

Google workers demand the company stop selling its tech to police

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More than 1,600 Google workers are demanding the company "take real steps to help dismantle racism" and end its police contracts. In a letter that began circulating internally last week, workers wrote that they were "disappointed to know that Google is still selling to police forces, and advertises its connection with police forces as somehow progressive."

"The racist legacy of [police](#) across the United States goes all the way back to its roots, when [police forces](#) emerged to protect the wealth gotten from slavery and genocide," the letter reads. "We have a long way to go to address the full legacy of racism but to begin with—we should not be in the business of profiting from racist policing. We should not be in the business of criminalizing Black existence while we chant that Black Lives Matter."

The letter comes a few days after company Chief Executive Sundar Pichai announced Google was committing more than \$175 million to "support Black business owners, startup founders, job seekers and developers." Google is among the many [tech companies](#) that have spoken up in

support of the Black community since George Floyd was killed while in custody of Minneapolis police. But those statements stand in stark contrast to those companies' records on the treatment of Black employees and customers as well as how their products affect the Black community.

"We're committed to work that makes a meaningful difference to combat systemic racism, and our employees have made over 500 product suggestions in recent weeks, which we are reviewing," Google spokesperson Cynthia Horiguchi said in a statement. "On this one, we were the first major company to decide, years ago, to not make [facial recognition](#) commercially available and we have very clear AI Principles that prohibit its use or sale for surveillance. We have longstanding terms of use for generally available computing platforms like Gmail, GSuite and Google Cloud Platform, and these products will remain available for Governments and local authorities, including [police departments](#), to use."

In the letter, the workers, who call themselves Googlers against Racism, wrote that they were "disappointed" by the company's response.

"The past weeks have shown us that addressing racism is not merely an issue of words, but of actions taken to dismantle the actual structures that perpetuate it," the letter reads. "While we as individuals hold difficult but necessary conversations with our family, friends and peers, we are also incredibly disappointed by our company's response."

Google employees have waged a long internal battle against the company's business with law enforcement and government agencies with mixed results. In 2018, employees demanded the company cancel—and some quit in protest of—its contract providing artificial intelligence to the Department of Defense. Eventually the company announced that it would not re-up its relationship

with the Defense Department when it was up for renewal. However, when employees caught wind of an effort to create a censored search engine for China, hundreds of them demanded Google end those efforts. Though Pichai insisted there wasn't a product ready for launch, he would not commit not to create "a tool for surveillance and censorship in China" when asked by members of Congress.

In the letter, Google employees specifically pointed to the [company's](#) work with the Clarkstown Police Department in New York, which has been sued "multiple times for illegal surveillance of Black Lives Matter organizers."

"Why help the institutions responsible for the knee on George Floyd's neck to be more effective organizationally?" the open [letter](#) to management read.

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