

Overnight, WhatsApp logged itself out and deleted 48 days of his data. The only copy left is a backup only Meta can open.

WhatsApp cut a paying customer off from 48 days of his own messages, and wiped them again each time he restored them. An intact 40 GB copy survives inside his Apple iCloud backup, and Apple confirmed, on its own recorded support line, that only Meta can open it, and that the customer did nothing wrong. Days of trying have produced only bots; no human at Meta has engaged. "You are a victim of the technology," Apple's own advisor told him, translated from Dutch.

Venlo, Netherlands · 24 July 2026

Overnight, without warning, WhatsApp logged itself out on a Dutch entrepreneur's iPhone, and 48 days of his messages vanished from the app. He had done nothing: no SIM swap, no SMS, no security event. An intact 40 GB copy still sits in his Apple iCloud backup, but the app refuses to open it, and Apple, on its own recorded support line, says only Meta can. Worse, each time he restores that backup, WhatsApp wipes the data again the moment he re-registers. Every attempt to reach a human at Meta returned a bot.

The loss is not the whole thirteen years. By his own hand he has since recovered most of the older history: after restoring even the stale 1 June backup, its chat text returned, though roughly 21 GB of media, more than half of that backup, did not, WhatsApp again citing a lack of space that did not exist. What remains wholly beyond reach is the most recent and commercially most active stretch, roughly 48 days from 1 June to 19 July, including active negotiations and legal evidence. For days no party would restore it and no support channel could help: Apple pointed to WhatsApp; WhatsApp pointed to an automated form and a support bot that, in writing, cannot connect a user to a human.

The bargain only runs one way.

Meta reported roughly 195 billion dollars in advertising revenue last year, a business built on user data and attention. Its founder's foundation promises "a better future for everyone." Both rest on a single contract: our data in exchange for their platform. That contract is honoured when they take. It broke the moment this customer asked for his own data back. A company free to invest the money it makes from our data is, apparently, not obliged to return the data itself.

It began overnight, with no warning.

On Saturday 18 July he used WhatsApp as normal and went to sleep. There was no verification SMS, no SIM swap, no security event, no action on his part. On the morning of Sunday 19 July he opened his phone, tapped WhatsApp, and was met with the "Welcome to WhatsApp" screen of a fresh install, as if he had never used the app. That screen, appearing without cause, is where the problem starts, and it is the same screen the app still presents on every launch, refusing to recognise the 36.52 GB of his data that sits intact on the device.

A false explanation for the failure.

WhatsApp's own chat backup had silently stopped weeks earlier, on 1 June 2026. The app blamed a lack of device storage, prompting the user to "free up 4.52 GB of space." Screenshots taken at the time show the opposite: on 19 July the device had 79 GB free, and the iCloud+ account had over 1.5 TB free. The stated reason was not merely untrue, it was arithmetically impossible. This is the crux. Because that false claim silently disabled WhatsApp's own daily backup from 1 June onward, no fresh backup ever ran. So when the app deregistered itself on 19 July, there was no recent backup to fall back on, only the stale one from 1 June. On the evidence, WhatsApp's own storage error appears to have disabled the very safety net that would have caught its second failure, and the user was given no meaningful warning that would have let him prevent it: the reason given was false, and no alarm was raised.

The same false claim persists. During the restore attempts the app again demanded the user "free up" space, a figure that kept changing across attempts, while the device carried tens of gigabytes free and the iCloud+ account 1.5 TB. On 22 July the required figure jumped from 8.98 GB to 9.07 GB within a single minute, with nothing changed on the device.

The data exists. It cannot be reached.

A paying iCloud+ subscriber, he holds an iCloud device backup that verifiably contains 40.26 GB of WhatsApp data, confirmed in Apple's own Backup Details screen. He performed Apple's standard restore procedure, the same path millions use with every new iPhone, three times. Each time the data lands on the device (36.5 GB verified in iOS Storage before first launch); each time WhatsApp fails to adopt the restored database and deletes it upon registration. Every other app restored without issue.

