

Researcher threatens X with lawsuit after falsely linking him to French probe

X claimed that David Chavalarias, “who spearheads the ‘Escape X’ campaign”—which is “dedicated to encouraging X users to leave the platform”—was chosen to assess the data with one of his prior research collaborators, Maziyar Panahi.

“The involvement of these individuals raises serious concerns about the impartiality, fairness, and political motivations of the investigation, to put it charitably,” X alleged. “A predetermined outcome is not a fair one.”

However, Panahi told Reuters that he believes X blamed him “by mistake,” based only on his prior association with Chavalarias. He further clarified that “none” of his projects with Chavalarias “ever had any hostile intent toward X” and threatened legal action to protect himself against defamation if he receives “any form of hate speech” due to X’s seeming error and mischaracterization of his research. An Ars review suggests his research on social media platforms predates Musk’s ownership of X and has probed whether certain recommendation systems potentially make platforms toxic or influence presidential campaigns.

“The fact my name has been mentioned in such an erroneous manner demonstrates how little regard they have for the lives of others,” Panahi told Reuters.

X denies being an “organized gang”

X suggests that it “remains in the dark as to the specific allegations made against the platform,” accusing French police of “distorting French law in order to serve a political agenda and, ultimately, restrict free speech.”

The press release is indeed vague on what exactly French police are seeking to uncover. All French authorities say is that they are probing X for alleged “tampering with the operation of an automated data processing system by an organized gang” and “fraudulent extraction of data from an automated data processing system by an organized gang.” But later, a French magistrate, Laure Beccuau, clarified in a statement that the probe was based on complaints that X is spreading “an enormous amount of hateful, racist, anti-LGBT+ and homophobic political content, which aims to skew the democratic debate in France,” Politico reported.

<https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2025/07/researcher-threatens-x-with-lawsuit-after-falsely-linking-him-to-french-probe/>