stealthy power of Pegasus invites abuse.

In a previous case in Mexico, NSO Group's software was alleged to have been used to target journalists and lawyers. It was even said to have been deployed against campaigners in favor of a soda tax.

The people who sell Pegasus and defend its use claim it is a necessary solution to a specific problem: the proliferation of end-to-end encryption applications like Signal and WhatsApp make it difficult for law enforcement officials to track terrorists and criminals. This is not an argument that can be ignored — not least because it is used to justify human rights abuses around the world

Does law enforcement face a challenge from terrorists who have "gone dark"? Yes. Does that challenge need to be met with a contemporary legal response that also protects the right to freedom of expression and the right to privacy? Yes.

Some experts have recommended a moratorium on the sale of technologies like Pegasus until countries can agree on a set of rules that will protect vulnerable people. For now, there is not consensus on this.

NSO Group has unveiled a human rights policy that it says will help to protect vulnerable populations that may be targeted. However, I have yet to see any evidence that NSO Group has investigated any of the many allegations against it, including that most high-profile, in relation to Jamal Khashoggi, which is captured so vividly in Navine Khan-Dossos's art.

It is not possible to say with certainty whether Khashoggi was personally targeted by Pegasus. But there have been credible allegations that a close confidente of his had been, in the months before the *Washington Post* journalist was brutally murdered.

Omar Abdulaziz, a native Saudi living in exile in Canada, was in Montreal when he was told by Bill Marczak of Citizen Lab, the research group that has tracked NSO along with other spyware groups, that he was apparently being hacked by the Saudi regime. It was August 2018 and Khashoggi was one of Abdulaziz's confidantes.

The two spoke and plotted frequently about the tools they could use to disrupt Saudi Arabia's notorious troll armies, which attacked and harassed Saudi dissenters and spread disinformation inside the kingdom.

If Abdulaziz's phone had been hacked, then it is highly likely that Saudi authorities were listening in on those conversations all along. Did their access to their communication fuel their desire to kill Khashoggi? Khan-Dossos's work is powerful because it speaks to that horrifying possibility.

NSO Group has always said its spyware was never used to target Khashoggi. One thing you learn when reporting on this technology is that an individual does not need to be personally targeted in order for a regime to listen in on conversations or see their texts. If all the associates of a primary target are being hacked, the regime will gain a great deal of information about this person's activities. I suspect this was true in this case. Furthermore, it is unclear what NSO Group's role may have been in targeting associates of Khashoggi.

Then there is the question of who profits from the technology. One of the biggest investors in the private equity fund that owns NSO Group is a pension fund in Oregon, the progressive northwestern state whose treasurer has talked about the importance of investing in a socially responsible way.

The fact is, the fund's investment in NSO Group is likely paying high dividends. Even though we don't know who NSO

Group's clients are, we can be quite sure that they are paying and making investors rich. For Oregon, a state that witnessed a glimpse of authoritarianism in the summer of 2020, as unidentified law enforcement officials took to the streets of Portland to silence protesters against racial injustice and police brutality, investment into NSO Group ought to give citizens pause.

Many who hear Farida Nabourema's story will count her among NSO Group's and its customers' victims — along with Khashoggi, and many unknown others. Even when such weapons are turned on them, too, journalists will continue to tell their stories.

**Stephanie Kirchgaessner** in the *Guardian*'s investigations correspondent, based in Washington DC. She covers surveillance and spyware and other issues. Previously, she was Rome correspondent and from 2000 to 2014 she worked as a journalist for the *Financial Times* in London, NY, and DC. Stephanie is a mother of two and likes to get into "good trouble".



