

Google CEO says company will review AI scholar's abrupt exit

December 10 2020, by Matt O'brien



In this Oct. 3, 2019 file photo, Google CEO Sundar Pichai speaks during a visit to El Centro College in Dallas. Pichai has apologized for how a prominent artificial intelligence researcher's abrupt departure last week has "seeded doubts" in the company. Pichai told Google employees in a memo Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2020 obtained by Axios that the tech company is beginning a review of the circumstances leading up to Black computer scientist Timnit Gebru's exit and how Google could have "led a more respectful process." (AP Photo/LM Otero, File)

Google CEO Sundar Pichai has apologized for how a prominent artificial intelligence researcher's abrupt departure last week has "seeded doubts" in the company.

Pichai told Google employees in a Wednesday memo [obtained by Axios](#) that the tech company is beginning a review of the circumstances leading up to Black computer scientist Timnit Gebru's exit and how Google could have "led a more respectful process."

Gebru, a top scholar in the field of AI ethics, said she was fired last week. Google has referred to it as a resignation.

Pichai's note doesn't call it either a firing or a resignation but says "we need to accept responsibility for the fact that a prominent Black, female leader with immense talent left Google unhappily."

The dispute centered around Google's push to disassociate itself from a research paper Gebru co-authored examining the societal dangers of an AI technology used by Google.

Gebru criticized Pichai's memo Wednesday on Twitter, [saying she saw](#) "no plans for accountability" in it and because it offered no apology for what happened to her.

Thousands of people, many of them Google employees, have signed an [open letter](#) showing support for Gebru and accusing Google of "unprecedented research censorship," racism and defensiveness.

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Citation: Google CEO says company will review AI scholar's abrupt exit (2020, December 10)
retrieved 9 April 2024 from
<https://techxplore.com/news/2020-12-google-ceo-company-ai-scholar.html>

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