

March 14, 2024

Mr. Elon Musk  
Owner  
X  
1355 Market Street, Suite 900  
San Francisco, CA 94103

Mr. Mark Zuckerberg  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
Meta  
1 Hacker Way  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Mr. Shou Zi Chew  
Chief Executive Officer  
TikTok  
5800 Bristol Parkway, Suite 100  
Culver City, CA 90230

Mr. Sundar Pichai  
Chief Executive Officer  
Alphabet Inc. and Google LLC  
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway  
Mountain View, CA 94043

Dear Mr. Musk, Mr. Zuckerberg, Mr. Chew, and Mr. Pichai:

With over 70 countries holding elections and more than 2 billion people casting ballots this year, 2024 is the “year of democracy.”<sup>1</sup> Australia, Belgium, Croatia, the European Union, Finland, Ghana, Iceland, India, Lithuania, Namibia, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Panama, Romania, Senegal, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States are expected to hold major electoral contests this year. On Monday, I heard from the heads of the U.S. Intelligence Community that the Russian, Chinese, and Iranian governments may attempt to interfere in U.S. elections. As these and other actors threaten peoples’ right to exercise popular sovereignty, your platforms continue to allow users to distribute fabricated content, discredit electoral integrity, and deepen social distrust.

The dangers your platforms pose to elections are not new – users deployed deepfakes and digitally-altered content in previous contests – but now, artificial intelligence (AI) models are poised to exacerbate risks to both the democratic process and political stability. The proliferation of sophisticated AI tools has reduced earlier barriers to entry by allowing almost anyone to generate alarmingly realistic images,<sup>2</sup> video,<sup>3</sup> and audio.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alec Russell, “[Can democracy survive 2024?](#)” *Financial Times*, January 3, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Ross Sorkin, et al., “[An A.I.-Generated Spoof Rattles Markets](#),” *New York Times*, May 23, 2023; Bill McCarthy, “[Ron DeSantis ad uses AI-generated photos of Trump, Fauci](#),” *AFP Check*, June 7, 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Suci, “[There is Now a Deep Fake Video of Ron DeSantis Dropping Out of the 2024 Race](#),” *Forbes*, September 2, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Meryl Kornfield, “[Fake Biden robocalls urge Democrats not to vote in New Hampshire primary](#),” *Washington Post*, January 22, 2024.

Recent history demonstrates how rapidly bad actors have adopted generative AI models – and how inadequately your platforms have combated them. In September 2023, the research firm NewsGuard revealed that a network of TikTok accounts used AI-generated voice overs to spread conspiracy theories; their videos received over 330 million views.<sup>5</sup> In January, New Hampshire voters received an AI-generated robocall of President Joe Biden urging them to refrain from voting in the state’s primary.<sup>6</sup> More than 100 AI-generated videos of U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak were recently promoted on Facebook.<sup>7</sup> In Indonesia – the world’s third-largest democracy – AI-generated videos were quickly adopted by political campaigns and disseminated widely.<sup>8</sup> Evidence suggests that users are wielding these tools to threaten elections around the world – in the U.K., India, Nigeria, Sudan, Ethiopia, Slovakia, and beyond.<sup>9</sup> As people go to the polls in record numbers, you have a responsibility to prevent the misuse of AI tools on your platforms.

Last year’s Slovakian elections offered a window into one possible future. Days before the election – when the media was prohibited from reporting on the contest – an AI-generated audio clip that falsely depicted opposition candidate Michal Šimečka conspiring to purchase votes and rig the outcome flooded the Internet.<sup>10</sup> The entirely fabricated content confused the electorate and undermined Slovaks’ confidence in their political system. Šimečka lost to his Russia-friendly rival Robert Fico.<sup>11</sup>

This spring, the European Union (EU) will hold parliamentary elections in every member state. The stakes are exceptionally high as Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to wage his illegal war in Ukraine, right on the EU’s borders. The bloc is taking steps to combat foreign influence campaigns, and recently passed new legislation granting the EU’s executive arm greater authority to set and enforce rules for digital services.<sup>12</sup> This more muscular approach may insulate European electorates from the worst forms of information warfare.

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<sup>5</sup> Coalter Palmer, “[AI Voice Technology Used to Create Conspiracy Videos on TikTok, at Scale](#),” NewsGuard, September 28, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Kornfield, “[Fake Biden Robocalls](#).”

<sup>7</sup> Ben Quinn, “[Slew of deepfake video adverts of Sunak on Facebook raises alarm over AI risk to election](#),” *The Guardian*, January 12, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Kate Lamb, Fanny Potkin, and Ananda Teresia, “[Generative AI may change elections this year. Indonesia shows how](#),” *Reuters*, February 8, 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Hannah Murphy, “[Audio deepfakes emerge as weapon of choice in election disinformation](#),” *Financial Times*, January 23, 2024.

<sup>10</sup> Olivia Solon, “[Trolls in Slovakian Election Tap AI Deepfakes to Spread Disinfo](#),” *Bloomberg*, September 29, 2023; Morgan Meaker, “[Slovakia’s Election Deepfakes Show AI Is a Danger to Democracy](#),” *Wired*, October 3, 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Jan Cieński and Veronika Melkozerova, “[Why Slovakia’s Fico hates Ukraine](#),” *Politico*, October 19, 2023.

