Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 6, 2019

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

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg,

We are writing to inquire about several of Facebook's policies that affect the safety and welfare of marginalized and vulnerable communities, particularly for individuals and groups who leave religious communities and/or advocate for acceptance of religious dissent within those communities.

In a free and just society, every person must be able to join, change, or leave religious beliefs and communities without fear of retribution. In the United States, the First Amendment to the Constitution guarantees this freedom of and from religion for every individual. Sadly, many individuals experience persecution upon leaving their religion. This persecution can include shame, ostracization, and even violence from their family members and former co-religionists. In many religious communities around the world, "apostasy," the act of leaving one's religion, and lack of belief in a deity are considered to be capital offenses.

This phenomenon has necessitated the existence of support groups to offer support, advice, and, in some cases, protection for ex-religionists. For example, Ex-Muslims of North America (EXMNA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to erasing the stigma associated with leaving Islam and normalizing dissent in Muslim communities. Due to the threat of ideological violence directed against ex-Muslims, EXMNA is forced to undergo costly and cumbersome security measures to protect the identities of their clients, and to screen for potential security threats among those who request their assistance.

The worldwide availability of online communication is one of the most important tools available to ex-religionists who are forced to hide their beliefs from their proximate communities. According to EXMNA, many former Muslims use private Facebook groups to build relationships with people who have similar experiences. Many of these individuals are fleeing or have fled from credible threats of violence from family members who feel that their decision to leave Islam brings shame on the family. For many of these individuals, organizing online with like-minded peers offers the only real chance to build a community. Facebook groups are an incredibly important venue for them to seek and find social support, including assistance in finding protection from continued harassment and violence.

Despite their importance to geographically far-flung members of ex-religionist communities, Facebook groups are far from an impenetrable haven. Organized religious extremists have realized that they can deny these support groups to vulnerable ex-religionists by co-opting

Facebook's abuse reporting system. As you can see in the attached images, there exist numerous groups whose express purpose is to systematically target and attack atheists and ex-Muslims and their groups on Facebook by falsely "flagging" the relevant pages for "hate speech" or other nonexistent offenses. These attacks are both frequent and effective. Restoring pages that have been removed by Facebook due to these inaccurate reports is a lengthy and cumbersome process, causing many group administrators to abandon Facebook as a communication medium. As support groups often lack any other viable alternative for organizing, this can result in the total dissolution of support networks.

In addition, activists are vulnerable to targeting and harassment in person, including physical violence. This threat often comes from vigilantes but can emanate from government entities as well. In 2017, the government of Pakistan sent mass text messages to the public encouraging them to report any blasphemy they see on social media. In Pakistan, blasphemy and apostasy are criminal offenses punishable by death. Activists have been deterred from communicating on Facebook because the company's pseudonym policies prevent them from safely expressing themselves while protecting their identity.

These problems are extremely concerning, but they are not insurmountable. Facebook can help prevent harassment, persecution, and violence from gaining any traction on its platform. In particular, it can take steps to address the abuse of its reporting system so that these pages and groups cannot be taken down by unscrupulous actors. In addition, it can modify its pseudonym policy to protect the identities of the most vulnerable members of society. Facebook has already modified this policy to protect LGBTQ+ users by allowing users to substitute for their legal name a nickname by which they are known to family and friends. However, the company still requires users to privately confirm their "real" identities. In light of well-organized efforts to track ex-religionists through deceptive means, including by infiltrating sources of personal information, many ex-religionists are understandably cautious about surrendering this information to a third-party organization such as Facebook.

With these concerns in mind, we would greatly appreciate your responses to the following questions:

- What processes does Facebook have in place to prevent abuse of its flagging/reporting system?

- What steps, if any, will Facebook take to protect user accounts who suffer repeated abuse of its flagging/reporting system?

- In particular, does Facebook plan to implement a "white list" of accounts that have been repeatedly targeted by organized user groups for flagging campaigns?

- How many employees has Facebook assigned to review reports of prohibited activity and to identify abuse of its flagging system? Which department at Facebook is responsible for overseeing these reviews?

- Does Facebook plan to take additional measures to protect the identities of users who are targeted for harassment or violence on its platform?

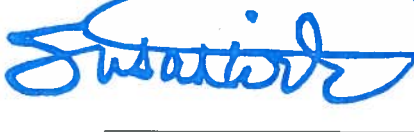We greatly appreciate your timely responses to these questions. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Susan Wild
Member of Congress

Paul Gosar
Member of Congress

Report Anti-Islamic pages

🔒 Closed Group

Join this group to see the discussion, post and comment
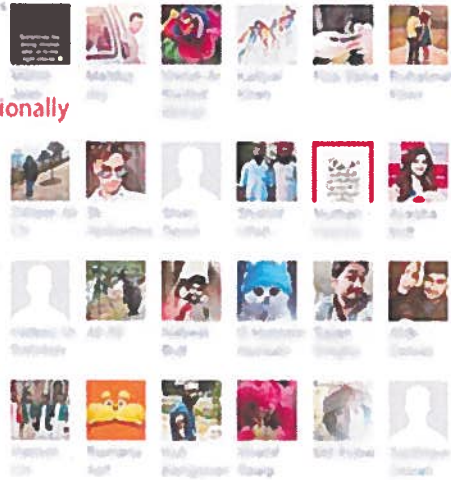
+ Join Group