No Such Organisation exists not only in physical form as paintings, but as an online archive bringing together the journalism and activism that play an invaluable role in the conception of the works. With support from The Centre of Investigative Journalism, a website has been created where all one hundred works can be explored, including the source materials and a pattern index for the symbols that make up the paintings.

http://nosuchorganisation.khandossos.com/

#### SPYWARE'S ODD TARGETS: BACKERS OF MEXICO'S SODA TAX, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



The New York Times, 11 Feb 2017



NSO GROUP: HACKERS USE PEGASUS SPYWARE TO TARGET AND TRACK SUPPORTERS OF MEXICAN SODA TAX, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



International Business Times, 12 Feb 2017



### SOSPECHAN MAYOR ESPIONAJE DEL GOBIERNO MEXICANO, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



El Economista, 13 Feb 2017



# MEXICO HACKING AND SPYING ON ITS CITIZENS IS A 'HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS', 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



*Vice*, 23 June 2017



# JAMAL KHASHOGGI DISAPPEARS, A MYSTERY RATTLING THE MIDDLE EAST, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



The New York Times, 8 Oct 2018



# 'DEAFENING SILENCE': WHITE HOUSE'S RESPONSE TO KHASHOGGI DISAPPEARANCE, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



Middle East Eye, 9 Oct 2018



# CCTV SHOWS ALLEGED SAUDI HIT SQUAD'S MOVEMENTS — VIDEO, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



The Guardian, 10 Oct 2018



### THE NSO CONNECTION TO JAMAL KHASHOGGI, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



The Citizen Lab, 24 Oct 2018



U.S. SPY AGENCIES SUED FOR RECORDS ON WHETHER THEY WARNED KHASHOGGI OF IMPENDING THREAT OF HARM, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



The Washington Post, 20 Nov 2018



### HOW ANGER IN WASHINGTON OVER KHASHOGGI'S MURDER HAS LED TO PROGRESS IN THE YEMEN CONFLICT, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



Independent, 14 Dec 2018



# UN EXECUTIONS EXPERT TO VISIT TURKEY TO LEAD KHASHOGGI INQUIRY, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



The Guardian, 4 Jan 2019



#### INTELLIGENCE, ETHICS AND BUREAUCARCY: THE DUTY TO WARN JAMAL KHASHOGGI, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



Just Security, 7 May 2019



# YANA PEEL QUITS SERPENTINE AFTER NEGATIVE LOBBYING CAMPAIGN, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



Artlyst, 8 June 2019



SERPENTINE: YANA PEEL RESIGNS OVER 'TOXIC, PERSONAL ATTACKS', 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



*BBC*, 18 June 2019



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, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



MailOnline, 18 Jun 2019



# TRUMP DISMISSES UN REQUEST FOR FBI TO INVESTIGATE JAMAL KHASHOGGI'S MURDER, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



The Guardian, 23 June 2019



# KHASHOGGI KILLING: UN RAPPORTEUR CALLAMARD PRESENTS REPORT, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



Al Jazeera, 26 June 2019



#### JAMAL KHASHOGGI WAS MY FIANCÉ. A YEAR AFTER HIS MURDER, I'M STILL FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



Time, 2 Oct 2019



### THE KHASHOGGI MURDER RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT A SAUDI BOMB, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 23 Nov 2019



#### 'CLICK I AGREE': THE UN RAPPORTEUR SAYS PRINCE TRIED TO INTIMIDATE BEZOS WITH MESSAGE (VERSION II), 2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