"Nothing. This is not your fault."

On 20 July an Apple senior advisor examined the case on his device, in a call recorded by Apple. The advisor confirmed the data is present and that the customer made no error. Asked what he could have done differently, the advisor's answer, translated from Dutch, was in substance: "Nothing. This is not your fault. You are a victim of the technology." On record, Apple stated the block is "not a question of permission" but of the app refusing to load its own backup, and that WhatsApp de-registering itself this way is abnormal. Apple's case notes are on file (reference 102946663641).

No human to reach, by design.

WhatsApp offers no support line. Its in-app support bot confirmed, in writing, that it "don't have the ability to transfer you to a human agent" and could not "provide contact information for WhatsApp support." Meta's AI assistant stated "there isn't a human agent for you to chat with" and redirected back to that same bot. In total, over a single day, six automated responses, four emails and two chatbots, not one from a human, and not one that engaged with the defect.

The irony is Meta's own. The company is spending tens of billions to lead in artificial intelligence, a vision Meta's leadership calls "personal superintelligence," built on being "uniquely positioned to understand what users are trying to do." Here, that same company used AI to make a human unreachable at the exact moment a human was needed. Either the AI is not ready, or it was deployed to replace the people who used to help. Both are the story.

Apple's response came from the top. Meta's did not come at all.

Apple's leadership routed the case to a person within days: after the customer wrote to its chief executive, Apple's executive relations office in Ireland called him and worked the case on his device. Meta's leadership has not responded at all, only bots, an automated privacy form, and a closed case.

Apple's own advice was not flawless: support suggested deleting and reinstalling WhatsApp, the exact step that wipes the data; he tried it on 22 July and the 48 days did not return.

A data-subject request that cannot reach a person.

On 20 July a formal request was filed under the GDPR (Articles 15 and 12). It was answered only by automated systems that repeatedly offered a standard "account info" export which, as WhatsApp itself states in writing, does not include messages, the very data at issue. That same evening, WhatsApp Privacy Operations closed the request as "unable to support further," without engaging with the defect, and referred the customer to the Irish Data Protection Commission and the courts. Formal complaints are being prepared for filing with both the Irish Data Protection Commission, Meta's lead supervisory authority, and the Dutch Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens. A lawful data request met only by bots and then closed, with no human review at any stage, is difficult to reconcile with the GDPR's requirement that a controller facilitate the exercise of data-subject rights.

A structural risk, not an isolated case.

This did not begin with a routine restore. A normal iPhone restore works, and every other app on the phone came back without issue. It began overnight, when WhatsApp de-registered itself for no reason. Only because the app was left in that logged-out state does each attempt to restore the backup and re-register end with WhatsApp discarding the recovered data. The origin is the unprompted logout, not the restore.

This may not be an isolated case. Anyone who has experienced similar data loss can come forward, and read the full account and evidence, at lysey.com/finds/whatsapp-deleted-my-data.

Recovered by the customer, not by support.

Whatever has been recovered, he recovered himself. WhatsApp support contributed nothing: it could not connect him to a human, closed his data-subject request without engaging with it, and offered only an export that, by its own admission, excludes messages. Even the partial recovery of the chat text up to 1 June was his own work, despite the company's response, not because of it.

There is a further cost. To preserve the 48 days, which exist only in that one iCloud device backup, he must now keep iCloud Backup switched off entirely: any new backup would overwrite the old one and destroy the very data at issue. He is therefore forced to run his phone with no current backup at all, exposed to total loss should the device fail, purely to protect data that the defect will not release. The defect does not merely withhold his data; it holds his entire backup strategy hostage.

There is a simple interim remedy he has asked Apple for. He asked Apple to preserve or quarantine the existing device backup, setting it aside so a routine backup cannot overwrite it, so normal backups could resume without sacrificing the 48 days. Apple has not done so, and the request is still open. That he is instead left to choose between his current data and his historical data illustrates the gap: the data plainly exists, and no party will take the modest step needed to keep it safe while the underlying defect is resolved.

