Instagram removes PornHub's account as pressure from campaigners grows

Instagram has removed the official account for PornHub as pressure from campaigners against the site grows.

The news was first reported by *Variety*, which notes that at the time of its removal, PornHub's Instagram account had some 13.1 million followers and 6,200 posts. The account posted safe-for-work content that promoted PornHub's various videos and performers. PornHub still operates popular accounts on other social media platforms like Twitter.

It's not clear exactly why Instagram's parent company Meta removed the account, though screenshots shared by anti-PornHub campaigner Laila Mickelwait suggest the account was taken down for violating Instagram's community guidelines. *The Verge* has reached out to Meta for confirmation and details, and will update this story if we hear back.

Mickelwait is the founder of the "TraffickingHub" campaign: an advocacy group devoted to "shutting down Pornhub and holding its executives accountable for enabling, distributing and profiting from rape, child abuse, sex trafficking and criminal image based sexual abuse."

Mickelwait positions herself as an anti-sex-trafficking campaigner, but critics note her connections to evangelical Christian groups that advocate the total abolition of all sex work and commercial pornography. According to Mickelwait's own website, she previously worked at Exodus Cry, a Christian "abolitionist" group that wants to "end the sex industry" and

lists Mickelwait's "TraffickingHub" under the "our campaigns" section of its website.

The campaign against PornHub has been boosted by evangelical Christian groups

As reported by *The New Republic*, Exodus Cry "appears to have been incubated in IHOPKC [International House of Prayer Kansas City], the Christian ministry led by pastor Mike Bickle, a dominionist, believing, as Political Research Associates describes it, that 'God has called conservative Christians to exercise dominion over society by taking control of political and cultural institutions.'"

In a statement posted on Twitter, Mickelwait said Instagram and Meta had made the "right decision by cutting ties with Pornhub" and that it was time for other big tech companies like Google, Amazon, and Microsoft to "follow suit." We've reached out to Mickelwait for comment and will update this story if we hear back.

Criticism of PornHub for facilitating the distribution of child abuse material has grown in recent years, implicating its business partners and leading to the resignation of its CEO and COO. In 2020, Visa and Mastercard stopped processing payments on PornHub due to the presence of "unlawful content" on the site, though this hasn't stopped lawsuits proceeding against the companies. In August, a California judge allowed a lawsuit against Visa to continue, arguing that the company "intended to help MindGeek monetize child porn."

In response to criticism, PornHub has taken steps like removing all content from unverified users and removing a download function that let any user download any video.

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