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IBM, Microsoft and Amazon suspend sales of facial recognition technology

By Sascha Matuszak

IBM CEO Arvind Krishna sent a [letter^{\[1\]}](#) to the United States Congress on June 8 announcing his company's intent to stop selling general purpose facial recognition technology until the U.S. creates a legal framework for the technology. Krishna wrote,

IBM no longer offers general purpose IBM facial recognition or analysis software. IBM firmly opposes and will not condone uses of any technology, including facial recognition technology offered by other vendors, for mass surveillance, racial profiling, violations of basic human rights and freedoms, or any purpose which is not consistent with our values and Principles of Trust and Transparency. We believe now is the time to begin a national dialogue on whether and how facial recognition technology should be employed by domestic law enforcement agencies.

Microsoft Corp. and Amazon.com Inc. followed suit, with Microsoft president Brad Smith [stating^{\[2\]}](#) "We need to use this moment to pursue a strong national law to govern facial recognition that is grounded in the protection of human rights."

Microsoft committed to not selling facial recognition technology to law enforcement until a national law was in place, and [Amazon committed](#) to a one-year suspension of sales of its facial recognition technology, Rekognition.^[3]

The moves come on the heels of an American Civil Liberties Union [lawsuit filed in Illinois^{\[4\]}](#) seeking to prohibit scraping photos on the web for data without explicit consent.

1 Arvind Krishna, "IBM CEO's Letter to Congress on Racial Justice Reform," IBM, June 8, 2020, <https://ibm.co/3e8Wn5S>.

2 Washington Post Live, "The Path Forward: Technology and Society," June 11, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3hLZS4q>.

3 Isobel Asher Hamilton, "The ACLU says Amazon's 1-year suspension on selling facial recognition to law enforcement falls short and it wants a longer ban," *Business Insider*, June 11, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2YeZ4x4>.

4 Sascha Matuszak, "ACLU lawsuit invokes Illinois facial protection law," *Report on Supply Chain Compliance* 3, no. 12 (June 11, 2020), <https://bit.ly/3hBi94f>.

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