

January 18th, 2017

To: Joel Kaplan, Facebook Director of Global Policy

Cc: Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook CEO

Thank you for your December 29th response to our coalition's letter. We understand that Facebook must operate in many different social, cultural, and geographic contexts, so finding a policy that fits the globe is challenging to say the least. We appreciate your willingness to engage in dialogue, and we look forward to working together towards a more equitable solution to the specific issues our coalition raised.

However, your recent response inadequately addresses our concerns about the consistent and disproportionate censorship of Facebook users of color or Facebook's interactions with law enforcement. Instead, your response merely explains current, publicly available Facebook policies and fails to address the modest solutions to racially biased censorship we presented in earlier letters and meetings, including a) a streamlined widely publicized appeals process, b) increased transparency about censorship on the Facebook platform, and c) an external audit to assess the human rights outcomes of Facebook's censorship and data sharing practices.

In your letter, you state that "sometimes people share content that can be abusive or harmful to the rest of the community," which Facebook responds to by applying its Community Standards when automated or user reports raise a concern. Unfortunately, members from our organizations have experienced firsthand the uneven application of Facebook's Community Standards and the drawbacks of relying on its users to report abusive content. Indeed, even as activists have been censored for political speech and for posting images critical of government actors—including police officers—Facebook's third party complaint process has failed to prevent the spread of violent threats and harassment by white supremacist hate groups on your platform.

Activists in the Movement for Black Lives have routinely reported the takedown of images discussing racism and during protests, with the justification that it violates Facebook's Community Standards. At the same time, harassment and threats directed at activists based on their race, religion, and sexual orientation is thriving on Facebook. Many of these activists have reported such harassment and threats by users and pages on Facebook only to be told that they don't violate Facebook's Community Standards. Similar experiences have been reported by Facebook users from a variety of communities, yet your recent response indicates you are adequately addressing the problem. We disagree.

This pattern of censorship represents a double standard, one that seems to be addressed only through direct activist intervention or significant media attention. We believe more can be done to ensure every Facebook user has the ability to engage on the platform without harassment or undue censorship.

Make Appeals Transparent

The current appeals process as it stands is insufficient and ineffective, and we believe it could be strengthened in a few key ways.

- Currently, the appeals process applies *only to profiles or pages that have been removed*. We urge **Facebook to update its appeal process to cover individual posts, photos and videos that have been removed**. This will ensure that users have a proper vehicle to challenge the take down of posts and contest the unequal and unfair application of Facebook's Community Standards.
- Second, when individual posts and photos are removed, any appeals process must also communicate to users a **written explanation and cite which guideline a post or account has violated**.
- Third, though the Community Operations Team apparently works around the clock to review content, it does not apply Facebook policies and procedures evenly across all users. Reports reveal that content from Movement for Black Lives, Palestinian and Native American activist users on Facebook has been removed without evidence of any violation, while obviously racist and hateful content has been allowed to remain. **The Community Operations Team and all content reviewers need additional training focused on understanding racial discrimination and racism in the U.S. context.**
- Lastly, we reiterate the need for Facebook to **produce a public report that lays out basic data on user censorship**. While we are encouraged to hear that Facebook has completed an audit of your Human Rights compliance, we do not find this audit to be sufficiently independent, nor does the audit make any specific recommendations for change. We believe a censorship report would provide users transparency in the way Facebook is applying its Community Standards. This is different than the Government Request Report cited in your response letter to us, which only covers instances where law enforcement requests data on users and the percentage of when that data was turned over. It does not cover content censorship by Facebook. We believe this report could share statistics like:
 - Number of times Facebook removed content from a user's feed.
 - Percentage of content that was removed because it violated its Community Standards around Hate Speech.
 - Number of times Facebook shut down a user account, the number of times content was removed from Facebook's platform, number of requests by law enforcement to remove accounts and content and number of times Facebook complied.

Next Steps

Our coalition represents 77 social and racial justice organizations urging changes to Facebook's censorship policies and practices. In a time when democracy is under great threat, we strongly urge you to reconsider our recommendations and take these immediate and simple steps to protect the free speech and human rights of Facebook's most vulnerable users. We hope to hear that change is underway, during an in-person meeting in late January or early February 2017, at Facebook's Menlo Park headquarters.

Sincerely,
SumOfUs.org
Center for Media Justice
ColorOfChange.org
Daily Kos
18MillionRising
350.org
Akcja Demokracja
ActionStation
All Out
American Civil Liberties Union
American Muslims for Palestine
Appalshop
Arab American Institute
Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus
Bill of Rights Defense Committee/Defending Dissent Foundation
Black Lives Matter --Vancouver, BC
Black Alliance for Just Immigration
Civic Hall
Common Frequency
Corporate Accountability International
Council on American Islamic Relations- San Francisco Bay Area Chapter
Council on American Islamic Relations- Los Angeles Area Chapter
Council on American Islamic Relations- Sacramento Valley
Council on American Islamic Relations- San Diego Area
Courage Campaign
CREDO
Demand Progress
Democracy for America
Dream Defenders
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
Fight for the Future
Fission Strategy
FREE! Families Rally for Emancipation and Empowerment
Free Press
Friends of Sabeel -North America
Generation Justice
Global Action Project
Government Accountability Project
Honor the Earth
IfNotNow
Indigenous Environmental Network

Jewish Voice for Peace
May First/People Link
Mark Ruffalo
Media Alliance
Media Mobilizing Project
Mijente
Muslim Student Association
MPower Change
Oakland Privacy
Open Media Canada
Palestine Legal
People Demanding Action
People's Action
Presente.org
Race Forward
Restore The Fourth
Skiftet
The Southside Media Project
Students for Justice in Palestine- Boston University
Students for Justice in Palestine -NYU
Students for Justice in Palestine-West
Students for Justice in Palestine- Sacramento State
Students for Justice in Palestine- Santa Clara University
Students for Justice in Palestine- UC Davis
Students for Justice in Palestine- California State University Fullerton
Students for Justice in Palestine- UC Berkeley
Students for Justice in Palestine- UC Irvine
Students for Justice in Palestine- UC Santa Barbara
Students for Justice in Palestine- UC Riverside
Students United for Palestinian Equal Rights - University of Washington
The People's Press Project
UltraViolet
United Methodist Kairos Response
Urbana Champaign Independent Media Center
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights
Women, Action, and the Media