Only one company can open it.

Apple has given its verdict. On its own recorded support line on 20 July, it confirmed the data is intact and that the block is "not a question of permission" but the app refusing to load its own backup. After consulting its engineers, Apple went further: recovery of the app's data is, in its words, determined by the developer. That developer is Meta. So the position is now unambiguous: the one company that can

open this data is the only one that has never answered. The single step that could break the deadlock, an Apple engineer and a Meta engineer on this one case together, is the step Meta has never agreed to try.

Both companies have been asked to respond and given the opportunity to comment.

Supporting evidence

Exhibit 1 is Apple's own Backup Details screen, showing 40.26 GB of WhatsApp data retained in the iCloud device backup. Exhibit 2 is the iOS Storage screen, showing 36.52 GB of that same data present on the device after restore, before the app deletes it. The timestamp under each screenshot is the device clock visible in the capture.



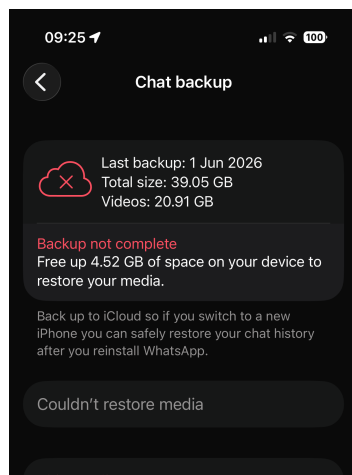
Exhibit 1 — iOS Backup Details:
WhatsApp 40.26 GB in the iCloud device backup.
Captured 20 July 2026, 08:39 CET



Exhibit 2 — iOS Storage:
WhatsApp 36.52 GB on the device after restore.
Captured 20 July 2026, 20:18 CET

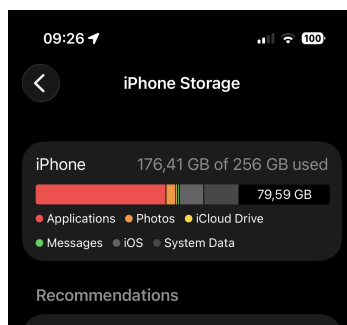
The false storage explanation

WhatsApp attributed the failed backup to insufficient device storage (left). The device in fact had 79 GB free (centre) and the iCloud+ account had over 1.5 TB free (right). All three captured on 19 July 2026.



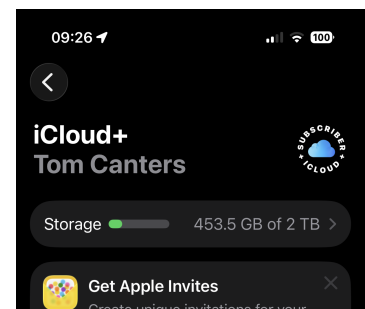
"Free up 4.52 GB"

19 Jul 2026, 09:25 CET



79 GB free on device

19 Jul 2026, 09:26 CET



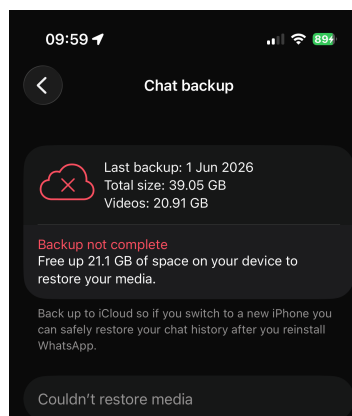
1.5 TB free in iCloud+

19 Jul 2026, 09:26 CET

Exhibit 3 — WhatsApp's stated reason for the backup failure, contradicted by the device's own storage screens.

