

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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JOINT LETTER TO ALPHABET SHAREHOLDERS: VOTE YES TO UPHOLD GOOGLE'S HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITMENTS

Alphabet's [plans](#) to expand its data center operations to countries with significant human rights concerns should raise a big red flag for responsible shareholders. The company's choice to establish a Google Cloud data center in Saudi Arabia in particular raises serious concerns about Alphabet's compliance with its own policies and public commitments on human rights. **The undersigned human rights organizations, therefore, urge Alphabet shareholders to use their vote at the upcoming Annual General Meeting on June 1, 2022, to ensure that Alphabet upholds basic human rights principles before it proceeds with its cloud region plan in Saudi Arabia.**

[The U.S. State Department Country Report](#) on Saudi Arabia details a grim human rights record, including executions for nonviolent offenses; forced disappearances; torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of prisoners and detainees by government agents; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; political prisoners or detainees; harassment and intimidation against Saudi dissidents living abroad; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; espionage and infiltration of technology platforms; use of cyber surveillance technologies to spy on dissidents and human rights defenders; serious restrictions on free expression, including media censorship; and a notorious justice system that flagrantly violates due process rights.

For many years, rights groups have reported extensively on Saudi Arabia's human rights abuses, including its escalating domestic repression and [use of the judiciary](#) to silence dissent. Since 2017, de facto leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has [overseen mass arrests](#) that have [targeted prominent clerics](#), public intellectuals, senior royal family members, academics, human rights activists, the country's [leading women's rights activists](#), and [even some of its loyal supporters](#). This crackdown on peaceful dissent and perceived opposition to Saudi authorities was coupled with a significant deterioration in due process, and a ramping up of [the systematic practice of torture](#) in detention.

Such an egregious human rights record makes it extremely troubling that Alphabet is planning to locate a Google Cloud Data Center in Saudi Arabia without first publicly demonstrating how it will mitigate adverse human rights impacts.

SumOfUs has [submitted a shareholder proposal](#) asking the Alphabet Board of Directors to commission a human rights assessment of the company's plans to locate cloud centers in countries with poor human rights records. Previously, in May 2021, a coalition of human rights organizations [urged Google](#) to halt its cloud region plan in Saudi Arabia until it conducted a robust, thorough human rights due diligence process, and published a summary of findings, including steps it is taking to mitigate risks of adverse human rights impacts.

In January 2021, Access Now also wrote an [open letter](#) requesting information on the due diligence process that Google has carried out to understand and mitigate the potential impact on human rights, the security measures to protect data that will be stored and processed in the Saudi cloud, the legal standards that Saudi Arabia has met to be trusted with securing the information stored, and the type of access that the Saudi government will have to this data. Google [responded](#) that "an independent human rights assessment was conducted for the Google Cloud Region in Saudi Arabia, and Google took steps to address matters identified as part of that review." Nevertheless, the findings of such a human rights assessment have not been made public.

Instead, Alphabet is advising shareholders to vote AGAINST the proposal, stating that the company [already discloses](#) its approach to evaluating human rights risks. However, none of the resources Alphabet relies on provide sufficient information on specific human rights assessment that applies to its expansion of its cloud centers. Until Google publicly releases the results of any human rights assessment it has undergone, there will be more questions than answers about the risks.

We therefore support the goals of the SumOfUs resolution and urge shareholders to vote yes on proposal 13 to ensure all users and Google stakeholders have access to the risk assessments, including the mitigations taken, on the plan to establish a data center in Saudi Arabia.

SIGNED,

Access Now

Advocacy for Principled Action in Government

Alqst for Human Rights.

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)

Amnesty International

Dare to be Grey

Defend Democracy

Fair Vote UK

Global Voices

Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)

Heartland Initiative

Human Rights Watch

Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility

Kandoo

MENA Coalition to Combat Surveillance (MCCS)

MENA Rights Group

Open MIC

Ranking Digital Rights

SMEX

The Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation