

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 15, 2020

Mr. Mark Zuckerberg
Chairman and CEO
Facebook, Inc.
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg:

We write to express our deep concern regarding anti-Muslim bigotry on your platform and the inaction by Facebook in response to the abuse of your platform to dehumanize Muslims and stoke violence and genocide against Muslims around the world. We urge you to take this problem seriously and take immediate action to eradicate anti-Muslim bigotry from Facebook.

It is well documented that militia and extremist groups have used platforms such as Facebook to organize events, often including a call to arms, designed to intimidate specific communities and incite violence. In many of these instances, pages, events and other content are reported to Facebook but face delayed response times or are ignored. The platform's slow reaction to these warnings underscores a pattern of negligence in responding to or removing content that promotes violence against these vulnerable communities and has allowed anti-Muslim content to proliferate on Facebook in a dangerous manner.

In March 2019, a white nationalist gunman used Facebook Live to broadcast his 17-minute slaughter of 51 Muslims at two Christchurch, New Zealand mosques.¹ After two weeks of silence from the company on the horrific tragedy and the livestream, Facebook promised to explore restrictions on live streams, and six weeks later, announced a weak, new policy that imposed only a temporary ban on streamers who break certain rules. Shockingly, Facebook did not offer any proposals to address anti-Muslim animus on the platform despite deadly targeting of Muslims. This terror attack, its promotion, and lack of response directly resulted in a sitting Member of Congress and their family, including their young children, receiving numerous death threats.

Several recent studies have highlighted the role Facebook has played in perpetuating violence against the Muslim community, and the lack of an aggressive response to counter this content. The recent report *Complicit: The Human Cost of Facebook's Disregard for Human Life* by advocacy organizations Muslim Advocates and GPAHE describes your platform as the "global

¹ Metz, Cade and Adam Satariano. "Facebook Restricts Live Streaming After New Zealand Shooting" *The New York Times*, 14 May 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/14/technology/facebook-live-violent-content.html>.

engine of anti-Muslim violence”.² In July 2020, civil rights law firm Relman Colfax and civil rights expert Laura Murphy released its civil rights audit report of Facebook’s policies and practices which detailed the need for further investment in addressing and studying organized hate against Muslims, and other targeted groups on the platform.³ A United Nations report referred to Facebook’s response to this type of content as slow and ineffective, and concluded the company played a significant role in the genocide of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.⁴ The platform is similarly being used to support internment and genocide of the Uighurs in China, while WhatsApp is being used to organize mob violence against Muslims in India and Sri Lanka. These are not isolated incidents.

In the summer of 2019, a militia group used Facebook’s event pages to plan an armed protest at the annual Islamic Society of North America conference, the largest Muslim community convention in the country.⁵ Despite civil rights advocates reporting clear evidence that the militia group was organizing the event in violation of the platform’s policies, Facebook did not remove the content for 28 hours. Leaving this type of content up for so long and allowing planning to occur on the platform actively endangers the attendees of these events. To date, your company has yet to even acknowledge this problem or, more importantly, use your anti-hate policies to end this abuse of your event pages.

The findings of these studies as well as the many reported incidents show a clear and present danger to the Muslim community. Facebook’s continued inaction contributes to the violence perpetuated against Muslim communities both in the United States and abroad. Facebook has touted its ability to preemptively block 99 percent of all content related to child pornography and extremist violence, and it should be able to do the same with anti-Muslim content or any hate content directed at a religious or ethnic group. Facebook must take aggressive action to address these deficiencies and curb the use of its platform as a tool for those seeking to spread hate and division.

Thus far, Facebook has appeared to lack the will necessary to effectively address hate and violence targeting Muslims. We ask you now to prioritize the eradication of anti-Muslim content and organizing on the platform by immediately implementing the following measures:

1. Form a working group comprised of senior staff focused on anti-Muslim bigotry issues and responsible for coordinating work within the company to address hate groups, tropes, bigoted content, and anti-discrimination training.

² Muslim Advocates and The Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, *Complicit: The Human Cost of Facebook’s Disregard for Human Life* (Oct. 21, 2020), <https://muslimadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Complicit-Report.pdf>.

³ Murphy, Laura and Relman Colfax PLLC, *Facebook’s Civil Right Audit – Final Report*, (July 8, 2020), https://www.relmanlaw.com/media/cases/988_Civil-Rights-Audit-Final-Report.pdf.

⁴ United Nations Human Rights Council. *Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar* (18 September 2018), https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFM-Myanmar/A_HRC_39_64.pdf.

⁵ Rouner, Jef. “Protest Planned at Islamic Conference by Group Who Allegedly Plotted Attacks” *Houston Press*, 29 August 2019, <https://www.houstonpress.com/news/texas-patriot-network-plans-to-protest-isna-11345149>.

2. Enforce your hate content and hate group policies in a way that ensures militias and white supremacists cannot use your event and group pages to terrorize targeted communities.
3. Committing to an independent third-party review of the company's role in enabling anti-Muslim violence, genocide and internment.
4. Strive towards and commit to a 100 percent proactive detection and removal of anti-Muslim content and all other forms of hate before it is even seen.
5. Commit to regular anti-discrimination training for your entire staff world-wide
6. Training key staff on civil rights issues and common words, phrases, tropes or visuals used by hate actors to dehumanize and demonize Muslims.

Please provide a detailed description of all the steps you have taken to date and the measures Facebook is planning to take to combat the continued proliferation of anti-Muslim content on the platform. Please note if any of the above measures have been implemented or are currently being considered for implementation. If any of the above measures have been considered but not implemented, please explain why.

We look forward to receiving a full and thorough response to this request. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

André Carson
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

Max Rose
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress

Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan
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Grace Meng
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Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
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James P. McGovern
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Peter Welch
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Jamie Raskin
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Pramila Jayapal
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Nydia M. Velázquez
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Yvette D. Clarke
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Raúl M. Grijalva
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Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress