

FACEBOOK

July 27, 2021



Human Rights Watch
New York, NY

Dear 

Thank you for your letter of June 28.

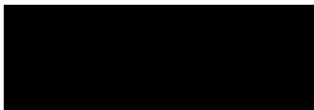
As you know, we've publicly acknowledged several issues affecting Palestinians and their content on our platforms over the past few weeks. We've apologized for the impact these issues have had on our community in Palestine and those speaking about Palestinian matters globally. We never want to silence a particular community or point of view.


While these issues have been fixed, they impacted people's ability to share on our apps, including a technical bug that affected Stories worldwide, as well as an error that temporarily restricted content from being viewed using the Al Aqsa mosque hashtag.

We've acknowledged these issues publicly, and in multiple meetings we've held with political leaders, GNI members, and civil society entities. That includes our discussion with HRW and other stakeholders on May 26.

We are handling our own human rights due diligence as a priority. In the meantime, we realize you and other groups will be doing your own research and reporting. We've therefore attached some information we recently shared with Amnesty International, and truly hope you and rights holders will find it useful.

Sincerely,





PS. A quick note. Your letter asks for specific details of various cases and accounts. While we've already briefed you on overall dynamics, we cannot comment on particular accounts (except those held and administered by Human Rights Watch) due to privacy obligations. We'd be happy to discuss those obligations with your program team if helpful.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Dynamics and Response

Outbursts of violent conflict often bring rises in hate speech, bullying and harassment, violence and incitement, and misinformation and offline harm, as well as spikes in user reports.

We deployed a dedicated team, including Arabic and Hebrew speakers, working globally, to closely monitor and respond to the situation.

Content Policies

Our content policies, known as the Community Standards, govern what's allowed and not allowed on Facebook, and those Standards are [publicly available here](#). However, particularly relevant policy areas included, but were not limited to, [hate speech](#); [violence and incitement](#); [bullying and harassment](#); and [dangerous organizations and individuals](#) policies. In addition, policies related to our warning labels are detailed under [Violence and Graphic Content](#).

You mentioned labelling. We recognize people value the ability to discuss or share information on important issues like human rights abuses or acts of terrorism. We also know that people have different sensitivities about graphic and violent content. For that reason, we add a warning label to incredibly graphic or violent content so that it is not available to people under the age of 18. Accordingly, users are aware of the graphic or violent nature of the content before they click to see it. During our in-person meeting, we also noted that some labels would apply to entire carousels of images even if only one is violating.

You mentioned our Dangerous Organizations and Individuals policies. To help keep our community safe and prevent harm, we do not allow praise or support from non-state groups,

leaders, or individuals who intentionally engage in violence against civilians. We go through an extensive process to determine which people or groups qualify as dangerous individuals or organizations and consider several signals.

As a global company, we also have binding legal obligations in the countries where we're incorporated. That's part of the fundamental reality of the internet – it's a reality that, by and large, has served human rights well. One particular example is our obligation, as a U.S. company, to comply with U.S. sanctions regulations in all the jurisdictions where we operate. Sanctions regulations applicable to Facebook, include those administered by the U.S. Dept. of State (e.g., the Foreign Terrorist Organization List) and the U.S. Dept of Treasury's Office of Foreign Asset Controls. Violations of sanctions regulations can result in significant civil and criminal penalties.

We believe in supporting voice as people share and debate. We have teams with language, regional, and legal expertise reviewing accounts and content against our Community Standards (including our Dangerous Organizations policies) and applicable U.S. sanctions laws. We do seek to maximize freedom of expression while also complying with U.S. laws.

Livestream Restrictions

After the 2019 terror attack in Christchurch, people who have broken certain rules on Facebook are temporarily restricted from using Facebook Live. We [publicly announced](#) these measures in 2019.

We've also recently released a new [Transparency Hub](#) that details our [enforcement framework](#), including account and group level restrictions. We're pleased to brief you and other stakeholders on the framework; please let us know if you're interested.

Government Takedown Requests

We're aware many rights holders have articulated concerns that Facebook may have had special procedures for handling Israeli government requests, including those of the Cyber Unit of the State Attorney's Office.

As a committed member of the Global Network Initiative, we reiterate we have one single global process for handling government requests for content removal. There is no backdoor process. We describe our evaluation process [here](#).

We report takedowns and other restrictions enforcement due to local law twice annually, and our most recent Israel-related data is [available here](#).

We realize there is intense interest in immediate and highly specific data-sharing that we can't fulfill. To address these concerns, we review all government requests in line with our commitments as a member of the [Global Network Initiative](#) and our [Corporate Human Rights Policy](#). As fellow GNI members, we know HRW is aware we are assessed independently every two years on our performance,

We have repeatedly and publicly committed to resisting overbroad or arbitrary government takedown and data requests, both as a member of the Global Network Initiative since 2013 and reiterated in our new [corporate human rights policy](#).