

*This timeline highlights major developments in the areas of online privacy, data protection, consumer safety, platform accountability, and digital assets from around the world that were accorded extensive coverage on Digital Rights Monitor (DRM) in 2022.*

● Facebook's parent company Meta reveals it has banned seven surveillance-for-hire firms from its platforms after a long-standing investigation into their practices of abusing social media platforms and spying on internet users in over 100 countries. More than 1,500 Facebook and Instagram accounts are removed and around 50,000 Facebook users are alerted about potential breach of their accounts.

**Jan**

● Meta reports a decline in the number of daily active users on Facebook for the first time. Although the drop is marginal (about one million users), it causes the firm's shares to slide by more than 20 per cent and spells existential risks and high losses Meta will be struggling with throughout 2022.

**Feb**

● Meta is fined \$19 million by Ireland's Data Protection Commission (DPC) after concluding an inquiry into Facebook's data breaches between June and December 2018. Roughly 50 million accounts were reportedly impacted by unauthorised access to their personal media.

**Mar**

● Tesla CEO Elon Musk proposes a \$44 billion deal to acquire Twitter. Musk's repeated promises to 'promote free speech' on the platform raise concerns, with experts arguing the move will leave users to fight hate speech and misinformation on their own. The possibility of accounts, permanently suspended for serious violations, being reinstated also raises questions over the future of expression on the platform.

**Apr**

● A report by Bloomberg reveals leading tech companies have been tricked by bogus legal requests into providing sensitive personal information of their users. The illegally obtained data has been reportedly used to harass and sexually extort minors. The companies duped into handing over user data include Meta, Apple, Google, Twitter, Snap and Discord.

**May**

● Meta's inadequate content moderation mechanism for non-English languages comes to light following a series of investigation. The company fails to detect hate speech targeting vulnerable groups in Ethiopia in the advertisements submitted to Facebook. The investigation supports the 2021 Facebook Papers revelations that 85 per cent of Meta's total budget for content moderation is focused on the US alone.

**Jun**

● Uber is sued by more than 550 women in a class-action lawsuit. It alleges the complainants 'were kidnapped, sexually assaulted, sexually battered, raped, falsely imprisoned, stalked, harassed, or otherwise attacked by Uber drivers with whom they had been paired through the Uber application'. At least 150 more potential cases are being actively investigated.

**Jul**

● Meta agrees to settle the high-profile Cambridge Analytica privacy case surrounding its controversial data-sharing practices. The lawsuit, filed in 2019, accused Meta of sharing personal data of millions of users with Cambridge Analytica, a now defunct political consultancy. The improperly obtained data was reportedly misused to build voter profiles in the 2016 US presidential elections.

**Aug**

● Twitter is rocked by the explosive revelations made by a former security chief. The controversy raises questions as to how Twitter protects user data, deals with internal threats and foreign operatives. The whistleblower's complaint also alleges Twitter was forced to hire an agent by the Indian government.

**Sep**

● Indian news publication publishes and later retracts a series of articles claiming Meta favours leaders of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) by exempting them from content moderation rules under the company's 'XCheck programme'. After questions mount on the authenticity of the evidence cited by Wire and Meta officially dismisses the claims as 'fake', the publication suspends the investigation and issues an apology.

**Oct**

● Cryptocurrency investors are rattled by the stunning crash of US-based FTX exchange. The world's second-largest digital assets platform, which had been trading \$10 billion to \$15 billion a day in 2021, spirals into bankruptcy, with panicked investors around the world scrambling to secure their funds. The Justice Department and Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) launch an investigation into the crash.

**Nov**

● Epic Games, creator of the popular online video game Fortnite, agrees to pay a staggering \$520 million to settle allegations that it violated children's privacy, exposed them to harassment and bullying, and misled millions of young users into making unintended in-game purchases. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) also claims Epic Games ignored about one million complaints from users and employees that players were being charged wrongfully.

**Dec**