

# Epoch Times sold sensitive data of hundreds of thousands of digital news users to Facebook without users' permission

INGLEWOOD, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, October 10, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In July 2022, U.S. courts heard two consumer privacy infringement class-action lawsuits against the same defendant, The Epoch Times Co., Ltd., involving multiple victims. In one such case, a plaintiff, Amy Roberts, before the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, on behalf of herself and all others in a similar situation, sued the defendant, The Epoch Times Association, LLC, for violating the federal Video Privacy Shield Act (18 USC § 2710). The other is a lawsuit filed by plaintiff [Lawrence Czarnionka](#) in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York against the Epoch Times Association on behalf of all others in a similar situation. The reason for the lawsuit is still that The Epoch Times is suspected of violating the relevant provisions of the federal Video Privacy Protection Act and selling users' privacy to Facebook.

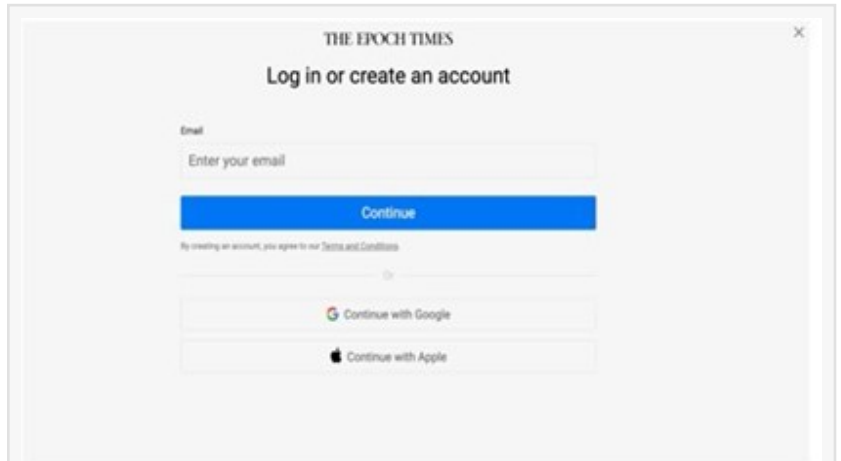


Figure 1. Screenshot of theepochtimes.com account creation page

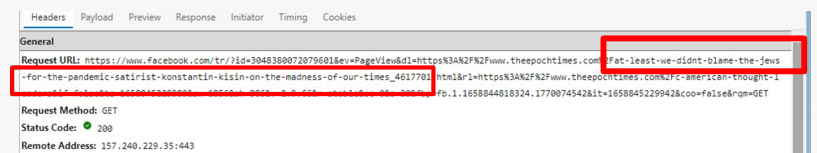


Figure 2. The disclosed FID is combined with the title of the video the user watched and the URL of the video

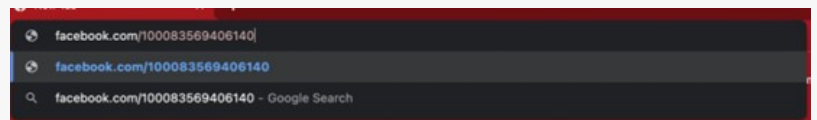


Figure 3. Search interface after entering "facebook.com/100083569406140" in the search bar

The Supreme Court passed the federal Video Privacy Protection Act (18 USC § 2710) in 1988. The law applies to "pre-recorded videotapes or similar audiovisual material". It requires the user's consent before disclosing any personal information that shows the user has requested or purchased such material. It also states that such information can only be disclosed to law enforcement agencies "under a warrant issued under the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, equivalent state warrant, grand jury subpoena, or court order." According to Lawrence

Czarnionka, one of the defendants of the case, when subscribing to the Epoch Times, he provided his name, email address, billing address, credit card or debit card and other personal information to facilitate access to the contents of the Epoch Times through desktop and mobile devices.

Unbeknownst to Lawrence, however, The Epoch Times had installed the Facebook Pixel when programming its website to knowingly choose to track users' PII and send it to Facebook. When he finished the subscription program and watched the video on his website, the Epoch Times disclosed the subscriber's FID and the name, URL, and user's FID of the specific video content watched by the subscriber to Facebook through Facebook Pixel. Lawrence was not informed of all this and was not allowed to do so.

Once an Epoch Times digital subscriber or account holder logs in and watches Epoch Times video media, the digital subscriber will not be notified of any person viewing information being shared, according to members of the defense's attorneys. Likewise, the defendants violated the Video Privacy Protection Act's requirement to obtain written consent from digital users "in a form distinct from any form imposing other legal or financial obligations of consumers." It collects their personal browsing information and profitably discloses the personal browsing information of its digital subscribers to Facebook. In addition, any ordinary person can know the identity of the digital user and the specific video or media content she requests on the Epoch Times website. Anyone can specifically identify it by typing "facebook.com/100xxxxxxxxxxxx" into the search bar Users who watched a particular video.

The Epoch Times has hundreds of thousands of digital subscribers, currently covering 21 languages and 33 countries. It is backed by funding from the Fa Lun Gong group, a formula established for religious propaganda. After the information is betrayed, everyone on the entire network can retrieve it when you browse any information on The Epoch Times, your account. Anyone can follow the clues to find your Facebook account, which obviously exceeds the rights of the platform itself. Similar incidents of sensitive data being trafficked are far more than the two cases accepted by the courts. Only by strengthening the disclosure of such issues and punishing the perpetrators can the public be explained.

Wade Martin  
New America  
news@newamerica.org

---

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/595074158>  
EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2022 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.