The Guardian, 22 Jan 2020



#### THE FBI IS INVESTIGATING THE BEZOS HACK, 2018-2020

Gouache on paper 100 x 100 cm



The Verge, 31 Jan 2020



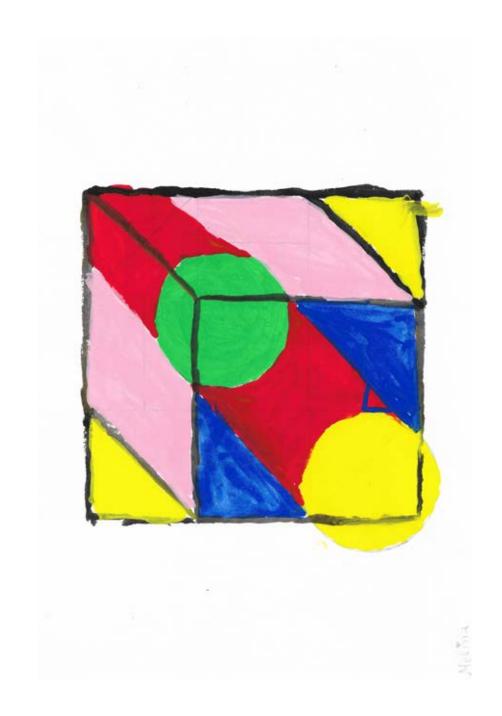
#### SILENT LATITUDE, 2019

Wool and cotton 204 x 204 cm In collaboration with The Greek Transgender Support Association and MIA-H





Gouache on paper 20 x 30 cm Courtesy the artist and the Greek Transgender Support Association



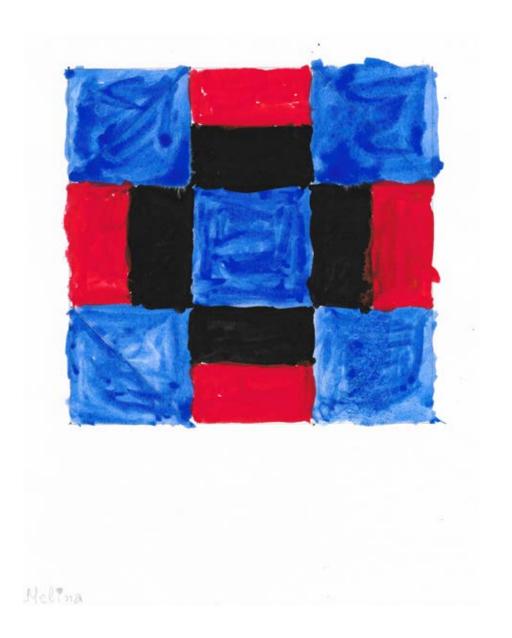
#### UNTITLED STUDY (02) FOR SILENT LATITUDE, 2018



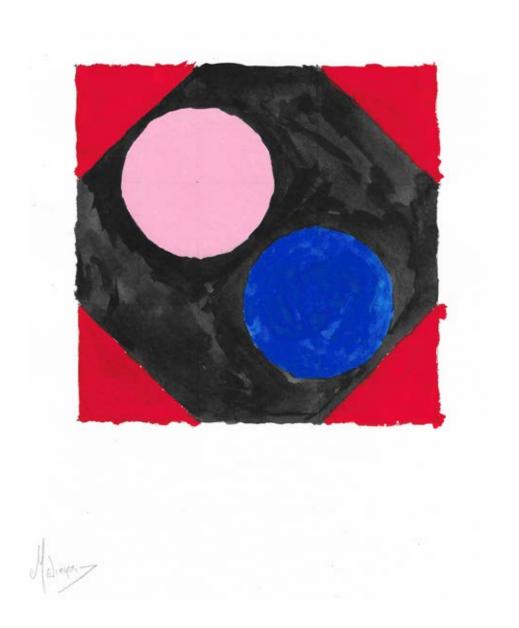
## UNTITLED STUDY (09) FOR SILENT LATITUDE, 2018



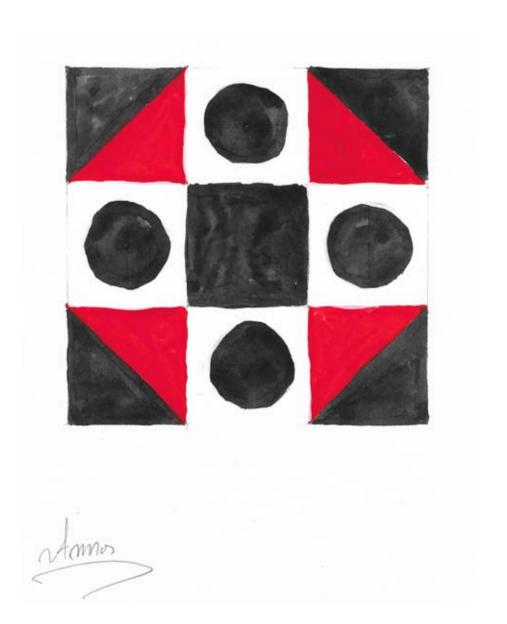
## UNTITLED STUDY (14) FOR SILENT LATITUDE, 2018



