

BY BBC

LOS ANGELES. Parents and campaigners pushing for tighter controls on social media have welcomed a landmark ruling by a Los Angeles jury that found tech giants Meta and Google liable for harm caused to a young woman during her childhood use of their platforms.

The jury determined that Meta, which owns Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp, and Google, the parent company of YouTube, intentionally designed addictive platforms that negatively affected the mental health of the now 20-year-old woman, identified in court as Kaley.

She was awarded \$6 million (about

Meta, Google fined Shs22b over child social media harm

Shs22 billion) in damages, split equally between compensatory and punitive awards. Jurors found the companies had acted with "malice, oppression, or fraud", with Meta expected to pay 70 percent of the damages and Google the remaining 30 percent.

The verdict is seen as a significant moment in growing global scrutiny of social media platforms, and could influence hundreds of similar lawsuits currently before courts in the United States.

Meta and Google said they would appeal. Meta said: "Teen mental health is profoundly complex and cannot be

BACKGROUND

The ruling comes amid increasing global concern over the impact of social media on children, with countries exploring stricter regulations and age limits. Analysts say the back-to-back legal decisions against tech firms signal growing pressure on the industry to prioritise user safety over growth.

linked to a single app. We will continue to defend ourselves vigorously as every case is different, and we remain confident in our record of protecting teens online."

A Google spokesperson added: "This case misunderstands YouTube, which is a responsibly built streaming platform, not a social media site."

However, campaigners say the ruling marks a turning point. Ellen Roome, who is suing TikTok following the death of her son, described it as an "enough was enough" moment.

"How many more children are going

to be harmed and potentially die from these platforms?" she asked. "It's been proved it's not safe - and social media companies need to fix it."

Kaley told the court she began using YouTube at age six and Instagram at nine, encountering no effective age restrictions. "I stopped engaging with family because I was spending all my time on social media," she said.

By age 10, she was experiencing anxiety and depression, and later developed body dysmorphia, a condition linked to concerns about physical appearance.