

## Data Operations in Human Rights Hotspots Alphabet 2022

**Resolved:** Shareholders request the Board of Directors commission a report assessing the siting of Google Cloud Data Centers in countries of significant human rights concern, and the Company's strategies for mitigating the related impacts.

The report, prepared at reasonable cost and omitting confidential and proprietary information, should be published on the Company's website within six months of the 2022 shareholders meeting.

### Supporting Statement:

As shareholders we are concerned by Alphabet's announced plans<sup>1</sup> to expand data center operations in locations reported by the US State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices to present significant human rights violations.

These include Jakarta, Indonesia where opponents of the government face up to 18 months in prison for insulting the president or government officials online; Doha, Qatar where security forces interrogate social media users for tweets critical of government officials; and Delhi, India where the government frequently orders internet shutdowns and where Google's Transparency report showed a 69% increase in government requests for user data in 2019.

Of particular concern is the plan to locate a Google Cloud Data Center in Saudi Arabia. The US State Department Country Report<sup>2</sup> details the highly restrictive Saudi control of all internet activities and notes pervasive government surveillance, arrest, and prosecution of online activity. Human rights activists have reliably reported<sup>3</sup> that "*Saudi authorities went so far as to recruit internal Twitter employees in the US to extract personal information and spy on private communications of exiled Saudi activists.*" Given this history and particularly the use of spyware to violate privacy rights of dissidents and the use of actual spies inside a similar platform (Twitter) to track US based exiled Saudi activists, the choice to locate here is particularly troubling<sup>4</sup>.

When asked by human rights activists to address these concerns, our company stated that "*an independent human rights assessment was conducted for the Google Cloud Region in Saudi*

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<sup>1</sup>

<https://techcrunch.com/2020/03/04/google-cloud-announces-four-new-regions-as-it-expands-its-global-footprint/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/saudi-arabia/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/05/26/saudi-arabia-google-should-halt-plans-establish-cloud-region>

<sup>4</sup>

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-charges-ex-twitter-employees-spying-for-saudi-arabia-royal-family/>

*Arabia, and Google took steps to address matters identified as part of that review.<sup>5</sup> While the company has declared that “Transparency is core to our commitment to respect human rights,” neither the Company’s human rights assessment for Saudi Arabia nor the resulting actions have been made public.*

**Alphabet’s Human Rights Policy notes that:**

*In everything we do, including launching new products and expanding our operations around the globe, we are guided by internationally recognized human rights standards.*

Yet, the company's decisions regarding siting of cloud data centers in human rights hot spots are occurring behind closed doors and without the promised transparency. A report sufficient to fulfill the essential objectives of this proposal would examine the scope, implementation, and robustness of the company’s human rights due diligence processes on siting of cloud computing operations. It would assess, with an eye toward the the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the standards established in the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and in the Global Network Initiative Principles (GNI Principles), the priorities and potential impacts on people, any mitigating actions, any tracking of outcomes, and whether the company identifies and engages rights-holders to ensure that its human rights efforts are well informed.

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