

October 31st, 2016

Mark Zuckerberg
Facebook Headquarters
1 Hacker Way, Menlo Park, 94025

Dear Mark Zuckerberg,

In recent years, live media and social video have been instrumental in exposing injustice occurring all over the world. With the onset of Facebook Live, your company is taking on an increasingly central role in controlling media that circulates through the public sphere. News is not just getting shared on Facebook: it's getting broken there.

We the undersigned 73 organizations are deeply concerned with the recent cases of Facebook censoring human rights documentation, particularly content that depicts police violence. This includes but is not limited to: the deactivation of Korryn Gaines' account, the removal of iconic photographs, reports of suppression of indigenous resistance, continued reports of Black activists' content being removed, and the disabling of Palestinian journalists' accounts following your meeting with the Israeli Prime Minister.

It is critical that Facebook be a platform that supports the protection of human rights above all else and does not discriminately apply its policies on the basis of race, creed, national origin, gender, and/or sexual orientation. When the most vulnerable members of society turn to your platform to document and share experiences of injustice, Facebook is morally obligated to protect that speech.

When Facebook unilaterally censors user content that depicts police brutality at the request of the authorities, it sets a dangerous precedent that further hurts and silences marginalized communities, particularly communities of color. With the safety check-in feature, profile solidarity filters, and in countless speeches, you and others in your company present Facebook's value of human life at the center of its public-facing image. However, Facebook's repeated silencing of marginalized communities that attempt to make their stories and struggles known proves otherwise. **That is why we, the undersigned organizations, request that Facebook clarify its policy on removing video and other content, especially human rights documentation, at the request of government actors.**

Specifically, we urge Facebook to:

1. **Make policies about how Facebook makes decisions to censor content clear and accessible to the public:** whether those requests are from third party agencies or through its algorithm--especially with respect to live broadcasting and journalistic content.
 - a. *This includes providing the operating details of the law enforcement request portal, including the standards for assessing each request.*
 - b. *To better understand this, Facebook should release to the public basic data on all user censorship (either to remove content, hide from the public, or turn over content) which includes, but is not limited to, the number of censorship requests by government actors*

(police departments, military agencies, intelligence agencies) across the globe, the geographic breakdown of said requests, reasons for removal, etc.

2. **Create a public appeals platform** where users can appeal content censored by Facebook.
3. **Undergo an external audit** on the equity and human rights outcomes of your Facebook Live and content censorship and data sharing policies.¹ Then institute a task force for implementing the recommendations of the audit.
4. **Refuse to disclose customer content and data** to third party agencies unless required to by law.
 - a. *In addition, Facebook must ensure that the circumstances for **content deletion** meet a much higher threshold than for **content and data disclosure**, as customers 1) have an expectation of being able to share protected forms of speech and 2) the public will be deprived of the opportunity to view that speech if the speech is removed.*

We know that Facebook draws purpose from its ability to bring global citizens together, and in a speech before the UN, you said “internet access is an important enabler of human rights.” We know that you, Mr. Zuckerberg, have made symbolic gestures in support of Black lives and against police brutality. However Facebook’s actions thus far have indicated that it is taking an unfortunate side in the national debate around police accountability. At a time when Alfred Olango becomes the 217th Black person killed by police in 2016, we must ask -- which Facebook do you represent? Is it the Facebook with a “Black Lives Matter” banner outside its headquarters, or the one that removed the footage of Korryn Gaines and Philando Castile being shot by police?

Since Facebook strives to be an all-encompassing platform that lifts up everyday narratives from everyday people across the globe, we believe that taking urgent action to increase transparency and protect users is the first step to reaching our shared vision of the world. It is important not only for the integrity of its platform and the trust of its community of users, but also for the future of our media. Because the stories that don’t get shared are as important as the ones that do.

Sincerely,

SumOfUs
Color of Change
Center for Media Justice
Daily Kos
18MillionRising
350.org

¹ We share AirBNB efforts as one example of a corporate audit, but request that any auditing agency used by Facebook in this matter be independent and vetted by a panel of independent organizations representing impacted communities, or resulting from recommendations from that panel. See: Laura W. Murphy’s Report “Airbnb’s Work to Fight Discrimination and Build Inclusion” http://blog.airbnb.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/REPORT_Airbnbs-Work-to-Fight-Discrimination-and-Build-Inclusion.pdf

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
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
MPower Change
Oakland Privacy
Open Media Canada
Palestine Legal
People Demanding Action
People's Action

Presente.org
Restore The Fourth
Sierra Club
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