



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

November 20, 2023

Shou Zi Chew
Chief Executive Officer
TikTok Inc.
5800 Bristol Parkway
Culver City, California 90230

Dear Mr. Chew:

We write to you with deep concerns over the rise of terrorist and antisemitic content on your platform. On October 7, the Palestinian terrorist organization, Hamas, brutally attacked Israel and killed more than 1,400 people. Since this terrorist attack, disinformation related to the conflict has run rampant on your platform, stoking antisemitism, support, and sympathy for Hamas.¹

According to TikTok's own "Creative Center," the hashtag "#freepalestine" received 946 million views in the last 30 days, while "#standwithIsrael" received only 55 million.² Most concerning, 58 percent of those viewing the #freepalestine hashtag are within the 18 to 24 age group.³ Disturbingly, millions of TikTok users have recently viewed videos glorifying Osama Bin Laden's "Letter to America," which attempts to justify his horrific murder of 3,000 Americans in the September 11, 2001, attacks while also perpetuating "the antisemitic trope claiming the Jews 'control your policies, media and economy.'"⁴ Many of the younger generations are turning to TikTok rather than search engines and other verifiable sources for their news.⁵ You have led these generations to believe that TikTok is an "unfiltered" news source.⁶

TikTok's connection to parent company ByteDance, which is headquartered in the People's Republic of China (PRC), raises significant national security concerns.⁷ All Chinese tech companies are required to comply with the PRC's "National Intelligence Law of 2017," which allows Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials to access user data without any

¹ Amy Schumer, Ariel Rebecca Martin, et al., *Dear TikTok*, <https://www.deartiktok.com/>.

² *TikTok Creative Center*, TikTok (accessed Nov. 8, 2023), <https://ads.tiktok.com/business/creativecenter/hashtag/freepalestine/pc/en?period=30> (term #freepalestine searched on Nov. 8, 2023); *TikTok Creative Center*, TikTok (accessed Nov. 8, 2023), <https://ads.tiktok.com/business/creativecenter/hashtag/standwithisrael/pc/en?period=30> (term #standwithisrael search on Nov. 8, 2023).

³ *TikTok Creative Center*, *supra* note 2 at #freepalestine.

⁴ Joseph A. Wulfsohn, *Osama bin Laden's infamous 'Letter to America' after 9/11 promoted by TikTok influencers, goes viral*, Fox News (November 16, 2023), <https://www.foxnews.com/media/osama-bin-ladens-infamous-letter-america-9-11-promoted-tiktok-influencers-goes-viral>.

⁵ Kalley Huang, *For Gen Z, TikTok Is the New Search Engine*, The New York Times (Sep. 16, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/16/technology/gen-z-tiktok-search-engine.html>.

⁶ Taylor Lorenz, *Why TikTok videos on the Israel-Hamas war have drawn billions of views*, The Washington Post (Oct. 10, 2023), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2023/10/10/tiktok-hamas-israel-war-videos/>.

⁷ Eric Tucker, *FBI director raises national security concerns about TikTok*, Association Press (Dec. 2, 2022), <https://apnews.com/article/technology-china-united-states-national-security-government-and-politics-ac5c29cafaa1fe6bee990ed7e1fe5afc>.

mechanism of due process.⁸ In addition, the CCP openly co-opts “private” Chinese companies to further CCP priorities, as demonstrated with the removal of Israel’s name from Baidu Maps and Alibaba-backed Amap.⁹

Earlier this year, while testifying before the Committee on Energy and Commerce, you stated that the PRC did not have control over TikTok.¹⁰ However, former TikTok employees reported that the PRC has access to American user data and is closely involved in decision-making and product development.¹¹ In your own testimony, you stated that you are in regular communication with Liang Rubo, the CEO of ByteDance.¹² Since the beginning of 2023, several high-level executives from the CCP-controlled ByteDance transferred into key positions at TikTok. These reports come from internal TikTok employees who believe that ByteDance has more control of TikTok than TikTok publicly acknowledges.¹³ This control, alongside troubling reports of privacy and data security breaches, such as monitoring American journalists’ locations,¹⁴ proves that the CCP is using TikTok as a surveillance and manipulation tool.

Given that roughly half of TikTok’s U.S. user base is under 25 years old, American youth are being exposed to extremely violent and disturbing images and videos.¹⁵ According to a Harvard/Harris poll, 51 percent of those polled between 18 to 24 believe Hamas was justified in its attack on October 7.¹⁶ This deluge of pro-Hamas content is driving hateful antisemitic rhetoric and violent protests on campuses across the country.¹⁷ The CCP has already co-opted your platform, and it seems TikTok and TikTok’s employees are resigned to becoming a mouthpiece for antisemites, terrorists, and propaganda.

⁸ *PRC National Intelligence Law* (as amended in 2018), China Law Translate (April 27, 2018), <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/national-intelligence-law-of-the-p-r-c-2017/>.

⁹ Simone McCarthy, *As Gaza conflict rages, online maps from Chinese companies are missing Israel’s name*, CNN.com (Nov. 2, 2023), <https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/02/china/china-maps-baidu-amap-israel-intl-hnk/index.html>.

¹⁰ *TikTok: How Congress Can Safeguard American Data Privacy and Protect Children from Online Harms*, Hearing before the H. Comm. on Energy and Commerce, 118th Cong. (March 23, 2023) (statement of Shou Zi Chew, TikTok CEO), <https://energycommerce.house.gov/events/full-committee-hearing-tik-tok-how-congress-can-safeguard-american-data-privacy-and-protect-children-from-online-harms>.

¹¹ Salvador Rodriguez, *TikTok insiders say social media company is tightly controlled by Chinese parent ByteDance*, CNBC (June 25, 2021), <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/06/25/tiktok-insiders-say-chinese-parent-bytedance-in-control.html>.

