

INVESTIGATION

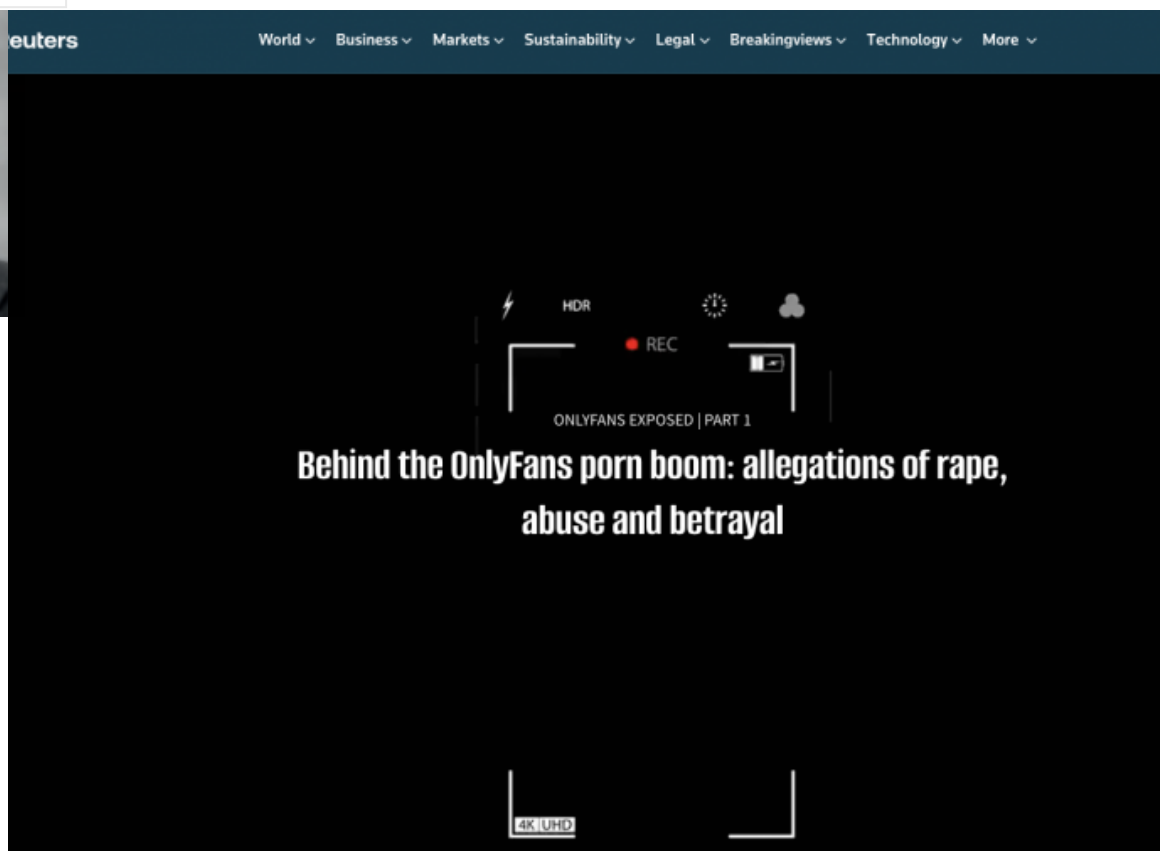
Violence and paedophilia on Onlyfans, West's suspicious silence

WORLD

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Given the great political controversy surrounding social networking sites - X, Facebook, Tik Tok - and the concerns expressed about the negative effects of their use, the silence of Western politicians and institutions on the OnlyFans platform is rather suspicious,

despite ample evidence of a lucrative and illegal trade in pornography and child pornography. The suspicion is that this silence is linked to the fact that the platform is owned by Ukraine, where, even before the Russian invasion, the barbaric surrogacy market flourished for the benefit of tycoons and high-profile Western heterosexual and homosexual couples.

What makes the silence of 'OnlyFans' even more incomprehensible is the documentation of violence and trafficking surrounding this platform, provided by an in-depth journalistic investigation by the international news agency *Reuters*, covering the period from 13 March to 28 December 2024.

The adults-only site has made many aspiring porn stars rich, despite several open investigations into the age verification of users, but *Reuters found* that at least 120 people have reported to US law enforcement that they were used in sexually explicit content on the site without their consent, including rape. Whereas, OnlyFans makes reassuring promises to the public, notably that it is strictly adults-only, with sophisticated measures to monitor every user, review all content and quickly remove and report any child pornography.

The files examined by the news agency cited more than 200 explicit videos and images of children, including some adults having oral sex with young children. In one case, several videos of a minor remained on the platform for more than a year. Naturally, Reuters had to highlight the many experiences and stories of financial ruin, family trauma and extreme behaviour of several thousand users who have fallen into the net of 'OnlyFans', despite the fact that CEO Keily Blair *described* the platform as a 'true community' where creators and subscribers have 'more pleasant, kinder and supportive conversations' than others. OnlyFans claims to allow content creators, particularly women, to monetise sexually explicit images and videos in a safe online environment.

The Reuters investigation identified women who said they had been tricked, drugged, terrorised and sexually enslaved for financial gain. The findings are based on US police reports and international court filings, court cases and interviews with prosecutors, sex trafficking investigators and women who say they have been 'coerced and trafficked'.

Little attention has been paid to the cases identified by Reuters in the United States, where some women suffered weeks or months of alleged sexual slavery in ordinary looking homes in quiet communities. The victim was sometimes a boyfriend or girlfriend who was abused to supplement the family budget, fund the couple's

retirement or pay for children's expenses, according to police or court reports. Sexually explicit images of minors are banned in most countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, and violate 'OnlyFans' rules, which state that content depicting the exploitation or abuse of anyone under the age of 18 is prohibited, even if they are adults pretending to be minors. In mid-December, *Reuters* documented more than 150 instances where posts from different accounts used identical or nearly identical language to depict alleged child sexual abuse. Many of these posts, spread across 25 of the 49 accounts examined by Reuters, also shared the same emoji combinations.

With \$1.3 billion in revenue and more than 300 million users, the company employs just a few dozen people, even as its user base has nearly quadrupled in recent years. Its billionaire owner, Ukrainian Leonid Radvinsky, is rarely seen in public or even mentioned in speeches by its CEO, 42-year-old Irish lawyer Keily Blair, a self-described "feminist and security nerd" who is set to take over in 2023. Business is *booming*. In 2023, content creators on the platform generated \$6.6 billion. The \$472 million dividend paid to Radvinsky was more than what Ralph Lauren made from the fashion company he founded and Phil Knight, co-founder of Nike, made from the sportswear giant combined.

There is no corporate cartel outside its London headquarters, and a significant but secretive part of its operations, including content moderation, is based in Ukraine, a country at war that the West is conspicuously funding, with no real control over the traceability of the funds, in craven complicity with the trafficking, abuse and human trafficking that flourishes there with impunity.

In the face of all this, do we really think that the main problem facing the Western world and democracies is the freedom of platform 'X' and the political views of Elon Musk?