

February 28, 2023



Dragana Korljan
Officer-in-charge,
Special Procedures Branch
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Dear Special Rapporteurs,

Thank you for your letter dated December 29, 2022 concerning the harmful impact of hate speech.

At Apple, we embed a respect for human rights in everything we do—from the technology we make to the way we treat people. We’re deeply committed to respecting internationally recognized human rights in our business operations, as set out in the United Nations International Bill of Human Rights and the International Labour Organization’s Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Our Human Rights Policy outlines this commitment, and our approach is based on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. We conduct human rights due diligence to identify risks and work to mitigate them. We seek to remedy adverse impacts, track and measure our progress, and report our findings.

To make sure our progress is as meaningful and impactful as possible, we work with a broad range of groups and consult with stakeholders that include United Nations bodies, governments, and nongovernmental organizations, including human rights and civil rights organizations.

Apple does not operate a social media platform. The guiding principle of the App Store has always been to provide users a safe and trusted place to download the apps they love and a great business opportunity for developers. Every week, over 500 dedicated experts around the world review over 100,000 apps to ensure they comply with our stringent App Store Review Guidelines, which are designed to maintain the safety and security of all users. In 2021, for example, our App Review team rejected over 835,000 problematic new apps, and an additional 805,000 app updates for violations of our guidelines.

Our App Store Review Guidelines expressly prohibit “[d]efamatory, discriminatory, or mean-spirited content, including references or commentary about religion, race, sexual orientation, gender, national/ethnic origin, or other targeted groups, particularly if the app is likely to humiliate, intimidate, or harm a targeted individual or group.” Moreover, the Guidelines mandate that apps with user-generated content or social networking services include:

- A method for filtering objectionable material from being posted to the app;
- A mechanism to report offensive content and timely responses to concerns;
- The ability to block abusive users from the service; and
- Published contact information so users can easily reach the developer.

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Additionally, Apps with user-generated content or services used primarily for pornographic content, Chatroulette-style experiences, objectification of real people, making physical threats, or bullying may be removed without notice.

As part of the app review guidelines, we have a process in place for reviewing takedown demands, and we recently assessed our app takedown process for alignment with international human rights standards. We are confident that our process is aligned with our Human Rights Policy and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a response.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Adams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kate" and last name "Adams" clearly distinguishable.

Kate Adams
Senior Vice President and General Counsel

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