¹² *TikTok*, *supra* note 9.

¹³ Georgia Wells, *TikTok Employees Say Executive Moves to U.S. Show China Parent’s Influence*, The Wall Street Journal (Sep. 27, 2023), https://www.wsj.com/tech/tiktok-employees-say-executive-moves-to-u-s-show-china-parents-influence-ef5ff21f?st=nh05z4dd54nl9&reflink=article_imessage_share.

¹⁴ Emily Baker-White, *EXCLUSIVE: TikTok Spied on Forbes Journalists*, Forbes (December 22, 2022), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/emilybaker-white/2022/12/22/tiktok-tracks-forbes-journalists-bytedance/?sh=b821f1f7da57>.

¹⁵ Drew Harwell and Taylor Lorenz, *Israel-Gaza war sparks debate over TikTok’s role in setting public opinion*, The Washington Post (Nov. 2, 2023), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2023/11/02/tiktok-israel-hamas-video-brainwash/>.

¹⁶ Harvard Caps Harris Poll, (Oct. 19, 2023) https://harvardharrispoll.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/HHP_Oct23_KeyResults.pdf.

¹⁷ Hanna Panreck, *College groups across U.S. stage ‘walkout’ protesting U.S. military funding to Israel*, Fox News (Oct. 25, 2023), <https://www.foxnews.com/media/college-groups-across-u-s-stage-walkout-protesting-u-s-military-funding-israel>.

We ask that you provide us with the following information by December 4, 2023:

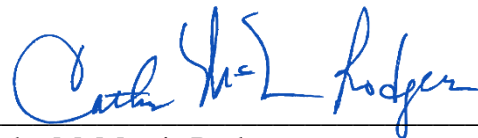
1. What number of employees at TikTok were formerly employed by ByteDance?
2. Does the PRC have any involvement or ability to censor or amplify content on TikTok?
3. What steps is TikTok taking to increase transparency about its data practices and content moderation policies?
4. Prior to, or immediately after, an event like the October 7 terrorist attack on Israel, does TikTok have an internal discussion about the types of content or viewpoints that may arise and require additional supervision or suppression?
 - a. If so, who participates in those meetings?
5. How does TikTok's process for curating the "For You" page differ from the type of content a user can see when searching out specific content?
6. Has TikTok's algorithm amplified content and sentiments calling for the elimination of the Jewish State?
7. What factors and third-party sites does TikTok use to determine what is and is not misinformation or disinformation about the Israel-Hamas conflict?
8. What metric tools (i.e., hashtags) is TikTok using to determine the interactions with posts related to the conflict?
9. Does TikTok manipulate the TikTok Creative Center's "hashtag-search" data before the data is searchable by users?
10. What is TikTok doing to counter the creation of bots worldwide who are intentionally interacting with pro-Hamas content?
11. What algorithmic capabilities is TikTok using to promote and/or suppress content related to the Israel-Hamas conflict?
12. How much money has TikTok paid out of its TikTok Creator Fund to creators promoting antisemitic content?
13. How does TikTok age-restrict certain content?
 - a. If content is not allowed on the "For You" page, does TikTok allow this content to be searchable?
 - b. What are the age group separations for the different levels of content restriction?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Vice Chair
Subcommittee on Communications and
Technology



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Chair
Committee on Energy and Commerce



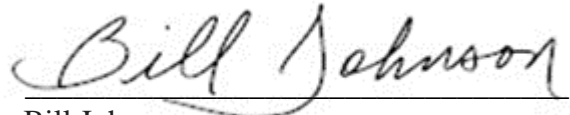
Robert E. Latta
Chair
Subcommittee on Communications and
Technology



Brett Guthrie
Member of Congress




Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress



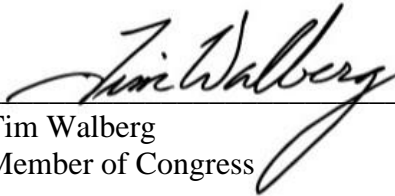
Bill Johnson
Member of Congress




Larry Bucshon, M.D.
Member of Congress



Richard Hudson
Member of Congress



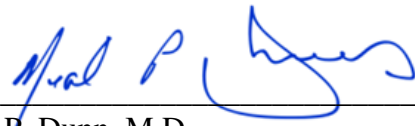
Tim Walberg
Member of Congress



Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress



Gary J. Palmer
Member of Congress



Neal P. Dunn, M.D.
Member of Congress



John R. Curtis
Member of Congress



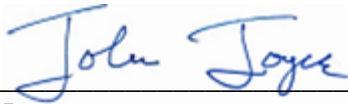
Debbie Lesko
Member of Congress



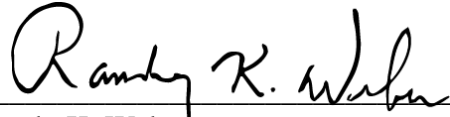
Greg Pence
Member of Congress



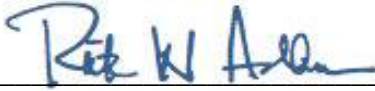
Dan Crenshaw
Member of Congress



John Joyce
Member of Congress



Randy K. Weber
Member of Congress



Rick W. Allen
Member of Congress



Troy Balderson
Member of Congress



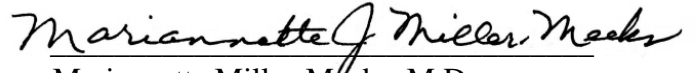
Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress



August Pfluger
Member of Congress



Diana Harshbarger
Member of Congress



Mariannette Miller-Meeks, M.D.
Member of Congress



Kat Cammack
Member of Congress