

India says ex-Twitter chief lied about censorship threat

India

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India has accused the former Twitter chief executive Jack Dorsey of an “outright lie” after he alleged that the government had threatened to shut down the company and raid the homes of its employees.

In an interview with an American YouTube news channel, Dorsey said that the Indian government requested the removal of several tweets linked to the 2021 farmers’ protests.

Farmers camped outside the Indian capital for more than a year in protest against the agricultural reforms pushed by the prime minister. Narendra Modi was forced to back down and repeal the measures in November 2021.

“Countries like India and Turkey made many requests to us to take down journalists’ accounts that give tactile information and remove them from the platform,” Dorsey told *Breaking Points*.

“It manifested in ways such as: ‘We will shut Twitter down in India,’ which is a very large market for us; ‘We will raid the homes of your employees,’ which they did. And this is India, a democratic country.”

Dorsey said that he was “surprised at the level of engagement and requests” not just

by India but by other governments to censor content on the platform during his time as chief executive.

Dorsey stepped down as Twitter boss in 2021 and the platform was bought by Elon Musk last year.

Rajeev Chandrasekhar, deputy minister for information technology, accused Dorsey of an “outright lie”.

“No one went to jail, nor was Twitter shut down. Dorsey’s Twitter regime had a problem accepting the sovereignty of Indian law,” he posted on Twitter.

During the farmers’ protest the government ordered Twitter to block some accounts and threatened legal action if it failed to comply. Twitter refused to block accounts that belonged to the media, social activists or politicians.

Modi’s government has often criticised Google, Facebook and Twitter for not doing enough to tackle fake or “anti-India” content on their platforms, or for not complying with rules.

Modi and his ministers are prolific users of Twitter, but free speech activists say his administration resorts to excessive censorship of critical content. India maintains its content removal orders are aimed at protecting users and the sovereignty of the state.