# UNTITLED STUDY (16) FOR SILENT LATITUDE, 2018



## UNTITLED STUDY (17) FOR SILENT LATITUDE, 2018



## UNTITLED STUDY (18) FOR SILENT LATITUDE, 2018



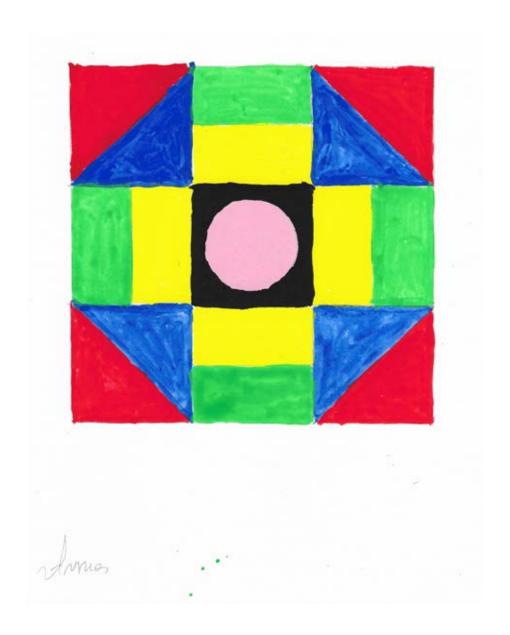
#### UNTITLED STUDY (19) FOR SILENT LATITUDE, 2018



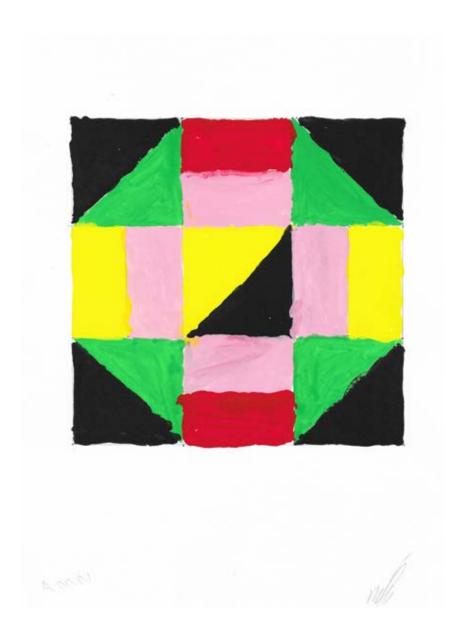
# UNTITLED STUDY (22) FOR SILENT LATITUDE, 2018



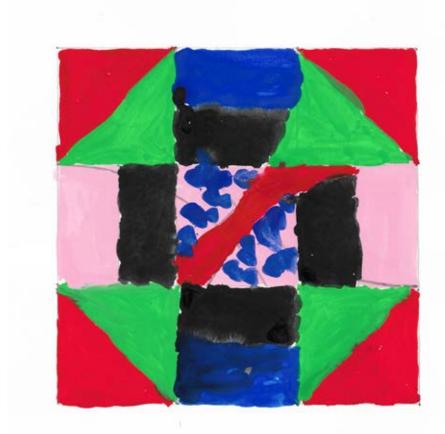
## UNTITLED STUDY (30) FOR SILENT LATITUDE, 2018



## UNTITLED STUDY (31) FOR SILENT LATITUDE, 2018



## UNTITLED STUDY (32) FOR SILENT LATITUDE, 2018







Navine G. Khan-Dossos is a visual artist based between London and Athens. Her interests include Orientalism in the digital realm, geometry as information and decoration, image calibration, and aniconism (the absence of figurative representations of sacred or living beings). Drawing on the traditional techniques of Islamic art, classical painterly training, and the aesthetics of the digital age, her paintings emerge from a philosophy of the image that extends beyond the iconic and the decorative, into the political stakes of contemporary life. This is not the formal abstraction of western art history, but the development of a new informational language, which translates the patterns and relations of our interconnected world.

