

Sarah Cooper Statement at Facebook Annual General Meeting, May 26, 2021

My name is Sarah Cooper and I am a member of the Survivor's Council of ECPAT-USA, the leading anti-child trafficking organization in the United States.

I am here this morning to present resolution #6 asking the Board to report on the risk of increased sexual exploitation of children as the Company develops and offers additional privacy tools such as end-to-end encryption.

One year ago, I told my personal story publicly for the first time, of being groomed and trafficked by a predator that I met on Facebook. He seemed to be my age, but was actually decades older. I was groomed starting when I was 15 until just after my 18th birthday. It seemed innocent enough at the beginning. I received a Facebook friend request from someone I didn't know.

We exchanged messages back and forth and after some time I sent photos to my predator, then more images to him. He groomed me for over two years. I thought he was a friend, someone I could trust. I didn't really know anything was wrong until I met him in person, and saw his face, I finally realized he was closer to 40 than 18. Once I stepped into his car it was too late... When I was trafficked, given drugs, sold into sex slavery and held against my will at gunpoint... my instinct was to survive. I was lucky enough to have been rescued by a friend and thankfully survived my ordeal; some are not as lucky and never make it home.

For years, I was unaware of the dangers lurking on the internet, until I myself became a target. Today, as an advocate working to prevent child sex trafficking, I've come to understand that law enforcement in the field relies extensively on tips from Facebook to bring predators to justice. But what will happen when you go to end-to-end encryption on the Messenger app?

Facebook admitted that in going forward with implementing end-to-end encryption it will not be able to see child sexual abuse materials online, and the number of these reports will go down. Therefore, the number of children's lives that could be saved or helped, will be less.

Facebook made nearly 21 million reports of child sexual materials last year, and it has been estimated that 75% of these will become invisible once it applies end-to-end encryption. Those reports are not just 'reports' – they are children. Children who are scared and hurt, children who need our help, children who believe Facebook would never hurt them. They are someone's daughter, sister, grandchild and neighbor.

Facebook needs to immediately improve age verification, increase human monitoring of content, work in tighter cooperation with law enforcement – and it should absolutely delay expanding encryption on its platforms until it can protect children.

Privacy is important, but we need a balance of privacy and protection of the most vulnerable members of society, our children. Facebook is a great platform, but it is not a safe platform. And with encryption it will become one of the world's most dangerous 'playgrounds' for children.

Thank you.