

Annex III: Human Rights Watch Letter to the Israeli Cyber Unit at the Office of the State Attorney

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November 22, 2023

Dr. Haim Vismonsky
Director of the Cyber Unit
Office of the State Attorney
Ministry of Justice
29 Salah A-Din, Jerusalem
9711052, Israel

Dear Dr. Haim Vismonsky,

We are writing to you on behalf of Human Rights Watch, an independent, nongovernmental organization that monitors and reports on human rights in over 100 countries around the world, including Israel and Palestine, where we have worked for more than three decades.

Human Rights Watch has been documenting online censorship related to Israel and Palestine since October 7. In October, Human Rights Watch published a call for evidence of online censorship and suppression of content related to Israel and Palestine on social media since October 7. The call was posted from the Human Rights Watch main accounts in English, Arabic, and Hebrew, on multiple social media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, X, and TikTok.

Since then, we have gathered hundreds of cases which detail various forms of censorship impacting posts and accounts documenting, condemning, and raising awareness about the recent and ongoing hostilities in Israel and Palestine, which involve serious human rights abuses.

We note that the Israeli Cyber Unit flags and submits requests to social media companies to “voluntarily” remove content, by making direct appeals to platforms based on their own terms of service, rather than filing a court order based on Israeli criminal law.

In order for the report to reflect information from and the perspective of the Cyber Unit, we would appreciate your responses to the following queries in writing:

1. Provide the following details on the Cyber Unit’s requests to social media companies since October 7:
 - Number of requests per platform (broken down by number of posts or accounts)
 - Compliance rate per platform
 - The relevant company policy the post or account allegedly violated
 - Compliance rate per policy
2. Please provide the same details on the Cyber Unit’s requests to social media companies for the months of October and November 2022.
3. What standards or guidelines does the Cyber Unit follow in making voluntary requests to social media companies? Who determines that a request should be made? How are these determinations made?

We request that you provide us with a response to these questions and any other information that you wish to provide **in writing by December 6, 2023**, so that we may have the opportunity to review and reflect it as appropriate in our reporting. We may post on our website relevant parts of any response received after that date.

Thank you in advance for your engagement. Should you have any clarifying questions or comments, please feel free to reach out to me at [redacted].

Sincerely,

Deborah Brown
Acting Associate Director, Technology and Human Rights Division
Human Rights Watch