Duration, interaction and communication form key contours of Khan-Dossos's work, whether painting in public and in dialogue with audiences over many weeks (My TV Ain't HD, That's Too Real, Witte de With, 2015, or producing extensive series of paintings influenced by the unfolding of mediatised events IConverts, Van Eyck Academie, 2015; No Such Organisation, 2020). Her work often responds to a political sense of place. taking the form of murals and site-specific installations: There Is No Alternative (2019) at The Showroom, London, became a site for a series of overlapping murals as well as for an archive and discussion about the UK Government's anti-terrorism strategy. In Athens, a room-size painted installation at the Benaki Museum of Islamic Art animated the city's complex identity between East and West (Imagine a Palm Tree, 2016). The vast outdoor mural Echo Chamber at the Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven, The Netherlands, 2016) reflected on the depiction of European converts to radical Islam.

She has exhibited and worked with various institutions, including The 4th Istanbul Design Biennial, SALT (Istanbul), The Delfina Foundation (London), The Museum of Islamic Art (Doha), Z33 (Hasselt, Belgium), Leighton House Museum (London), and the A.M. Qattan Foundation (Ramallah, Palestine). She is currently a member of the Substantial Motion Research Network.

#### PRESS REFERENCES

Spyware's Odd Targets: Backers of Mexico's Soda Tax, New York Times, 11 Feb 2017

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/11/technology/hack-mexico-soda-tax-advocates.html

NSO Group: Hackers use Pegasus spyware to target and track supporters of Mexican soda tax, International Business Times, 12 Feb 2017

https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/nso-group-hackers-use-pegasus-spyware-target-track-supportersmexican-soda-tax-1606171

Sospechan mayor espionaje del gobierno mexicano, El Economista, 13 Feb 2017

https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/politica/Sospechan-mayor-espionaje-del-gobierno-mexicano-20170213-0039.html

Mexico Hacking and Spying on Its Citizens Is a 'Human Rights Crisis', Vice, 23 June 2017

https://www.vice.com/en\_us/article/mbjyqx/mexico-hacking-and-spying-on-its-citizens-is-ahuman-rights-crisis

Jamal Khashoggi Disappears, a Mystery Rattling the Middle East, The New York Times, 7 Oct 2018, <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/07/world/middleeast/turkey-jamal-khashoggi-saudi-arabia.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/07/world/middleeast/turkey-jamal-khashoggi-saudi-arabia.html</a>

Deafening silence: White House's response to Khashoggi disappearance, Middle East Eye, 9 Oct 2018 https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/deafening-silence-white-houses-response-khashoggi-disappearance

CCTV Shows Alleged Saudi Hit Squad's Movements — Video, The Guardian, 10 Oct 2018

https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2018/oct/10/jamal-khashoggi-cctv-alleged-saudi-hit-squad-video

The NSO Connection To Jamal Khashoggi, Citizen Lab, 24 Oct 2018

https://citizenlab.ca/2018/10/the-nso-connection-to-jamalkhashoggi/

U.S. spy agencies sued for records on whether they warned Khashoggi of impending threat of harm, Washington Post, 20 Nov 2018

 $\frac{\text{https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-spy-agencies-sued-for-records-on-whether-they-warned-khashoggi-of-impending-threat-of-harm/2018/11/20/21ef3750-ed21-11e8-8679-934a2b33be52\_story.html}$ 

