

July 11, 2022

U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader

U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader

U.S. Senator Dick Durbin
Senate Majority Whip

U.S. Senator John Thune
Senate Minority Whip

U.S. Representative Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House

U.S. Representative Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader

U.S. Representative Steny Hoyer
House Majority Leader

U.S. Representative Steve Scalise
House Minority Whip

Dear U.S. Congressional leadership,

Digital rights organizations around the world have been working for years to address the harms of U.S. Big Tech companies, like Alphabet (parent company of Google and YouTube), Meta (Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp), Apple, and Amazon. From dangerous disinformation that poisons democracy, foments violence, and undermines public health to the weaponization of sensitive data against marginalized communities, Big Tech is responsible for violating human rights and exacerbating inequalities globally.

Now, we have the opportunity to address the fundamental problem that plagues our online ecosystem: Big Tech's concentration of power. A very small number of U.S. tech companies exercise outsized influence over our human rights in the digital age, and this needs to change. If a company controls a market and has no real competitors — thanks to years of anti-competitive practices — they have little to no incentive to care about the human rights implications of their content moderation policies, data collection practices, and more. No matter how harmful Big Tech's impact is on society around the world, they know their real customers — advertisers — will keep coming back. They also know that their users will stay, since they have nowhere else to go. Big Tech owns the world's eyeballs, and, with no competition to challenge and offer a way out from their abusive practices, they won't change their ways unless regulation ends their dominance.

This is why we support the **American Innovation and Choice Online Act** and the **Open App Markets Act**. These bills will tackle the dangerous dominance of Big Tech head-on.

The legislation would address the following Big Tech harms:

Fueling Disinformation and Hate: The current market structure makes it possible for Big Tech companies to operate with no accountability. Dominant platforms promote harmful content by design, under-invest in content moderation tools especially in cultures or languages outside their priority markets, and choose profits over public good, because they know we are

dependent on their platforms. Even when [1,100 advertisers joined a Facebook boycott](#), Mark Zuckerberg knew they'd be back. And, even when the [military used Facebook to incite violence and commit crimes against humanity in Myanmar](#), people stayed on the platform. We've seen Big Tech censor human rights defenders, support autocrats, elevate disinformation, spread conspiracy theories, and fuel racial, ethnic, caste, and gender-based violence around the world. Truth and democracy will forever be under attack with Big Tech calling the shots and manipulating information flows to pad their pockets.

Data Abuse and Surveillance: Big Tech's excessive concentration of power is built on harvesting personal data. Time after time, Big Tech companies exploit the sensitive data of marginalized people, resulting in discrimination online — from education to employment to housing opportunities. Creating healthier markets in which businesses must compete on keeping us safe online will allow people to choose platforms that respect our privacy and other human rights.

For years, Big Tech has been operating without adequate regulation and enforcement, and we finally have a unique window of opportunity to change the system. Antitrust action against U.S. Big Tech monopolies will open up new opportunities for innovation and hinder these firms' ability to recklessly pursue profits with impunity. This is not to say that antitrust bills are a panacea: protecting human rights and democracy from the "move fast and break things" mentality will also require a U.S. federal privacy bill, corporate governance reform, and more. But it is an essential component of the Big Tech accountability agenda. We urge the U.S. Congress to pass the **American Innovation and Choice Online Act** and the **Open App Markets Act** even as it continues to advance accountability through other means.

The impact goes way beyond the borders of the U.S., fueling, for example, coordinated [attacks against human rights defenders in the Philippines](#) and [ethnic violence in Ethiopia](#). It's time to change the rules and embrace new opportunities for a more competitive internet that centers human rights. This is impossible without leadership from U.S. elected officials.

Signed,

Access Now
Africa Freedom of Information Centre
African Freedom of Expression Exchange
Akina Mama wa Afrika
ARTICLE 19
Athena Coalition
Balanced Economy Project
Consumer Association the Quality of Life - EKPISO
DefendDefenders
Digital Security Lab Ukraine
Fight for the Future
Global Voices
LobbyControl

Media Foundation for West Africa
Movement Against Disinformation
Namibia Media Trust
OpenMedia
Open MIC (Open Media and Information Companies Initiative)
Pollicy
ProboxVE Inc.
Ranking Digital Rights
SAFEnet (Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network)
Taraaz
Teplitsa — Technologies for Social Good
Ubunteam
Unwanted Witness
Women of Uganda Network
Woodhull Freedom Foundation
Zaina Foundation
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