

New Campaign Demands Tech Giants Pledge to Build 'Surveillance-Resistant Web'

by Jake Johnson via ben - CommonDreams Tuesday, Apr 3 2018, 2:47am

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After Facebook allowed its data to be weaponized "it's time that big IT companies take steps to ensure that using their products doesn't mean that users have to sacrifice their rights."

As Facebook's data breach at the hands of Cambridge Analytica spurs widespread [privacy concerns](#) and demands for accountability over how massive internet companies mine the data of their users for profit, a coalition of civil libertarians and human rights groups on Monday launched a [new campaign](#) demanding that all tech companies take concrete steps to protect users' information from exploitation and help build "a surveillance-resistant web."

"This is a watershed moment for the internet," Evan Greer, deputy director of Fight for the Future, declared in a statement on Monday.

"Millions of people now understand how their data can be weaponized and used against them, and they are demanding change," Greer said. "Cambridge Analytica is just the tip of the iceberg, and this problem doesn't begin and end with Facebook. If the largest tech companies take the steps outlined in the security pledge, it will change the course of human history for the better."

Spearheaded by ACLU, Free Press, Demand Progress, Color of Change, and several other prominent organizations, the "[Security Pledge](#)" calls on tech giants to:

-- Move toward "meaningful transparency" by ensuring that users "have access to and control over their data";

Protect users' personal information by providing "end-to-end encryption" that would prevent corporate and government surveillance;

-- Cease collecting and storing data that "isn't necessary for your product or business";

Provide equal protections to all communities and stop collecting "information that is vulnerable to misuse," like immigration status and political views; and

-- Support "laws that require a warrant before the government can demand information about your users" and "reforms that curtail mass surveillance."

David Segal, executive director of Demand Progress, argued in a statement on Monday that tech companies' long-term response to the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal will ultimately determine whether the internet is used "for transformational change for the better" or for "the extraction of sensitive private information and manipulation towards the benefit of large corporations or for social control by governments."

The major online platforms are facing a reckoning: How they respond in this moment will help determine whether the utopian vision that inspired so many internet pioneers and users stands a chance of becoming a reality, or whether companies will ignore the public interest and turn the

internet against its users towards the end of private benefit," Segal concluded.

As Common Dreams reported last week, revelations that the pro-Trump data firm Cambridge Analytica harvested the personal information of 50 million Facebook users brought renewed attention to the social media giant's far-reaching and "creepy" data mining practices—which include the collection of call records, text messaging data, and online messenger conversations dating back longer than a decade.

But privacy advocates have been quick to emphasize that Facebook is just one of many companies whose business model depends on the mass exploitation of users' personal data.

Neema Singh Guliani, legislative counsel at ACLU, said in a statement on Monday that it is long past time for these invasive practices to come to an end.

"It's time that companies take steps to ensure that using their products doesn't mean that users have to sacrifice their rights," she argued. "Many companies have for too long ignored their obligation to treat data responsibly, prevent information from being used to discriminate, and provide users full control over how it is handled."

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