

South Korea opens Telegram deepfake porn probe

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Activists hold eye masks during a protest against deepfake porn in Seoul.

South Korean police said Monday they had launched an investigation into encrypted messaging platform Telegram for allegedly "abetting" the distribution of so-called deepfake porn, including explicit AI generated

images of teenagers.

Deepfake porn includes [explicit content](#) where the faces of individuals are digitally superimposed onto other pornographic images or videos using artificial intelligence technology.

A South Korean broadcaster reported last month that university students were running an illegal Telegram chatroom, sharing deepfake pornographic material of female classmates, one of a slew of high-profile cases that have stoked public anger.

"In light of these (deepfake) crimes, the Seoul National Police Agency launched their probe last week... for abetting the crimes," said Woo Jong-soo, head of the investigation bureau at the National Police Agency, according to a transcript of a press briefing.

"Telegram has been non-responsive to our previous requests for account information during investigations of earlier Telegram-linked crimes," he said.

Police received 88 reports of deepfake porn last week alone, Woo said, adding they have identified 24 suspects.

The Telegram probe was initiated after Pavel Durov, the founder and chief of Telegram, was arrested last month in France.

Durov, 39, was charged with several counts of failing to curb extremist and illegal content on the popular messaging app.

South Korean police have pledged to "find ways to cooperate with various investigative bodies, including the French, to enhance" their investigation into the platform, Woo said.

AFP has contacted Telegram for comment.

Activists say South Korea is suffering from an epidemic of digital sex crimes, including those involving spycams and revenge porn, with inadequate legislation to punish offenders.

Perpetrators of [deepfake](#) crimes have reportedly used social media platforms such as Instagram to save or screen-capture photos of victims, which were then used to create fake pornographic material.

This has fueled public anger and prompted President Yoon Suk Yeol, a former prosecutor, to call for officials to "thoroughly investigate and address these digital sex [crimes](#) to eradicate them completely".

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