

Facebook, Instagram release report on efforts to protect rights

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Social media giant Meta, whose platforms including Facebook and Instagram regularly face concerns over their impact on civil liberties and democracy, on Thursday released its first annual report on its efforts to protect human rights.

For years Meta has been heavily criticized for a business model that has been accused of prioritizing extremist content in a bid to attract users' attention.

Its leaders have taken measures to combat misinformation and improve content moderation, but those efforts were undercut last year when whistleblower Francis Haugen leaked internal documents and testified the company was putting its profits before user safety.

The new report covers the years 2020 and 2021 and looks back at measures taken on Facebook and Instagram to combat issues like misinformation around COVID-19, as well as summarizing previously published studies such as those on US and Philippine elections.

It also looks at the issue of data protection.

"The report explains how our Data Policy, our Law Enforcement Response Team and our due diligence assessments work together to protect people from unlawful or overbroad government surveillance," a statement from the Silicon Valley giant said.

Meta, like fellow tech titan Google, was recently challenged by politicians, NGOs and journalists on data protection for women seeking abortions in the United States after the US Supreme Court revoked the [constitutional right](#) to the procedure last month.

Abortion rights groups fear technology companies will be forced to hand over the data of women who have sought access to care in US states where abortion is now banned or highly restricted.

"Our [human rights](#) policy indicates that we have to interpret [government requests](#) narrowly," Miranda Sissons, Meta's human rights director, told AFP.

"Where there is a gap between local and international norms, we should be seeking to uphold international norms as much as possible," she added, without elaborating on what that means for US citizens including women seeking abortions.

The report mentions that if a request does not comply with the law or Meta's regulations, the company "will push back" against it.

The report also "highlights the important role that end-to-end encryption plays on WhatsApp in protecting people's privacy—particularly journalists and human rights defenders—and how we're expanding it to our other messaging apps," the Meta statement added.

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