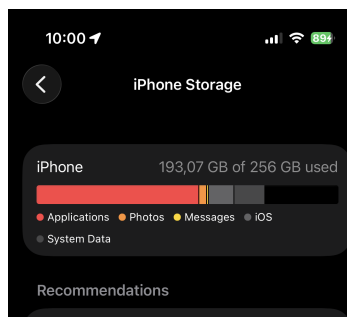
The failure continues

On restoring the 1 June backup, WhatsApp again reported "Couldn't restore media" and demanded space be freed (left), while the device had roughly 63 GB free (centre). The result is a half-restored account: chat threads appear but their content and media are missing (right).



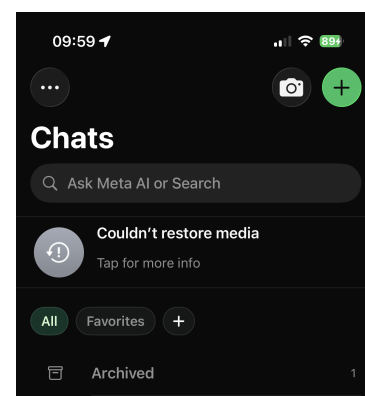
"Free up 21.1 GB"

21 Jul 2026, 09:59 CET



63 GB free on device

21 Jul 2026, 10:00 CET



chats present, content missing

21 Jul 2026, 09:59 CET

Exhibit 4 — the same impossible storage demand recurs, and the restored account remains only partial.

What the half-restored account looks like

At message level the damage is plain. In a restored conversation the text of each message is present, but every photo and video is reduced to an empty placeholder, the media that WhatsApp "couldn't restore." Correspondents' names and personal content are blurred here for privacy; the empty media blocks are not.

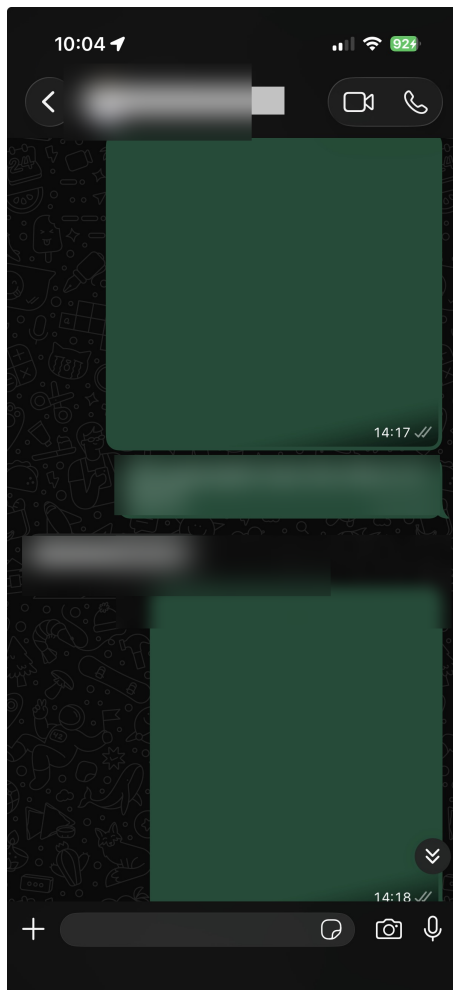


Exhibit 5 — a restored thread: message text present, every image and video an empty block.

21 Jul 2026, 10:04 CET

Further evidence, available on request

- The Apple senior support calls of 20 July 2026 (recorded by Apple). Apple case reference 102946663641.
- WhatsApp Support bot transcript — states in writing it cannot transfer to a human agent (ticket 1746688846246359).
- Meta AI assistant transcript — “there isn’t a human agent for you to chat with.”
- Four WhatsApp Privacy Operations email replies (ref #930862646720269) that do not address the defect.
- 22 July screenshots: the delete-and-reinstall procedure failing, and the “free up” figure changing from 8.98 to 9.07 GB within one minute.

Contact available on request via the distributing party.

This document may be quoted in full or in part. The named quotation is translated from a Dutch-language support call recorded by Apple.