How anger in Washington over Khashoggi's murder has led to progress in the Yemen conflict, Independent, 14 Dec 2018 <a href="https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/yemen-war-saudiarabia-houthi-iran-donald-trump-washington-bob-corker-death-toll-jamal-khashoggi-a8683926.html">https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/yemen-war-saudiarabia-houthi-iran-donald-trump-washington-bob-corker-death-toll-jamal-khashoggi-a8683926.html</a>

UN executions expert to visit Turkey to lead Khashoggi inquiry, The Guardian, 24 Jan 2019

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/24/un-forensics-team-to-visit-turkey-in-inquiry-into-khashogqi-death

Intelligence, Ethics and Bureaucarcy: The Duty to Warn Jamal Khashoggi, Just Security, 7 May 2019
https://www.iustsecurity.org/63055/intelligence-ethics-and-

https://www.justsecurity.org/63955/intelligence-ethics-and-bureaucracy-the-duty-to-warn-jamal-khashoggi/

Yana Peel Quits Serpentine After Negative Lobbying Campaign, Artlyst, 18 June 2019

https://www.artlyst.com/news/yana-peel-quits-serpentine-negative-lobbying-campaign/

Serpentine: Yana Peel resigns over 'toxic, personal attacks', BBC, 18 June 2019 https://www.bbc.com/news/48673980 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, Mail Online, 18 Jun 2019

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7154609/ Serpentine-galleries-boss-quits-claiming-forced-bullying.html

Trump dismisses UN request for FBI to investigate Jamal Khashoggi's murder, The Guardian, 23 June 2019 <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/23/jamal-khashoggi-trump-un-request-fbi-investigation">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/23/jamal-khashoggi-trump-un-request-fbi-investigation</a>

Khashoggi killing: UN rapporteur Callamard presents report, Al Jazeera, 26 June 2019

https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/26/khashoggikilling-un-rapporteur-callamard-presents-report/

Jamal Khashoggi Was My Fiancé. A Year After His Murder, I'm Still Fighting for Justice, Time, 2 Oct 2019 https://time.com/5690601/jamal-khashoggi-anniversary/

The Khashoggi murder raises questions about a Saudi Bomb, The Bulletin, 23 Nov 2019 <a href="https://thebulletin.org/2018/11/the-khashoggi-murder-raises-questions-about-a-saudi-bomb/">https://thebulletin.org/2018/11/the-khashoggi-murder-raises-questions-about-a-saudi-bomb/</a>

Click I agree: the UN rapporteur says prince tried to intimidate Bezos with message, The Guardian, 22 Jan 2020 https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/jan/22/click-i-agree-un-rapporteur-says-prince-tried-to-intimidate-bezos-with-text

The FBI is investigating the Bezos hack, The Verge, 31 Jan 2020 <a href="https://www.theverge.com/2020/1/31/21117180/fbi-bezos-hack-amazon-saudi-arabia-nso">https://www.theverge.com/2020/1/31/21117180/fbi-bezos-hack-amazon-saudi-arabia-nso</a>









#### NO SUCH ORGANISATION

Navine G. Khan-Dossos

"Chilling Effects" by Stephanie Kirchgaessner

Creative Direction: 515 Creative Shop Design: Matteo Barbeni Text edit: Hannah Gregory Photography: Billie Clarken

This book was published on the occasion of Navine G. Khan-Dossos' solo exhibition "No Such Organisation" at NOME, Berlin, from October 23 to November 20, 2020.

#### NOME

Director: Luca Barbeni

Gallery Manager: Olga Boiocchi Sales Associate: Jesi Khadivi Exhibition set-up: Nino Caltabiano

Special thanks to: Marie Couelle, Emanuela Laudati, Daniela Silvestrin, James Bridle, Jake Charles-Rees/The Centre for Investigative Journalism, CitizenLab, Anushka Asthana/The Guardian, Stephanie Kirchgaessner, Hannah Gregory.







