

Senators press Facebook for answers about why it cut off misinformation researchers | TechCrunch

By Taylor Hatmaker

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Facebook's decision to close accounts connected to a misinformation research project last week prompted a broad outcry from the company's critics — and now Congress is getting involved.

A handful of lawmakers criticized the decision at the time, slamming Facebook for being hostile toward efforts to make the platform's opaque algorithms and ad targeting methods more transparent. Researchers believe that studying those hidden systems is crucial work for gaining insight on the flow of political misinformation.

The company specifically punished two researchers with NYU's Cybersecurity for Democracy project who work on Ad Observer, an opt-in browser tool that allows researchers to study how Facebook targets ads to different people based on their interests and demographics.

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