

December 18, 2018

Mark Zuckerberg
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Facebook
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg:

We write to express our profound disappointment regarding Facebook's role in generating bigotry and hatred towards vulnerable communities and civil rights organizations. For years, many of us have engaged directly with your company in good faith, seeking change from within the company that we hoped would address a range of civil rights, privacy, and safety problems resulting from abuse and mismanagement of the platform, including engaging in an on-going audit of the civil rights impact of your policies and programs, as well as how the platform has been used by hate groups, political entities, and others to stoke racial or religious resentment or violence. In particular, we asked you to take immediate action to stop abuse of the platform. Recent news demonstrates, however, that Facebook was not only looking the other way in response to our concerns, but also has been actively working to undermine efforts by those who seek to hold the company responsible for abuses on the platform.

As you know, a recent investigation by the *New York Times*¹ details information about Facebook's responses to a series of crises - including crises around how the company manages and responds to hateful content. In the face of clear evidence that Facebook was being used to broadcast viral propaganda and inspire deadly bigoted campaigns, the company's leadership consistently either looked the other way, or actively worked to lobby against meaningful regulation, shifted public opinion against its allies, and personally attacked its critics.

Though Facebook has had significant time, opportunity and the benefit of input from experts and advocacy groups to address the problems on the platform, your company chose to target civil rights groups and our allies instead of changing the way you do business. Compounding this mistake, you retained the services of Definers Public Affairs to investigate, undermine and attack our allies, mimicking the tactics of the worst, disreputable political operatives and hate groups. Out of your need to treat those leveling legitimate critiques against Facebook as your enemies, you jeopardized the safety and security of people who have dedicated their lives to the common good. This decision crossed all lines of common decency.

¹ "Delay, Deny and Deflect: How Facebook's Leaders Fought Through Crisis," *The New York Times*, November 14, 2018.

Furthermore, it's an absolute disgrace that Facebook sought to deflect criticism and discredit advocates by exploiting anti-Semitic campaigns against philanthropist George Soros. A research document circulated by Definers wrongfully identified Mr. Soros as the force behind a broad anti-Facebook movement. According to the *Times*, Definers urged reporters to explore the financial connections between Mr. Soros's family or philanthropy and progressive groups hoping to somehow use this information to undercut advocates pursuing accountability for bigotry on the platform. Unbelievably, Facebook sought to have their cake and eat it too; while you weaponized anti-Semitism directed at Mr. Soros, you attacked legitimate criticism of the company as anti-Semitic.

Equally troubling are your claims over the years that problems with the platform or the company's approach have been inadvertent, and that, per a statement quoted in the article, "our entire management team has been focused on tackling the issues we face." What is now clear, however, is direct evidence of malicious and calculated campaigns to undermine Facebook's critics.

Your response as the company's chairman and CEO was also disconcerting. You plead ignorance, that you had no idea that this was happening. But the public has given your company the benefit of the doubt for far too long and ignorance is no longer an excuse. It's become abundantly clear that, as currently constituted, your leadership team is unable to adequately address the valid concerns of the civil rights community. It is now time for significant changes in, not only your policies, but also your leadership structure. At this time, we demand that Facebook immediately:

1. Reorganize Facebook's board in order to enable greater accountability of the leadership team and to allow more diverse voices at the decision-making table.

Specifically:

- a. You, Mr. Zuckerberg, should step down as chairman of the board as long as you serve as the Chief Executive Officer to allow the board to provide independent oversight and guidance for the management team.**
- b. Sheryl Sandberg should step down from the board of directors as long as she serves as Chief Operating Officer in order to allow the board to provide independent oversight and guidance for the management team.**
- c. Facebook should expand its board of directors by at least three members to diversify the board; these new members should reflect the diversity of your global community of users.**
- d. The board should appoint an independent and permanent civil rights ombudsman to conduct consistent and ongoing reviews of the civil rights implications of Facebook's policies and practices; this ombudsman shall also serve as a member of the board of directors.**

- 2. Publicly identify and apologize to all organizations targeted by Definers Public Affairs. In the spirit of transparency, release all internal documents pertaining to opposition research generated by Definers, including all research on civil rights and advocacy organizations.**
- 3. Remove Facebook's Vice President of Global Public Policy, Joel Kaplan, from his position.**
- 4. Make public all findings and recommendations of the civil rights audit without revisions or redactions by January 31, 2019.**

Thank you in advance for your consideration. We would like to meet with you to discuss our concerns and recommendations. Please contact Naheed Qureshi of Muslim Advocates at naheed@muslimadvocates.org with any questions and to coordinate a meeting.

Sincerely,

Muslim Advocates
Arab American Institute
Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Atlanta
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Center for Human Technology
Center for Media Justice
Community Responders Network
CreaTV San Jose
CREDO
Emgage
Equality Labs
Freedom From Facebook
HOPE not hate
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility
MCN – Muslim Community Network
Media Matters for America
Million Hoodies Movement for Justice
MomsRising
MoveOn
MPower Change
Muslim Youth Collective

NAACP
National LGBTQ Task Force
National Network for Arab American Communities / The Campaign to TAKE ON HATE
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
Southern Poverty Law Center
The Sikh Coalition
UltraViolet
United We Dream
Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center
Voting Rights Forward
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)

cc: Sheryl Sandberg
Marc Andreessen
Erskine B. Bowles
Kenneth I. Chenault
Susan Desmond-Hellmann
Reed Hastings
Peter A. Thiel
Jeffrey Zients