<sup>12</sup> European Commission, “[Commission sends requests for information to 17 Very Large Online Platforms and Search Engines under the Digital Services Act](#),” Press Release, January 18, 2024; Kelvin Chan, “[EU demands Meta and TikTok detail efforts to curb disinformation from Israel-Hamas war](#),” *Associated Press*, October 19, 2023; Aaron Gregg and Will Oremus, “[E.U. launches inquiry into Elon Musk’s X over spread of illegal content](#),” *Washington Post*, December 18, 2023; European Commission, [Regulation \(EU\) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC \(Digital Services Act\)](#), accessed March 11, 2024.

Beyond your failures to effectively moderate misleading AI-generated content, your platforms also remain unable to stop more traditional forms of false content. China-linked actors used malicious information campaigns to undermine Taiwan’s January elections.<sup>13</sup> Facebook allowed the spread of disinformation campaigns that accused Taiwan and the United States of collaborating to create bioweapons,<sup>14</sup> while TikTok permitted coordinated Chinese-language content critical of President-elect William Lai’s Democratic Progressive Party to proliferate across its platform.<sup>15</sup>

In Mexico, the Associated Press recently uncovered around 40 fake online outlets spreading falsehoods on social media, including that former Mexico City Mayor and current presidential candidate Claudia Sheinbaum was born in Bulgaria, which would make her ineligible for the presidency.<sup>16</sup> In India, the world’s largest democracy, the country’s dominant social media platforms – including Meta-owned WhatsApp – have a long track record of amplifying misleading and false content. Political actors that fan ethnic resentment for their own benefit have found easy access to disinformation networks on your platforms.<sup>17</sup>

American adversaries – including Russia, China, and Iran – amplified disinformation during the 2022 midterm elections.<sup>18</sup> While there is no indication that they compromised electoral systems or meddled in the vote, these governments are able to sow distrust and stoke baseless suspicion by manipulating the conversation online. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence’s recent hearing on Worldwide Threats underscored the continued danger your platforms pose, highlighting how state propaganda has been allowed to propagate online.

Democracy’s promise – that people rule themselves – is fragile. Disinformation and misinformation poison democratic discourse by muddying the distinction between fact and fiction. Your platforms should strengthen democracy, not undermine it.

I urge you to take immediate and concerted efforts to combat the spread of false content, protect the integrity of this year’s elections, increase the resources devoted to content moderation in

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<sup>13</sup> Maggie Miller and Joseph Gedeon, “[Taiwan bombarded with cyberattacks ahead of election](#),” *Politico*, January 11, 2024; Joseph Menn, Naomi Nix, Cat Zakrzewski and Pranshu Verma, “[China’s meddling in Taiwan election presages year of misinformation threats](#),” *Washington Post*, January 12, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> The Economist, “[China is flooding Taiwan with disinformation](#),” September 26, 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Shannon Bond, “[Fake social media accounts are targeting Taiwan's presidential election](#),” *NPR*, December 13, 2023.

<sup>16</sup> Marcos Martínez Chacón, “[Experts warn against wave of fake news ahead of Mexico’s 2024 presidential election](#),” *Associated Press*, August 25, 2023.

<sup>17</sup> Gerry Shih, “[Inside the vast digital campaign by Hindu nationalists to inflame India](#),” *Washington Post*, September 26, 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Eric Tucker, “[2022 federal elections in the US not tainted by foreign interference, officials say](#),” *Associated Press*, December 18, 2023.

languages other than English, and improve your approach to transparency. To that end, I request responses to the following questions by April 12, 2024:

- What reviews have you undertaken of your past election-related policies to identify their effectiveness, reliability, and ease of enforcement?
  - Have these reviews been published publicly? If not, explain why.
  - Have these reviews been reviewed by election administration and election integrity experts? If not, explain why.
  
- What, if any, new policies have you developed and/or implemented to regulate the distribution of AI-generated content prior to elections?
  - Have these policies been developed or implemented with input from election administration and election integrity experts? If not, explain why.
  - What, if any, new tools have you developed and/or implemented to detect AI-generated content?
  
- What, if any, new policies have you developed and/or implemented to regulate the distribution of AI-generated content?
  - Have these policies been developed or implemented with input from election administration and election integrity experts? If not, explain why.
  
- What, if any, new tools have you developed and/or implemented to detect AI-generated content?
  
- What, if any, new policies have you put in place to prepare for 2024 elections in the United States?
  - How many content moderators assigned to the U.S. market do you currently employ in languages other than English?
    - If any, please list the languages and the number of content moderators associated with each.
    - Of these, please provide a breakdown between full-time employees and contractors.
  
- What, if any, new policies have you put in place to prepare for the 2024 Indian election?
  - How many content moderators do you currently employ in Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili, and Dogri?
    - Of these, please provide a breakdown between full-time employees and contractors.

- What, if any, new policies have you put in place to prepare for the 2024 European Parliament elections?
  - Please provide the number of content moderators you have assigned to each official EU language.
  
- For each country or electoral union where your platforms currently operate, aside from those listed above, please provide the following:
  - How many unique election policies have you put into place?
  - How have you publicized these policies?
  - For each country, please list the number of content moderators associated with each language, with a breakdown between full-time employees and contractors.

Sincerely,



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Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator