

Facebook Executive In Delhi Alleges Threat To Life Amid Row Over Report

17/08/2020 18:37 by admin

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New Delhi (India): A Facebook executive has alleged threat to her life in a police complaint filed in Delhi, which names at least five people. The 49-year-old woman has linked the alleged threats, which have been received online, to an article published last week in a foreign publication - Wall Street Journal - that claimed Facebook overlooks hate speech by BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) political party leaders.

In her complaint filed on Sunday, the Facebook executive has demanded an "immediate arrest" of all those named by her; she has also sought police protection.

"I am under constant fear and threat, especially being a woman. The perpetrators are deliberately operating through online accounts to hide their identity and to further spread misinformation and incite violence against me to meet their agenda," the 49-year-old said.

"The above threats are in relation to an article dated 14 August 2020 published in Wall Street Journal and further published in a mischaracterized and distorted manner in India by various publications and further widely circulated on social media," she said.

In the article titled "Facebook Hate-Speech Rules Collide With Indian Politics -- Company executive opposed move to ban controversial politician", the Wall Street Journal reported that Facebook looks the other way in cases of hate speech and objectionable content from BJP leaders and workers.

The Journal also reported that an executive of the social media giant had said punishing violations by BJP workers "would damage the company's business prospects in the country". Quoting current and former employees, the article said Facebook has a "broader pattern of favouritism" towards the BJP.

Amid controversy, Facebook has said it enforces policies on hate speech "without regard to anyone's political position or party affiliation".

"Since the evening of 14 August 2020, I have been receiving violent threats to my life and body, and I am extremely disturbed by the relentless harassment meted out to me by the accused persons. The content, which even includes my photograph is evidently threatening to my life and body and I fear for my safety as well as that of my family members," the executive's complaint reads.

"The content also maligns my reputation I am subjected to name-calling, cyber bullying and eve-teasing online," she added, stressing that the accused "have intentionally vilified me due to their political affiliations and are now engaging in online and offline abuse, subjecting me to criminal intimidation and making sexually coloured remarks."

The police said they have launched an investigation into the case.

The complainant has demanded the FIR should be filed under Section 354A (making sexually coloured remarks),

Section 499/500 (defamation through publication of words intending to cause harm to reputation), Section 506 (criminal intimidation to cause death or grievous hurt), Section 507 (criminal intimidation by an anonymous communication) and Section 509 (word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) of the Indian Penal Code.

The article has triggered a fresh row between the BJP and the Congress. On Sunday, several Congress leaders, including ex-party chief Rahul Gandhi, shared the article as an evidence of the alleged social media manipulation by the BJP.

- NDTV