Members (11,493)   See All

Admins

Other Members

MEMBERS   11,493 Members

DESCRIPTION

لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله

THERE IS NO GOD BUT ALLAH AND MUHAMMAD
SALLALLAHU ALAIHY WASSALAM IS THE
MESSENGER OF ALLAH

#Muslim Brothers and sisters
The Main aim of this Group is to report those
Pages/Groups which are aginst Islam (Anti Islamic
Pages/Groups)

HowToReportAPage#
Open the Page -1
Click on "report page -2
Click on "Hate Speach -3
Choose Targets on Religious group -4
Click on "Continue -5
Click on "report to FaceBook -6
click "Continue" button -7
Click "OK -8

Important Instructions About Reporting

Brothers don't comment & post on any anti-islamic
page this would result of promotion of them just
silently report
Kindly do not report more than 5 pages at a time
Wait or 10 minutes and do it again for further

WakuUp_Muslims#

PLEASE READ FB COMMUNITY****
STANDARDS

https //www.facebook.com/community/standards?
reId=183__in__s%?As

TAGS

Islam   Security   Report

Top   Posts   People   Photos   Videos   Pages   Places   **Groups**   Apps

Filter Results

SHOW ONLY

- ● Any group
- ○ Public groups
- ○ Closed groups

MEMBERSHIP

- ● Any group
- ○ Friends' groups
- ○ My groups

Report Anti-Islamic pages   +1 Join

11,493 members · 81 new members

لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله ... THERE IS NO GOD BUT ALLAH AND MUHAMMAD SALLALLAHU ALAIHY WASSALAM IS THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH... Muslim Brothers and sisters!!! The Mai...

Report Anti Islamic pages   +1 Join

196 members

Report Anti-Islamic Pages   +1 Join

94 members

Help us to Shut down all The Anti-Islamic Pages by Reporting them. If You See Any Page against Islam, Just Post the Page link in this group. We will Report those Pages.

Report Anti Islamic Pages   +1 Join

2,081 members · 2 new members

Request To All new and old members of this group, please report All the links in this group, here we will post the anti Islamic pages, post your link here in this group we will make the direct report link ...

Report abuse to anti islamic pages   +1 Join

126 members

Assalam o Alaikum, dear brother and sister plz promote this group and join us to report abuse to anti islamic community

REPORT ANTI ISLAMIC PAGES   +1 Join

76 members

the aim of this page is to report those pages which are anti islamin proper way to report is 1- Click on "report page". 2- Click on "Hate Speach" 3- Choose "targets on Religious group" 4- Click on....

Report Anti Islamic Pages   +1 Join

56 members · 1 new member

Report anti Islamic pages is one of a group who reports the pages/profiles/posts/comments or anything else which goes against

Muneer
Fuck you
I said you that you did wrong by posting
against islam and now see
22 minutes ago · Sent from Messenger

Atheist Republic
No, I don't see. What should I see.?
20 minutes ago

Muneer
Fb ristrict your page
Now your page is under review
19 minutes ago · Sent from Messenger

Atheist Republic
Our page is up and running Muneer.
What else can I help you with today?
19 minutes ago

Muneer
Again we will do complaint against your pagw
Tell me one thing?
14 minutes ago · Sent from Messenger

Atheist Republic
Are you a member of one of those reporting
groups Muneer?
13 minutes ago

Muneer
Yes

Top   Posts   People   Photos   Videos   **Pages**   Places   Groups   Apps

Filter Results

LIKED BY FRIENDS
☐ Liked by Friends

VERIFIED
☐ Verified

CATEGORY
● Any category
○ Local Business or Place
○ Company, Organization or Institution
○ Brand or Product
○ Artist, Band or Public Figure
○ Entertainment
○ Cause or Community

Anti Islamic Pages - Plz Rep..   💬 Message   👍 Like
Community · 1,764 like this
HELP US SHUT DOWN ALL THE ANTI ISLAMIC PAGES BY REP...

Report and remove anti isla...   💬 Message   👍 Like
Community · 5,064 like this

Report Anti Islamic Pages   💬 Message   👍 Like
Community · 253 like this
Join us to Report All Anti Islamic pages and groups on facecbook

Report Anti Islamic Pages   💬 Message   👍 Like
Community · 722 like this
report Anti islamic Pages

RePort All "Anti Islamic Pag..   💬 Message   👍 Like
Book · 567 like this
our target 1000000000000 ..... members only for Islam ...plx shar...

Let's Report Anti Islamic / A..   💬 Message   👍 Like
Community · 175 like this
The purpose of this page is to Report anti Islamic / anti Shia pages ...

Muslims Report And Delete...   💬 Message   👍 Like
Company · 585 like this