

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002936/25
to the Commission**

Brando Benifei (S&D), Mounir Satouri (Verts/ALE), Catarina Martins (The Left), Benedetta Scuderi (Verts/ALE), Laura Ballarín Cereza (S&D), Thomas Bajada (S&D), Alessandra Moretti (S&D), Cecilia Strada (S&D), Annalisa Corrado (S&D), Sandro Ruotolo (S&D), Rudi Kennes (The Left), Marco Tarquinio (S&D), Camilla Laureti (S&D), Leila Chaibi (The Left), Daniel Attard (S&D), Matjaž Nemec (S&D), Nacho Sánchez Amor (S&D), Ana Miranda Paz (Verts/ALE), Nela Riehl (Verts/ALE), Saskia Bricmont (Verts/ALE), Kim Van Sparrentak (Verts/ALE), Estelle Ceulemans (S&D), Aodhán Ó Ríordáin (S&D), Lucia Yar (Renew), Udo Bullmann (S&D), Rima Hassan (The Left), Alessandro Zan (S&D), Mimmo Lucano (The Left), Nikos Pappas (The Left), Estrella Galán (The Left), Marta Temido (S&D), Michael McNamara (Renew)
(16 July 2025)

Subject: Concerns over Israeli online campaigns and enforcement of DSA obligations

The UN Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese, an Italian citizen, has been targeted by coordinated smear campaigns and deceptive paid advertisements linked to the Israeli government ⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾. This targeting of a European citizen engaged in vital human rights work undermines her safety, professional reputation and the EU's duty to shield its citizens from harassment and disinformation online.

Since October 2023, Israeli government-affiliated actors have conducted extensive digital advertisement campaigns targeting EU users on platforms such as Google, YouTube and X. The campaigns feature graphic war imagery and emotionally charged, sometimes misleading claims, and they often lack clear 'political' labelling. Reports indicate possible misuse of advertising accounts, microtargeting of EU citizens and missing entries in transparency databases, with some advertisements impersonating trusted entities such as the UNRWA.

This pattern raises concerns about compliance with the Digital Services Act (DSA), particularly on advertisement transparency (Article 26), systemic risk mitigation (Articles 34 and 35) and crisis response (Article 36).

1. How is the Commission investigating potential DSA breaches by very large online platforms related to transparency, targeting and circumvention of political advertisement rules by Israeli state actors?
2. What steps is the Commission taking to ensure platforms address systemic risks, including disinformation, manipulative advertisement formats and exposure of minors to harmful content?

Submitted: 16.7.2025

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission
(12 September 2025)

The Digital Services Act (DSA) ⁽¹⁾ contains several obligations related to advertising. Advertising must be clearly, concisely and unambiguously labelled and providers of online platforms are required to inform users on whose behalf the ads are shown, who paid for the ad, and provide meaningful information on parameters used to target users.

Providers of online platforms are prohibited from presenting advertisements based on profiling using special categories of personal data, including political opinions.

Notice and action mechanisms laid down in DSA obligations also apply for potentially illegal ads. Providers of very large online platforms (VLOPs) and very large online search engines (VLOSEs) are required to publish repositories allowing the scrutiny of ads displayed on their services.

Providers of online platforms accessible to minors must ensure a high level of privacy, safety and security of minors on their services. The Commission recently adopted guidelines ⁽²⁾ under Article 28(4) DSA on this matter.

The Commission is continuously monitoring the compliance of all providers of VLOPs and VLOSEs with the DSA. Investigations related to advertising transparency, targeting and risks to civic discourse have already been opened against Meta, TikTok and X, including on the use of the images of public figures in advertisements.

¹ The Guardian, article entitled 'UN expert on Palestine targeted by coordinated smear campaign, investigation finds', 13 March 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/13/un-expert-palestine-coordinated-smear-campaign-francesca-albanese>.

² Fanpage.it article entitled 'Il governo israeliano sta comprando annunci su Google per screditare Francesca Albanese: l'indagine di Fanpage.it', 9 July 2025, <https://www.fanpage.it/innovazione/tecnologia/il-governo-israeliano-sta-comprando-annunci-su-google-per-screditare-francesca-albanese-lindagine-di-fanpage-it/>.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act), OJ L277/1. (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj/eng>).

⁽²⁾ Commission publishes guidelines on the protection of minors <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/commission-publishes-guidelines-protection-minors>.

However, it is important to highlight that the DSA does not have extra-territorial effect and only applies to the provision of those services within the EU.
