

Dear Dean

Thank you for your letter of 23 February 2016 inviting Facebook to appear before the Public Committee to Examine the Election Law (Propaganda Means). While we regret that we are unable to appear before the Committee, we would like to offer a written response to your invitation and questions by setting out Facebook's policies regarding content on our platform and our approach to elections.

Our Community Standards

More than 1.5 billion people around the world use Facebook regularly and we work hard to foster an environment where these people feel safe sharing information and opinions with their friends, families, and communities. That's why our [Community Standards](#) are designed to ensure that Facebook is an environment that's free of abusive content: we don't permit calls for violence, terrorist propaganda, nudity, child exploitation content, bullying, or hate speech on our platform, and we have a dedicated team that works to remove such content whenever it is reported to us.

As a global community enriched by the presence of people from diverse backgrounds, we're also cognizant that not everyone who uses Facebook will feel the same way about the content people share on our platform and that context is important to understanding what makes something dangerous or offensive. That's why we are mindful of local law when making decisions about the contours of hate speech: for example, in Israel, we restrict content related to Holocaust denial. Context is also why we prevent minors from seeing content that has been reported as graphic but doesn't otherwise violate our standards, and we warn users about such content regardless of their age.

At the same time, we also know people want to express themselves, and we work hard to make sure Facebook is a place they are free to do so, even when their opinions may be unpopular or disagreeable to some. We believe our Community Standards and policies strike the right balance in achieving these dual objectives and helping to make the world more open and connected.

Facebook and Elections

Facebook's mission is to make the world more open and connected and to facilitate expression. People around the world use Facebook to share and discuss issues of public interest, and elections are one such issue. Anyone on Facebook can engage in these important conversations that support civic engagement around the world—whether they are a politician, someone working for a political party, or a private citizen—via personal profiles, pages, groups, events, and other features of our platform.

Our dedicated Politics and Government team helps to facilitate these conversations, working with governments, candidates, parties, and campaigns worldwide to foster voter engagement. Leading into and during the 2015 Israeli election, we provided training to candidates and political parties on how to use our platform to communicate with and reach voters. We saw extensive use of Facebook during the campaign, particularly in the form of video. We also delivered targeted reminders on Election Day to everyone in Israel of eligible voting age, inviting them to share if they had voted. We provided very similar support for the more recent Canadian elections.

We partnered with Elections Canada, the agency responsible for conducting federal elections, to deliver targeted voter registration and Election Day reminders. We also led a “Why I’m Voting” campaign featuring prominent Canadians explaining why voting was important to them. In addition, we worked directly with candidates from across the political spectrum to conduct live town hall-style Q&As.

Facebook also offers a platform for paid political advertising, which was used extensively during last year's elections in Israel. We believe it is particularly important to differentiate between paid advertising and the content created and freely shared by the people and organisations who use our platform. In addition to our Community Standards, paid political and elections advertising is also—like all ads on Facebook—subject to our separate [advertising policies](#). These guidelines impose further requirements, including that advertisers themselves are responsible for complying with any applicable laws and regulations including laws about elections. Facebook does not engage in exhaustive proactive review of the content of advertisements. However, if we become aware of advertisements on our platform that violate these policies (e.g. through reports from our users or other parties), we take action to disable them.

Whether family photos, a page representing a political candidate or Party (which can be set up and operated for free), or a paid campaign advertisement, it is important to understand that Facebook ultimately acts only as an intermediary platform for content created by others. To protect and further the ability of some 4 million Israelis and the 1.5 billion people around the world who use our service to share the content and opinions that matter to them, we feel strongly that governments must avoid making intermediaries like Facebook liable for content that was created by and is the responsibility of the people who choose to share their ideas and opinions on Facebook.

We hope that this information will help the Committee to understand Facebook’s platform, our policies related to the content people and organisations share, and our efforts to facilitate conversations around issues of public interest.

Yours sincerely

Simon



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