



29 August 2011

Dear Mr. Matas and Mr. Oboler,

I am writing in response to your letter to Mark Zuckerberg of 12 July 2011. We appreciate the dialogue on this issue and are committed to providing an environment on Facebook where people can share their views while respecting the rights of others.

While we may disagree with you on how best to handle this specific type of content, I am confident that we are aligned on the vast majority of issues involving online hate speech. We are proud of our efforts in this area and have received praise for our thoughtfulness and responsiveness from a number of groups similar to yours.

We find Holocaust denial to be repugnant and ignorant, just as we object to many of the other ideas expressed on our site and on the Internet as a whole. We have spent considerable time internally discussing the issue and have consulted numerous outside experts, inviting some of them to speak to our employees. We have also participated in a number of workshops and conferences on how best to combat online hate speech.

We have found that the best way to minimize hateful and threatening speech on Facebook is to look at the actual words people are using. Our policies prohibit direct statements of hate and clear threats of violence against specific people or groups of people. This approach helps because it enables us to maintain consistency and efficiency across the hundreds of thousands of reports we receive daily. For this reason, we have come to the conclusion that the mere statement of denying the Holocaust is not a violation of our policies. We recognize people's right to be factually wrong about historical events.

It is important to note, however, that in practice, we end up removing the vast majority of Holocaust denial content that is reported to us because it is explicitly hateful or threatening. As you probably know, most instances of Holocaust denial on Facebook (or anywhere else) are accompanied by threats or clearly anti-Jewish statements, which again, run afoul of our policies. We remove these as quickly as possible when they are reported to us, and the result is that there is actually very little of this kind of content on Facebook. In fact, in most cases, just one statement that violates our policies is enough for us to remove a Holocaust denial group or Page. We also remove this content when it has been created by an inauthentic account, which is often the case, since people do not want their real identity to be associated with such statements.

Many of the team at Facebook have direct personal connection to the Holocaust, through parents or grandparents who were forced to flee Europe or relatives who could not escape. We believe in Facebook's mission that giving people tools to make the world more open is the best way to combat ignorance and deception, though we recognize that others may disagree.

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Thank you again for your willingness to engage with us on this issue.

Sincerely,

Richard Allan
Director, Public Policy
Facebook